



Summer 2009

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New York State Outdoor Education Association

pathways

The Inclusion U Story

The NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center at SUNY Cortland

By Laurie Penney McGee, Lynn Anderson, and Vicki Wilkins

A few years ago, a member of the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NYS DDPC) scheduled a ski vacation with friends. He is an avid skier who uses a wheelchair and a mono ski. After calling ahead and being assured that a rental mono ski would be available, he and his friends paid a substantial deposit and traveled to the resort. Upon arrival, he was very disappointed to learn that only mono skis for children were available, and so while his friends enjoyed the mountain, he spent his vacation in the lodge.

This experience only highlighted a problem that people with disabilities are all too familiar with: many recreation sites and facilities often advertise that they are accessible and fully accommodating, when in fact, many physical and social barriers exist. As a result, the NYS



DDPC decided to allocate funding toward a resource center that would help individuals with disabilities

find accurate and descriptive information about recreation opportunities.

Dr. Lynn Anderson, chair of the Recreation, Parks and Leisure Studies Department at SUNY Cortland, envisioned a university-based resource center that would become the New York State Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (NYS IRRC). Centrally located and having a wealth of talented faculty and student resources to draw upon, SUNY Cortland aligned precisely with the DDPC's goal of creating a centralized recreation information gathering resource. Dr. Anderson's proposal was awarded a three-year grant, and in January 2007, the NYS IRRC was founded.

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Materials Submissions

Anyone interested in contributing to *pathways* is encouraged to submit material via email to:

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Materials should be typed. Please include a short biographical section about the author of the article. References cited in the article should be listed at the end of the article, APA style. Deadlines are: Mar. 10, Jun. 10, Sep. 10, Dec. 10

Editor: Jonathan Duda

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From the President

It amazes me that it's summer already! Kids are heading off to camp, the smell of wood fires, bug spray, and sunscreen are in the air, the fireflies at night, and the humming birds throughout the day.

If you are like me, summer means less, not more time for relaxation. It's even more important for me to sneak out in the morning with my cup of coffee to watch the humming birds at the feeder or the fog rise off the lake. During these quiet times of reflection, take a moment to think about those members of NYSOEA that have done something award worthy. Fill out a nomination form, and get it to the awards committee. We are also seeking nominations for board positions. If you feel that you would make a valuable addition to the NYSOEA board, send in your nomination to get on the ballot. If you are more of a social or organized being, the all important position of conference chairs for 2011 and 2012 are up for grabs.

I am very pleased with our ongoing projects and encourage you all to write an article for *pathways*, contribute on our social networking site, visit our website often, share affiliate events for the events listings, attend a roundtable regarding environmental literacy, register for the conference and bring a friend, and volunteer to help with the 2010 conference in Buffalo. We will be conducting the Teacher Ecology Workshop in a couple of weeks, and the board will be conducting our annual retreat in July. If you have anything you would like to share, please do not hesitate to contact me at malone@highlands.com.

-MaryLynne Malone

Ramblings

It was a typical late January weekend: a Saturday ski trip followed by a day of teaching CPR to my student guide staff. The usual ups & downs that accompany both were completed without any problems. Or so I thought until I woke up Monday morning.

I've been through this enough to know that my knee wasn't working properly when I tried getting out of bed that morning. If the Yale company makes a key to unlock joints, it wasn't one that I possessed. My right knee looked as if a large grapefruit had planted itself overnight. The ability to bend the knee was non-existent. It was time to see the doc; again.

A total knee replacement later, followed by four days of convalescence in the hospital and my world had shrunk to a small segment of Red Hill. A window view was all I would see over the next month or so during my in-home rehabilitation. I was fortunate; my window on the world allowed me an ever-changing view. Even though I was flat on my back, some judicious gazing allowed me two or three sightlines to the outside world. This was all I needed to watch the season unfold.

On one of the first days, I was reminded of the many shades of natural light that exist in upstate New York. Our weather pattern at the time included numerous cold fronts passing through. Most days were a blending of strong, localized storms followed by incredible sunshine, blue sky, looming clouds and blowing winds. As each partner in this natural dance waxed and waned, the emerging shades of green were illuminated, backlit, or in full shadow. At any particular moment the landscape would be a golden sunlit green or a deep forest hue. No two days were the same as front after front passed through the region, and it was a magnificent show; right outside my window.

As the weeks moved on, many of our local birds arrived from their winter refuges or transformed back into their springtime plumage. A quick shot of orange let me know that a Baltimore oriole had returned. Flitting amongst the maples on the front lawn, this colorful bird gave me a focal point on which to concentrate. Another day a glittering yellow caught my eye when a male Goldfinch alighted on the miniature spruce that borders our front deck. The prominent colors displayed by both of these creatures brightened my day, making the boredom of rehab fade into the background.

So is there a moral to my story? I'd like to think there is, and it's a simple one. Every one of us can stay connected to the natural world if we'd just look out our windows. Regardless of where we live, nature surrounds us. Stay in touch with it and you will be richly rewarded with the sights, sounds, and magic of the seasons.

Until next time, may all your rambles lead you to new and exciting places.

- Snapper Petta
pettas@oneonta.edu

from Red Hill

Important conference dates to remember

July 31st - End of early-bird registration...take advantage of the savings!

July 31st - Teacher Scholarship deadline

August 24th - prices of rooms at the Holiday Inn Fishkill go up...remember right now you can get a room for 1-4 people for \$90!

September 1st - end of conference registration!!

** Due to the hotel catering policy, we must pay for meals in advance. **
Please remember...conference meals will not be available for purchase at the hotel.

September 1st - pre-registration and payment deadline for the Thursday evening (9/24 - \$45, wine and cheese sail) and Friday afternoon (9/25, \$30) Hudson River Sloop Clearwater sails

September 15th - deadline for registering for the wonderful Thursday workshops and fieldtrip offerings.



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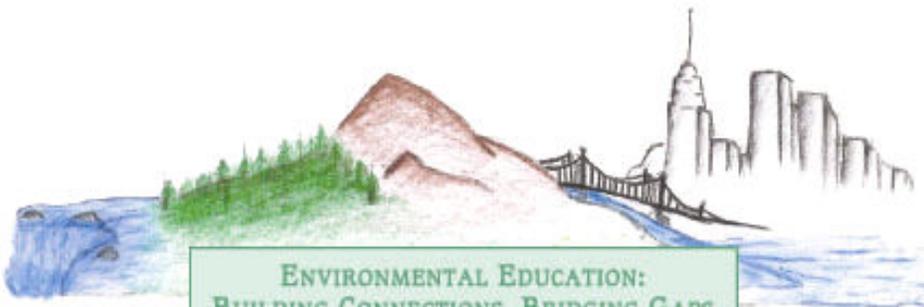
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The mission of the NYS IRRC is to help promote opportunities for people of all abilities to play and recreate wherever they choose. This is accomplished in many ways, including educating recreation and tourism professionals about how to provide inclusive services. Inclusivity training is key to the development of recreation resources that are truly inclusive. To reach this vision, ten modules have been created to assist practitioners acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to provide inclusive recreation services. This training, Inclusion U, encompasses a broad spectrum of learning outcomes for professionals at all levels to not only understand the concept of inclusion, but to implement strategies, policies, and procedures for its success. After completing this training, participants become Certified Inclusivity Assessors and are then able to assess recreation programs, sites, and facilities. To date, nearly 600 people have attended Inclusion U and have made significant changes at their own sites to become more inclusive.

Once individuals become Certified Inclusivity Assessors, they are asked to conduct two assessments within six months of training. Many choose to assess their own facilities. Recreation sites include parks and playgrounds, nature centers, community centers, campgrounds, libraries, museums, fishing access areas, bowling alleys, boat launch sites, archery ranges, and many others. The Inclusivity Assessment includes a physical assessment of areas such as parking lots, restrooms, registration areas and recreation amenities, as well as an interview with an administrator about best practices, policies, and procedures. As a result, recreation providers learn many ways they can make changes, both physical and programmatic, to create a more welcoming environment for people of all abilities. The assessment information is then submitted to the NYS IRRC for entry into an on-line database that will be available in September. The Inclusivity Assessments provide a wealth of accurate and descriptive information about recreation sites so that people with disabilities, their family members, and providers can better plan their recreation.

Inclusion U will be offered on September 24, 2009, as a free pre-conference institute of the NYSOEA conference. For other upcoming dates, see the announcement in this Pathways issue or on the NYSIRRC website: www.cortland.edu/nysirrc.

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New York State Outdoor Education Association

Established in 1968, the New York State Outdoor Education Association is the leading professional group supporting outdoor education, environmental education, and interpretive services in New York State. Our membership includes classroom teachers, environmental educators, college professors, naturalists, interpreters, youth leaders, administrators, students, parents, and others interested in the outdoors.

OUR MISSION

NYSOEA is a professional organization that promotes interdisciplinary life-long learning in, for, and about the outdoors

Our Goals

- We promote public awareness of the value of outdoor and environmental education and interpretation.
- We foster a lifelong appreciation and sense of stewardship for the environment.
- We help classroom teachers and youth leaders use the outdoors to enrich their curricula and programs.
- We assist our members in expanding their knowledge and skills in using the environment for responsible educational purposes.
- We act as a unified voice supporting the fields of environmental education, outdoor education, interpretation, and outdoor recreation

New York State Outdoor Education Association

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