

AMERICORPS CAPE COD THEWAYPOINT

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Dear Readers,

February 11th, 2008 was a fairly normal Monday in the life of Year IX AmeriCorps members; both houses set out to their respective service projects on opposite ends on the Cape and completed their weekly house chores. Unknown to most members, however, was that fact that this day marked the halfway point in our year of service to the Cape Cod community. While this news has definitely struck some fear within many members who are scrambling to figure out their “life after AmeriCorps” plans, it was also a great time to reflect on all that we have accomplished thus far and think about our goals for the coming months. To help in this endeavor, members spent three lovely days together for a retreat at the NEED building at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham to discuss these very issues and have a lot of fun in the process.

Time does seem to be flying by this year, but after some reflection, it turns out that AmeriCorps members have been hard at work planning events, organizing volunteers, building trails, clearing invasives, and serving the community at their individual placements; and there are still 5 more months to go. We hope you enjoy, and laugh out loud at this second edition of the Year IX Waypoint!

MLK Day

By Heidi Fuchs (Wellfleet)

This year, Tuesday COD members (Community Outreach and Development) were tasked with planning the annual MLK Day of service. Since this is the largest COD day group, we had lots of ideas early on that didn't get much traction. Around November, we decided on making quilts for homeless shelters with the idea of engaging school children through designing quilt squares that would later be sewn by community volunteers to create quilts. The theme of “Share the Warmth” evolved from there with guidance from Greg, the COD Day expert, to include weatherizing low-income housing units and shelters.

Christin set up a day to serve with schools in early January at Morse Pond School, located in Falmouth, and Mike charmed Grace Filliman from the Quilt Bank into giving us fabric and some sewing advice. After hours spent cutting the fabric up into 12.5” squares and developing a lesson plan that touched on prejudice and social justice, the members from Bourne descended on Morse Pond School on January 8. Some 220 fifth graders later, we had stacks of decorated squares, ranging thematically from rainbows and peace signs to “Feed the Hungry – DON'T WATCH THEM SUFFER.”

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MLK Day (continued)

A week later, members from Wellfleet met at an Eastham church where Christina had arranged a meeting of quilters. They put us to work ironing, taught fundamentals of quilting, and finished one entire quilt and several quilt tops. The next day, the highly efficient women from the Quilt Bank and Bayberry Quilters churned out several more quilts amid lessons and gossip at the Harwich Community Center.



AmeriCorps members work to clear out invasives at Meetinghouse Farm.

As MLK Day neared, we scrambled to make sure everything was in place for the big event. Sanjoy and Christin were in charge of getting materials for weatherizing Safe Harbor in Hyannis, Mike reserved space at Mattacheese Middle School and solicited pizza donations, and we decided to dispatch a group of AmeriCorps volunteers to Meetinghouse Farm as a third element of the project.



Tara and Darlene sew quilt squares together.

After initial worries, we were fine financially. Greg was generous with his time and managed to secure donations through community members. Christina set up a day at Barnes & Noble where we gift-wrapped for tips, as well as taking part in sending out donation request letters to Stop & Shop, Walmart, and Dunkin' Donuts. Falmouth Auto Works and All Cape Garage Door also donated \$250 each, which was a great help.



Angela and Sam quilting.

Finally, MLK Day arrived.

Last-minute preparations in both houses and the designation of responsibilities for the day meant that it ran fairly smoothly. We had about 25 community volunteers show up for the actual event; they had a choice to weatherize, quilt, or manage invasive species. A troop of Girl Scouts led by Jane Hargreave was essential in finishing a total of 14 quilts, as was the presence of experienced quilters like DJ and Betty from the Quilt Bank. Our Department Manager and founder of AmeriCorps Cape Cod, Darlene, even got into the act and spent some time at a sewing machine, with several AmeriCorps alumni devoting their day off in volunteering it with us.



A finished quilt top waits to have its back layer attached.

Overall, we definitely made a dent in invasives at Meetinghouse, weatherized all the units at Safe Harbor, gave quilts to Independence House, Champ Homes, Helping Our Women, A Baby Center, Falmouth Service Center, and the county. There was great satisfaction in reaching out to the community and using Dr. King's vision to inspire a day of service.

There IS Something in Truro!

By Christina Imrich (Wellfleet)

Tucked away in the hills of Truro, few Cape Codders have heard of the Highlands Center. If you were to take a walk around the campus today, it may be difficult to understand its former glory as a US Air Force Base. With only one radar dome on site, it might be hard to imagine that twenty-five years ago there were five radar domes used to track Soviet Planes during the Cold War. These buildings are missing shingles, in desperate need of a paint job, and, in general, have a lonely look about them, making it easy to forget that hundreds of people lived and worked there every day serving our country.

Since its closure in 1985, the Cape Cod National Seashore has taken the site under its wing and the Highlands Center project began. In response to a community survey, the residents of Truro saw great potential for the site as an art and science center – a place where ideas will converge, creativity is fostered, and the community can gather to learn. With magnificent views of the ocean, a trail that winds through acres of forest, and more than 45 buildings to work with, great potential lies in this site's re-development. Joined under the non-profit Management Partner, Highlands Center Inc., there are currently five organizations selected as program partners to take over one of the buildings and bring activities to the site.

AmeriCorps Cape Cod is one of the partners in the Highland Center project, and just so happens to be my individual placement. At the Cape Cod National Seashore, I serve under Park Planner, Lauren McKean who represents the Seashore in all Highlands Center activities. One of my projects this year has been working on a grant that (hopefully!) will fund the green planning of Building 11, the future Outer Cape residence for members, replacing, though never



Pictured above is Building 11, which AmeriCorps has leased. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

forgetting, LeHac. The site will also serve as a satellite office for Barnstable County. In line with AmeriCorps' environmental focus and the goal for Highlands Center to be "green," the plans for the building are to be as eco-friendly as possible, incorporate renewable energies, recycled materials, and energy efficiency measures from the very beginning. Keep an eye out – big plans are in the making.

Payomet Performing Arts Center in Truro is also active on site. During the summer months they have regular performances and activities in their outdoor tent, which is set-up at the entrance to the Center. Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill is in the process of constructing Cape Cod's only wood-burning kiln and will be holding pottery programs upon the completion of this project. The Fine Arts Work Center is committed to this mission and interested in engaging artists on Cape Cod. The National Park's North Atlantic Coastal Laboratory, while not an official partner, is currently active, having rehabilitated two buildings which they currently use – one is a classroom for educational activities and the other is a research laboratory for Park scientists.

Keep an ear out for activities coming up at the Highlands Center. Plans for wind themed summer activities are in the works. Former AmeriCorps member Chelsea Clarke, with the guidance of Lauren McKean, applied for and received a Massachusetts Technology Collaborative grant for \$40,000 to conduct a wind feasibility study at the Highlands Center. In other words, change is in the wind, so take a walk on site, read up on the North Truro Air Force Base, and learn about the program partners so that you can watch this site evolve. Get excited about the vision. Darlene sees the potential and that should be all we need.



Aerial view of the entire site. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.

When fiddling, don't Bb or B# - just B-natural.

By Caitlin Welsh (Wellfleet)

It is wintertime in Wellfleet, and for native Wellfleetians and Wash Ashores alike, that means it's time for finding new and interesting forms of entertainment to pass the time while waiting for the days to lengthen. In the AmeriCorps Wellfleet House, many members have begun adopting various hobbies as a means of escaping the boredom that comes from living in a veritable seasonal ghost town by either exploring personal interests or the greater Cape community that surrounds them. Some take a more solitary route and catch up on their reading or work on their cars; others find group activities to partake in like hockey or practice their Junior Ranger skills by thwarting would-be shipwreck scavengers along the beaches on Ocean View Drive. Yours truly is not without her distractions from the mid-winter doldrums.

Sometime shortly before Christmas, I quickly found myself becoming eager to explore the social world beyond the drafty walls of the Lebac house. I delved into my cache of past hobbies I had either abandoned long ago in the interest of avoiding competition or simply forgot about since I do not have the means to practice in my current situation – there's lacrosse, but I don't keep ten sticks on hand in the off chance that I might run into an entire team looking to scrimmage; Irish step dancing seemed possible, but there appears to be a shortage of sequined, velvetine dresses even this close to Provincetown. I quickly found myself at a loss, but my search for dance schools turned up something closely related – The Cape Cod Fiddlers.

The Cape Cod Fiddlers are a group of musicians – mostly fiddlers, but a guitarist and bass player accompany them – who have performed on and off the Cape since 1989. I found their website during my search and was encouraged by the simplistic design of

the site and the welcoming attitudes expressed by the biographic information. I contacted Bill Hardy to ask additional information about where I could take up lessons or the like and promptly received an invitation to his home to join the group's next session.

A session is generally an open invitation for musicians and non-musicians alike to gather and play or simply share and enjoy tunes in an informal atmosphere. I had practiced classical violin for a number of years but was largely unprepared for the set-up. My first night visiting the group, I had no instrument of my own and only had a single folk tune committed to memory that I had learned on a mandolin. After sitting through two Monday night sessions with the group, I determined it was time for me to dust off the catgut on my own fiddle and stretch my fingers.

Through the group I was contacted by Barbara Adams, the aunt of a certain Member Leader, who lives in Eastham and plays in other sessions throughout the week. Settling into my winter routine and getting a handle on my weekly schedule, I'm able to meet up with her when time permits to share songs and get in a bit of practice (to say nothing of the delicious meals and quality time spent with her family, the cats Michael and Sam, and Grace the dog). Though I was first intimidated by the prospect of involving myself so closely with people I had never met before, the shared interest in our respective talents has given me a rekindled appreciation for fiddling and a newfound respect for the artists and musicians who call the Cape home year round.

If you'd like to attend a session on the Cape, contact Caitlin at ccwelsh@gmail.com for further information on the various locations.

Going Green

By Angela L'Heureux (Bourne)

The date is October 31, 2007, the time, way too early in the morning. A miserable AmeriCorps member rolls out of bed (that's me). Not being a morning person in college wasn't an issue with classes scheduled the earliest at noon, but here on Cape Cod the day is half over by then. Battling a mid-autumn cold, I struggled to wake myself up and get ready for the day. Today, instead of going to my regular Wednesday individual placement at Self-Reliance, I would be driving all the way up to Wellfleet for a "Go Green Workshop". Dreading the fact that there was a long drive ahead, not understanding why this workshop couldn't just be in Falmouth, I hopped in my car and drove off. The opportunity to attend this workshop presented itself through my placement, Self-Reliance, because it is a non-profit organization promoting environmentally sound technologies. My specific placement put me in charge of the Junior Solar Sprint, a classroom based project where students design, build, and race model solar power cars. A Going Green workshop would usually

be something I am enthusiastic about, but today I must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed.

The long drive down route 6 was monotonous and nothing good was on the radio. The boring car ride began to further upset the mood to the point where I figured even the radio was against me. Upon arrival at the site of the workshop things quickly took a turn. The workshop was at the Wellfleet Audubon's Esther Underwood Johnson Nature Center. Driving through the entrance was comparable to crossing the threshold into a magical wonderland and my bad mood instantly melted away. Finding a parking space was a breeze because suddenly everything was easy inside this haven. I entered the nature center, which basically resembled a green lover's dream, and was swept away by the architecture and use of recycled products everywhere. The nature center was simply the outer most layer of what proved to be one of the most inspiring days I spent with AmeriCorps.

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Going Green (continued)

All the attendants of the workshop gathered in a seminar room with natural lighting and floor made from recycled tires. The day began with a brief introduction of the program and the announcement of the four guest speakers from Joan Muller of Waquoit Bay Research Center. Kevin Galligan from The Cape Light Compact spoke first about where your electricity comes from and how it gets to your home. He informed everyone about the importance of energy efficiency and switching to efficient light bulbs in one's own home. To me, this was a great way to kick off the day; Kevin had so much enthusiasm about the topic and really got the crowd thinking on the green track. Following the efficiency trend, Bruce Torrey from Building Diagnostics Help provided information on how to keep a house properly insulated. According to Bruce, 90% of homes have good opportunities to improve efficiency, but 90% of newly built homes are not taking these opportunities. Richard Lawrence spoke next about green transportation and the environment of Cape Cod. Hearing that Cape Cod has 50% worse air quality than Boston was astounding. As I sat in the audience, it made me wonder why there weren't more people in attendance and why more people don't seem concerned about these astonish-

ing facts. It was really great to now feel like a part of the population that wants to make a change. Being in the same room with these passionate speakers made me feel the synergy of new technology and ideas. As the afternoon came to a close, Tom Wine-man from Clean Energy Design talked about using solar and wind in everyday construction. I learned that utilizing the sun's power is as easy as the right orientation and design of a home.

Being from an area of the United States that has not really caught up with the idea of renewable energy on such a large scale as Cape Cod, I was filled with hope that I could bring information home with me and inspire others as much as the speakers inspired me today. As I left the Audubon, my bad mood from the morning seemed like it was miles away, now replaced by visions of designing and building green homes and empowering others to learn about renewables. This workshop demonstrated that through the AmeriCorps program anything can happen and you can be exposed to so many different things that change your outlook on life altogether.

Chowder Chronicles

By Erin Der-McLeod (Wellfleet)

Shortly after arriving in Wellfleet, I learned that one of last year's Corps Members created a blog rating the numerous ice cream stands on the Cape. Being a food lover, it inspired me to explore the local cuisine Cape Cod had to offer. One of my favorite places to eat out at in San Francisco is Boudin Bakery where I always order clam chowder in a bread bowl. It only seemed natural that I should try all the chowder the Cape had to offer. Where better to rate New England clam chowder than in New England? Not only is a bowl of chowder one of the few foods one can afford on an AmeriCorps budget, it is a fitting meal during these long Cape winters.

After announcing my quest, I was quickly informed by our Massachusetts locals that Captain Parker's Pub in Yarmouth had the best chowder on Cape. Parker's certainly has the accolades to back up this bold statement. It has won the triple crown of chowder fests, winning first place in the Boston, Newport, and Cape Cod chowder contests.

I am often skeptical of things that have been built up in grandeur, but Captain Parker's was not disappointing. In addition to the chowder, the restaurant's excellent service made for an enjoyable dining experience. Our waitress was attentive, without being pushy--a line I often find being crossed when sales are involved. She was also friendly and brought the food out almost immedi-

ately after I ordered. Most importantly, the chowder, the thing that brought me there, was close to perfect. I do not have a gourmet pallet by any means, but I do know what I like. I like a rich, thick, creamy chowder that does not skimp on the clams. While Parker's chowder fit all the above criteria, what I found most impressive was its consistency. To me, nothing is worse than watery chowder. This was not a problem at Parker's, as the chowder was thick but went down smooth.

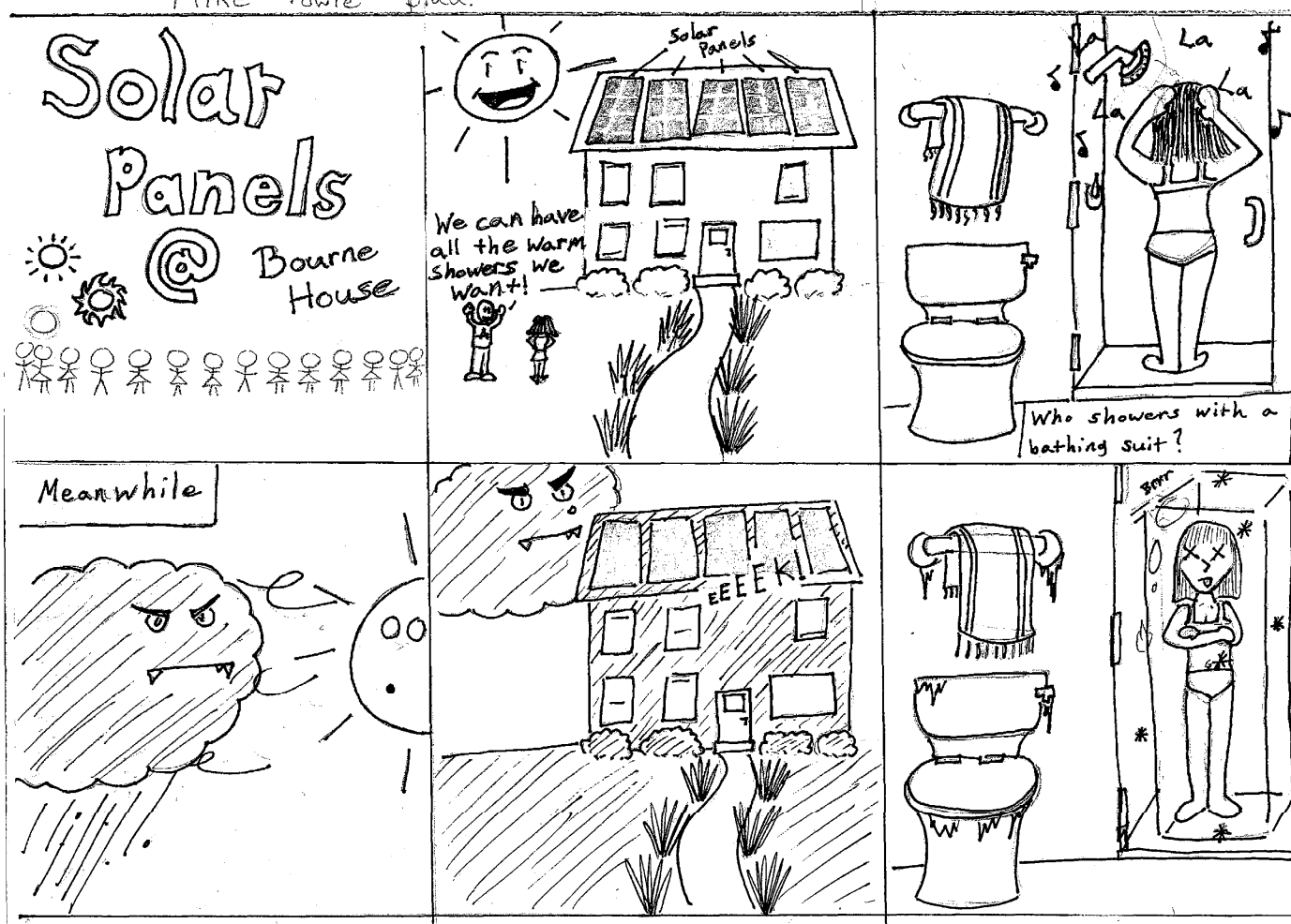
So, does Captain Parker's have the best chowder on Cape? I need to explore more restaurants to even come close in answering that question. However, I will say that it is the best chowder I've had to date. I would recommend a trip there to any chowder lover.

And, if you are looking to try someplace less well-known, I would also recommend La Petite France on Main Street in Hyannis. With the myriad of seafood restaurants on Cape, this little French cafe might be the last place you would look to find a bowl of chowder. Fortunately, I learned of this hidden gem from one of my co-workers. Their chowder is nice and thick with plenty of clams. While its flavor is saltier than Parker's chowder which is perfectly seasoned with thyme, it is a great place to stop for a quick bowl of soup at lunch.

Blau!

Cartoons by Mike Towle

Mike Towle Blau!



It's COD Day: So What Now?

By Dave Quinn (Wellfleet)

It was early November and members from the Wednesday COD day sat in the stuffy and confining basement of the AmeriCorps office. The order of the day was to come up with a perfect project idea, one that would win over the approval of our favorite COD day supervisor, Greg. At this point in the year, we had already gone through a few different ideas, including hosting a big environmentally themed concert or organizing an ongoing lecture series. At first, we fell in love with these project ideas, but with Greg playing devil's advocate, as he often does so well, we eventually came to realize that these ideas might not be so easy to pull off, and probably wouldn't fit in with AmeriCorps mission to mobilize community volunteers.

So what now? There we were, six AmeriCorps members sitting in the office together with our one and only task – to generate

new ideas. Whenever we hit a mental block, we reverted to checking our emails and surfing the Internet, hoping that an idea would magically appear on the screen. Unfortunately, no amount of Googling seemed to help our situation. After much debate amongst ourselves and with Greg, we all settled on one idea – *an Environmental Book Club*. We figured that people like to read, so why not recruit some fellow readers on the Cape to read and discuss books that address environmental issues? As an added plus, it would force us to read and be more educated about local issues we deal with every day. Through an environmentally based book club it initially was, and still is, our hope to spark an interest within community members who care about the environment, and essentially motivate them to become more involved with relevant issues on Cape Cod through serving with us.

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It's COD Day: So What Now? (continued)

So we finally had what looked like a good idea. Next we had to actually start organizing the project. We decided to break the project up into two separate book clubs, one at the Bourne Public Library, and another at the Wellfleet Public Library. In Wellfleet, the library staff was hugely supportive of our idea and even helped purchase extra books to get us started. We made flyers, called newspapers, and created a website to encourage people to join us in discussing A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold, a classic piece of environmental literature that looks at the importance of conservationism. We decided to first hold an information session for people to learn more about the club and pick up their books. At this point, everything was running surprisingly well and we figured the book club would be a great success. We did run into one minor problem the day of our introduction meeting: NO ONE SHOWED UP! Well, no one except for the one man who just happened to overhear us talking a minute before the info session was supposed to start and, I think, felt pity for us. The

meeting was a complete disaster, or at least, so we thought. The librarians were able to boost our spirits and encouraged us not to give up on our great idea. We pushed forward with more flyers and newspaper ads and crossed our fingers for a good showing on the night of our first discussion.

As the clock ticked past the start time of 6pm on the night of the first meeting we sat anxiously in the library conference room waiting to see if our efforts had paid off. A few locals came through the door and sat down with us to talk about our book selection. At 8pm, after nearly two hours of continuous conversation about the importance of being connected with nature, we were convinced that the first book club meeting had been a success. While organizing this environmental book club will certainly not be even close to the largest project that AmeriCorps works on this year, it has nonetheless been a rewarding experience to witness a successful project, after it was merely a vague concept a few weeks earlier.

Dear Drew,

By Drew Brown (Bourne)

Dear Drew,

I have a co-member who seems to be obsessed with scary puppets. I generally like puppets, but the ones that show up in my place of work look as though they need a little more help than people can offer (ie: old and have acquired a deranged contenance). I've come across the infamous St. Nicolas puppet on more than one occasion and it makes me very uncomfortable. I am beginning to wonder if there is an underground puppeting club occurring in the basement office during off hours. Please relay any or all suggestions as to how I can confront this member and address what I think is becoming a serious puppet addiction.

Sincerely,
Marionette Mary

Dear Mary,

I agree with you. While teddy bears get better with age, puppets don't tend to fair so well. When teddy loses an eye he becomes a cherished heirloom, when a puppet covered with years of hand-sweat dirt loses an eye it becomes a character from a horror movie out to steal your soul. In my experience puppet addictions are

hard to break requiring months of rehab and intensive therapy. I don't think you will be able to make the puppets go away, but you may be able to give the old grungy ones a wash. Best case scenario; they come out looking fresh and new. Worse case scenario; they unravel and self-destruct. Either way will be a win, win situation for you. Best of luck.

Dear Drew,

As a resident of the Wellfleet House I'm always surrounded by fifteen friends. That's right *fifteen*. Thirteen of them are warm blooded, compassionate, intelligent, and attractive (our house is amazing) but that is beside the point. My other two friends are slimy, fat-bellied frogs named Archimiedies and Merlin. A housemate brought them in and I, like others in the house, have grown attached to these moist minions. There is only one problem...

They live in their own poop. I understand, life in a fish tank does not offer many options for taking care of one's #2's. I feel like a solution to this would be to offer them a larger fish tank.

I told the care taker this but she is in

denial. She mentions that "They are happy as they are!" or "They like the small amount of water."

These frogs are fat and fill their small two gallon tank with poop over night. The swap shop has larger tanks! How can I make her see the light and aid our slimy companions?

Frogger

Dear Frogger,

I believe that we are going to have to look at the fine country of France for an answer to your problem. Wait! I am not insinuating that the frogs be sacrificed and have their legs served as a culinary delight at house dinner, I am suggesting you have a *RÉVOLUTION!* and overthrow our tyrannical housemate.

What your frogs need more than a larger tank is FREEDOM! You have been told to go and 'eat your cake' well you need to stage a midnight rebellion and release those frogs back into the wild where they belong. I know it may be hard to see your friends go, but I believe that you genuinely want what's best for the frogs.

So "Off with her head!" let the frogs go free!

Polar Plunge '07

By Natalie Dinki (Bourne)

Ah, Cape Cod, Massachusetts. A refuge for beach bums looking to enjoy the view of the pristine ocean shores, or feel the salty breeze on their faces as they swim in the waters of the Atlantic. Most often when this image is conjured, it involves moderately warm temperatures, or so I thought. That was until one day in early December, when a proposal was made at our weekly house meeting. A challenge was to take place, to discover in which AmeriCorps Cape Cod house resided more courageous (or perhaps just stupid) souls. Our test: going for a swim at beautiful Sandy Neck Beach- in near freezing water. There of course, were a few resounding “no ways” from some members of the Bourne House, along with a couple of eager plunge enthusiasts. I however, fell into the category of the undecided, the borderers, those who would agonize over the decision until the time leading up to plunge time.

Over the next following weeks leading up to the fateful day, Nikki, Member Leader extraordinaire, tried her best to encourage more Bourne members to step up to the plate.



And they're off!



The plungers run back to the shore with frozen feet.

During these weeks, I often contemplated: do I have it in me? In spite of my Western New York blood, the mere thought of a Winter Solstice swim made my fingers and toes ache, imagining potential frostbite.

Finally, the day arrived. Even as I ate breakfast the morning of December 21, 2007, I still remained undecided on the issue. Sure, I would pack some extra clothes, maybe a towel “just in case”, but would I actually go through with it? I still wasn’t making any promises.

As we pulled into the parking lot of Sandy Neck, the temperature was in the upper 20s, a steady breeze could be felt coming off of the water, and the sky was covered with clouds.



Erin and Danielle already looking cold before the plunge begins.

Polar Plunge '07 (continued)



Wellfleetians and Bournians huddle before the plunge.

As more members of both the Bourne and Wellfleet houses pulled up and gathered around waiting for the inevitable, a certain air of anticipation could be felt; a mixture of both excitement and fear. I walked over to where a crowd of committed plungers were gathered, almost ceremoniously attempting to pump each other up for the coming event with mini pep talks and encouraging hugs. The non-plungers created a semi-circle around the rest of us, some taking pictures, and all wearing looks of “glad it’s not me.”

Once all the designated plungers had finally gathered, it was time for one last solid pep talk. Angela gave a fantastic rallying speech, and with one final “hands in” and “break!” on the count of three, we were off. Was I really going through with this? Walking down the wooden steps in what seemed to be slow motion while the icy waves waited for us was a very surreal feeling. As slow as time seemed to be moving on the way down to the shore was as fast as it moved once we were running toward the water. As one of the last people to make it into the water, I fought every instinct of survival that urged me to turn around, especially as I observed the shocked faces of my fellow Ameri-Corps members as they were running back from their own plunge. Once the water hit me, it really wasn’t so horrible. This was probably because I immediately could no longer feel anything. Luckily I did not have to venture out very far into the water to become completely submerged, as an enormous wave hit me just a few feet into the ocean.

As I began to run back to my warm, dry towel, I pondered what exactly I was running on. I certainly could no longer have feet, for I was not able to feel the sand and rocks beneath them; nor was I sure how my arms were working to grab my towel, as I lost feeling in those as well. The plungers received one another with their best possible attempts at warm hugs as the non-plungers generously assisted those who could not feel their appendages in quickly finding their shoes and sweatshirts. We loaded into our cars, heat on full blast, with feeling slowly returning to our appendages, though of course not pain free.

Luckily there were doughnuts and hot chocolate waiting for us at the Barnstable West Barnstable Fire Department. Thanks to digital technology, we were able to view a slideshow of pictures just taken at the plunge only an hour or so before. Nearly every picture produced a laugh, as close-ups of our individual reactions to the icy water were caught on camera by Tara. As for the competition that began this whole adventure, the number of people from the Bourne and Wellfleet houses tied both gathering seven brave individuals who actually took the plunge. Am I glad I went through with it? Yes, it definitely was a memorable experience. Will I do it again any time soon? I’ll stick to swimming in the summer.



Jaime and Nikki try to warm up.

Food for Thought: a Review of The Omnivore's Dilemma

By Rebecca Prosser (Bourne)

"What should I eat?" is a simple question that each of us asks ourselves at least twice a day. Even with our modest AmeriCorps living stipends, food is one item to which we all must allocate some of our expendable income. So how do we discriminate among the plethora of choices in the super market? Do we buy organic? Low fat or low carb? Ready-to-serve meals or fresh produce? Or simply the sale items? Michael Pollan demonstrates that our decisions in the grocery store are only one small component in the extremely complex chain of where our food comes from. In order to answer the question "What should I eat?" Pollan first strives to answer "What *am* I eating? And where in the world did it come from?"

In The Omnivore's Dilemma, Pollan navigates the origins of four meals. The first journey begins in an Iowa cornfield and ends in a fast food meal from McDonald's. Pollan explains the economics behind the surplus of corn in this country, and subsequently how we started raising food animals on corn, how corn has ended up in more than 25% of items in the store, and how our consumption of calories has increased by more than 10%, mostly in the form of high fructose corn syrup. The second meal is comprised of organic food items from Whole Foods, with ingredients from large-scale farms in California to asparagus grown in Argentina. Considering the vast amounts of energy required to refrigerate, process, and transport food from these large "industrial organic" farms, Pollan concludes that the organic food industry is in an "unsustainable position: floating on a sinking sea of petroleum."

The third meal is also "organic", but all the ingredients come from one small farm in Virginia that produces tomatoes, corn, chicken,

eggs, turkeys, and beef among other items. This extremely productive farm has a closed-loop system where rotational grazing negates the need for fertilizer, and there is minimal dependence on fossil fuels. The final meal is one where Pollan himself has grown, hunted, or gathered all the ingredients. This meal was a more personal journey—Pollan even philosophizes on the moral implications of vegetarianism and hunting. He does not advocate this type of meal as a realistic option for the American eater, but he wanted "to eat in full consciousness of everything involved in feeding myself: For once, I was able to pay the full karmic price of a meal."

In each of the journeys, Pollan weaves in history, politics, culture, human health and the human palette. He also expounds on the environmental impacts: the toll of growing nitrogen-stripping corn on the soil year after year, the benefits of not releasing chemical fertilizers and pesticides into the environment, and the overall fossil fuel consumption and subsequent CO2 emissions that occur along every step of the chain that connects a patch of soil to a grocery store or restaurant. For anyone interested in his or her impact as a consumer (in both the economic and biological sense of the word) this book is a must-read. For those content to eat at the end of an industrial food chain or for those looking for a simple grocery-shopping guide, this book may not be appropriate. Pollan does not offer suggestions as to what to eat because that decision has countless factors to consider. However, he does remind us that eating is still one way that each of us is connected to our environment, and we have some control over whether that connection is convoluted and all but invisible, or whether we are more deliberate with our place in the food chain.

Piping Plover Project

By Jaime McLaren (Bourne)

October 1st was my birthday and it proved to be a great day. On this Monday, the Bourne house set off on a mission to save piping plovers. The crew headed down to Sandy Neck Beach, one of my favorite beaches on the Cape, where we met up with our service partner, Nina Coleman. We immediately got to work. The mission of the day was to remove over two miles of symbolic fencing that had been protecting piping plover habitat over the summer months, but would soon be destroyed by harsh winter weather if not removed. Pole by pole we removed the symbolic fencing, while serving a double purpose and cleaning up any trash we found along the way.

Although, this may not seem like the most glorious project for the common individual, it turned out to be one of my favorite service projects to date; the day proved to be remarkable for many reasons. First, the weather was beautiful. The sun was shining, there was not a single cloud in the sky, and the temperature was in the 80's.

The beach provided a beautiful view and made me really appreciate the fact that I had received an opportunity to live on Cape Cod, be so close to the ocean, and experience its gorgeous landscape.

Later, an unexpected event added some excitement to the day. After walking along the beach, one of our service partners noticed a lobster buoy bobbing up and down out of sight. We came to find out that it was a turtle was tangled in the line that ran down from the buoy to the lobster net. We watched the event pan out to a happy ending, and the turtle was soon rescued and released back into its wild habitat.

Overall, this was one of our first service projects (unlike the never ending battle with the terrible monster known as *Phragmites*) in which we could see the large amount of work that we could accomplish as a group. At the end of the day we left feeling very proficient and happy to have helped the community.

Green Living

By Tara Di Giovanni (Bourne)

“A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but waste is a terrific thing to mind.”

Waste. Those five little letters foreshadow every purchase we make in our consuming lives in the U.S. We are a culture of ‘new’ and ‘improved’ things. Whatever happened to hand-me-downs and homemade goods? If we as a society used less, less would have to be produced. Products change so quickly today that it’s hard to even upload music on an iPod without the style or features being revamped. The quick progression of making things better than before leaves our manufacturing companies with old, unused, useless products, and those products end up flooding our landfills. Waste areas eventually overflow so much that laws have to be compromised and open spaces filled.

Being mindful of every thing – and I mean everything – we do and use makes some kind of imprint on our Mother Earth every day. When is the last time you checked your carbon footprint (www.carbonfootprint.com)? Reducing our footprint eventually leads to zero waste (a concept that may have gotten lost in the mix of hippies and tree huggers) by making little things we do day to day a noticeable difference. The kooky person bringing a refillable cup to the local sandwich shop to fill with a fountain drink may be onto something quite pivotal. The same goes for the person who rents a hybrid car instead of a regular octane running vehicle. Tons of options are available now that our culture is moving toward being ‘green.’ All we need to do is take advantage of them.

Here are some ways that you can reduce waste in your day to day life:

Ways to waste less when grocery shopping:

- Buy fruits and vegetables without packaging. Keep them loose so you don’t waste a plastic bag and twist tie on holding them together.
- Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season.
- Buy fresh meat instead of packaged meat.
- Buy in bulk instead of buying separate packages. (i.e. a 5 pound bag of rice instead of a pound box).
- Purchase organic and fair trade over store brands. You could be supporting local farmers and harvesters who put their personal time and effort into going the extra mile in treating products with natural growing additives instead of herbicides or pesticides.
- Any food that you can buy loose or fresh, you will save resources and energy that would typically be expended on packaging, canning, dating, etc.
- Use paper versus plastic.
- Recycle used plastic bags when you go to the store.

“Every time we hit the mall, we spend an average of \$113. We want lots of stuff and create huge demand for consumer products of all types. A new car is made every second, 2.3 million shoes are purchased every day, and 2.6 billion toys are bought every year.”
-Rogers and Kostigen

Ways reduce waste when shopping for clothes:

- Go to second hand stores.
- Have a swap party with friends.
- Buy recycled or organic clothing.

Things to do when traveling:

- Rent a hybrid car.
- Take a train or bus.
- Carpool or check into ride shares on www.craigslist.com.
- Travel locally to save fuel and uncover new spots.
- Rent a boat or a bike for a week instead of a couple of hours to save some money.
- Visit family and friends and stay with them. You can save by cooking instead of dining out.
- Travel during the off season.
- Take your own reusable toiletry bottles instead of using the ones in the hotels so the manufacturers don’t have to produce more.

Tips for cutting down on paper waste:

- Don’t take receipts.
- Recycle paper.
- Shred paper and use it for compost.
- Use both sides of paper.
- Instead of receiving magazines, read articles online.
- Get a library card and check books out instead of buying books and propelling publishers to use more paper.
- Write emails.
- When buying tickets, for entertainment or travel, get e-tickets.
- Stop delivery of newspapers and mail while on vacation.

<http://www.rdoac.org/ameriCorps/>

**CHECK
US OUT ONLINE!**

**AmeriCorps Cape Cod
PO Box 427
Barnstable, MA 02630**



Calendar: March—May

Here are just a few upcoming AmeriCorps Cape Cod events.

- April 7-11 Thompson's Field Blitz
- April 26 Canal Cleanup, 9 AM—12 PM
- May 10 Cape & Islands Junior Solar Sprint
- May 21 Recycled Art Show/Open House
at the Chatham transfer station, 1—4 PM

CANAL CLEANUP 2008

***JOIN US TO HELP KEEP THE CAPE COD CANAL
CLEAN***

SATURDAY APRIL, 26, 2008

- Meet us at the Herring Run Recreation Area,
- 830 Scenic Highway, Bourne (Mainland side)
- Registration and breakfast begin at 9:00 AM
- Gloves and trash bags are provided.
- Food, music, kids activities, and raffle begin after
12:00 PM

Contact us at 508-375-6975 or
americorpssc@gmail.com

Please recycle me!

