

Beczak Environmental Education Center Newsletter

THE BECZAK NET

Vol. 3 No. 1

Winter 2008-2009

REGENERATION!

At Beczak, we often find blue crabs in our marsh that are missing a claw, perhaps lost in a fight with another creature. We bring some of these crabs back to our aquarium, and within a few weeks they develop a small stub where they were missing a claw. Over the course of several months, each crab molts and expands that stub into a new leg. This process is known as *regeneration*.

We are experiencing the amazing process of regeneration here at Beczak. After two years without a permanent executive director and a dwindling number of employees, we've hired six new staff members in the last eight months. There are new interpretive signs in our marsh. We've introduced our first geology program for students, designed around our new permanent



exhibit *The Palisades Revealed*. We launched *Summer Adventures* in July and are preparing for our second action-packed season.

Your support is an essential part of our regeneration. Beczak has an ambitious plan to bring river education to communities along the Hudson, Saw

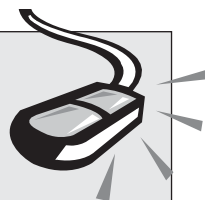
Mill and Bronx rivers, but we can't do it without your help. I ask you to be generous in your investment in Beczak at this exciting time of opportunity and growth.

Sincerely,
Rochelle Odesser
President of the Board

DON'T MISS OUT—GO TO BECZAK.ORG

There are so many new things happening at Beczak that there's just not enough room to tell you here. So visit Beczak.org to:

- **Sign up for Beczak's online newsletter**, our environmentally-friendly bulletin of program news, volunteer opportunities and special events. Beczak.org
- **Enter the Tidal Zone**, the online diary of our Hudson River tidal marsh, written by Beczak's educators. <http://thetidalzone.blogspot.com>
- **Meet our staff**. See photos and read bios of Executive Director Clifford D. Schneider, Director of Programs Steve Ruff, Finance and Grants Manager Sandy DeSando, Marketing and Communications Manager Lenore Person, Education Program Manager Vicky Garufi, and Educators Dorene Sukup and Jason Muller. Beczak.org/staff.htm
- **Watch TV news of Hudson River Snapshot Day at Beczak** on Channel 12 and Yonkers Public School TV. Beczak.org/home.htm
- **Check out photos of the Beczak staff team-building trip** to Lake Tear of the Clouds, the source of the Hudson River. Beczak.org/gallery.htm

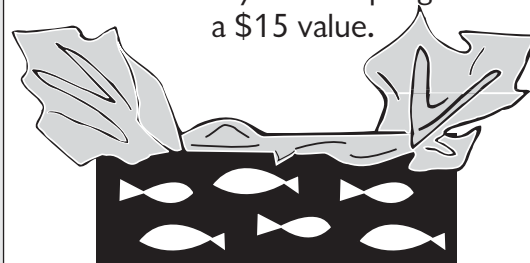


BECZAK NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Help us meet the growing demand for environmental education in the lower Hudson River Valley by sending in a donation today.

Use the reply envelope inside or donate online at Beczak.org/supportus.htm

All donors will receive three tickets to any Beczak program—a \$15 value.



BEZAK

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

LEARN TO LOVE YOUR RIVER

35 Alexander Street, Yonkers, NY 10701
914.377.1900 • www.beczak.org

Beczak's mission is to educate people about the ecology, culture and history of the Hudson River, Saw Mill River and the Bronx River through interactive educational experiences. We do this so that everyone we reach can become better stewards of their rivers and better citizens of their community.

Staff

Clifford D. Schneider, Executive Director

Steve Ruff, Director of Programs

Sandra DeSando, Finance and
Grants Manager

Lenore Person, Marketing and
Communications Manager

Victoria Garufi, Education
Program Manager

Jason Muller, Educator

Dorene Sukup, Educator

Board of Directors

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Andrew Simmons

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Al Kuropatwa

Adolph Stewart

Clifford D. Schneider, Ex Officio

Graphic Design
Cristine Kossow

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello,

My seven months at Beczak have been a whirlwind of grant administration, meeting our partners, and setting a strategy for the future. It's been a pleasure to meet each friend of Beczak. And if we haven't met yet, know that I look forward to it.

I've led several social service agencies in my career and have learned the importance of teamwork. And so in late August, the Beczak staff hiked to Lake Tear of the Clouds, the headwaters of the Hudson River. During that team-building trip, surrounded by amazing beauty, we talked a lot about the children we work with at Beczak...their potential...and their challenges.

Most children don't know that the natural world is full of life, that the Hudson is home to microscopic green algae and forty-pound striped bass, slithering eels and scrambling fiddler crabs. The children often see nature as something to *use* rather than to live alongside and learn from. This is our work at Beczak. Our vision is to give every child in our community the opportunity to experience nature's joys and lessons.

In the coming year, our goal is to expand our educational programs to the Saw Mill River and the Bronx River. Beczak's Board of Directors is committed to a multifaceted plan that includes publishing educational guidebooks, leading riverside educational programs, supporting in-school environmental education and increasing the programs we do with inner-city children.

This ambitious plan has a budget of \$600,000, more than double of last year's. We have about half of the money in



The Beczak staff on the trail.

place from government, corporate and foundation grants. For instance, Beczak has been awarded a \$52,000 contract for the 2008-2009 school year through the Yonkers Public School District. Our educators are mentoring approximately eight hundred additional children in classrooms, afterschool environmental clubs and student internships.

The rest of the budget rests on individual donations from people like you. We are poised to move to the next phase in our plan—but we can't do it without your help.

I invite you to be part of Beczak's work by helping support it financially. Please use the enclosed donation envelope. Your contribution will help us give more children a love of nature. I see it like this: Giving to Beczak is really giving a gift to each other, as we all share the same rivers, resources and responsibility.

Sincerely,

Clifford D. Schneider
Executive Director

Interpretive Center
and Park
Open 7 Days a Week
9 AM - 5 PM

Beczak Filmed for Public Television Special on Children and the Environment

“We told our families when we got home that our trip was great!”

Adam, Andrew, Arav, Ben, Eleanor, Ella, Faye, Gabriela, Henry, Joaquim, Maggie, Miles, Nicholas and Raquel from Sarah Lawrence College's Early Childhood Center

Five-and six-year-olds are particularly exuberant visitors at Beczak. Children seem to pop out of the school bus and skip into Beczak's interpretive center. They come face to face with Gloria, the new snapping turtle in the fish tank, and they press their noses against the tank where the grass shrimp swim. When their teachers open the back doors, everyone runs to the large lawn. They twirl and tag before Beczak Educators Vicky, Jason and Dorene gather them at the beach. “Where did this come from?” wonders one child who's found a water chestnut seed. And a discussion about the tides in the Hudson River begins.

A teachable moment like this is why Beczak's work with children will be featured in **Connecting with the World: Children and the Environment**, the fourth film in *The Learning Child Series* (see www.thelearningchildseries.org). This project is produced by Jonathan Diamond Associates in association with Sarah Lawrence College's Child Development Institute. It is due to be distributed on public television in September 2009.

The film crew visited Beczak on November 7 and filmed a class from Sarah Lawrence College's Early Childhood Center. “First, the children were given the opportunity to enjoy and explore Beczak's marine environment. Then, they sat down and began drawing



Children investigating a hogchoker at Beczak's Hudson River beach.

PHOTO CREDIT: SONNA SCHUPAK

pictures of their experience. It was clear that Beczak's educators had made a personal and creative connection with every child. Those connections are at the core of our documentary,” says filmmaker Jonathan Diamond.

“The children's interest in fish and the Hudson River has *skyrocketed* since our visit with you last week!”

*Sonna Schupak
Teacher at Sarah Lawrence College's
Early Childhood Center*

Climate changes, water contamination and species loss are front-page news. Beczak's goal is to begin preparing children for the intensive environmental stewardship that will be needed in the decades ahead. “We give young people an emotional connection to the natural world. They come here and walk through marsh grass, smell the tide, touch fish and get wet. Once they enjoy the river and its plants and animals, learning about them—and wanting to protect their habitat—comes naturally,” says Beczak Education Program Manager Vicky Garufi.

Beczak Program Participants 2008

Anne Hutchinson School, Eastchester
Bank Street School, New York City
Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York City
Caring Hands of Yonkers
Cedar Place Elementary School, Yonkers
Charter School for Educational Excellence, Yonkers
Community Nursery School, Dobbs Ferry
Corlears School, New York City
Dalton School, New York City
Dows Lane Elementary School, Irvington
Emerson Middle School, Yonkers
Enrico Fermi School, Yonkers
Ethical Culture Fieldston Lower School, New York City
Family School 32, Yonkers
Fieldston Middle School, Bronx
Foxfire Elementary School, Yonkers
Geneva School of Manhattan, New York City
Greenburgh Parks and Recreation, Ardsley
Hawthorne Cedar Knolls, Hawthorne
Hope Inc., Yonkers
Horace Mann School, New York City
Hudson Country Montessori School, New Rochelle
Kid's Play Center, Yonkers
Lakeland Children Center, Chappaqua
Lehman College, New York City
Lois Bronz Children Center, White Plains
Mark Twain Middle School, Yonkers
Montessori School 11, Yonkers
Montessori School 27, Yonkers
Nepperhan Community Center, Yonkers
Nyack Park Conservancy, Nyack
Oak Lane Daycare, Chappaqua
Our Montessori School, Yorktown Heights
Park Avenue School, Port Chester
PEARLS Hawthorne School, Yonkers
PS 29, New York City
Riverside High School, Yonkers
Sarah Lawrence Early Childhood Center, Yonkers
Saunders High School, Yonkers
School 8, Yonkers
School 16, Yonkers
School 23, Yonkers
Science Adventure Camp, New York City
St. Bartholomew's, Yonkers
St. Francis College, New York City
St. Joseph's School, Bronxville
Tribeca Learning Center, New York City
Village of Mamaroneck Recreation
Whitney Young Headstart, Yonkers
William E. Cottle Elementary School, Tuckahoe
Yonkers Christian Academy
Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority
Yonkers YMCA

BEZAK KIDS

Beczak Catch

by Dorene Sukup

We caught 4,038 fish in our seine net this year at Beczak!

I love to seine. Have you ever tried it? First, you put on waders—waterproof overalls with built-in boots—and then you walk into the river dragging a thirty-foot seine net by the poles on each end. The bottom of the net has weights and sinks, while the top has floats keeping the net at the surface. As the net drags along the

bottom of the Hudson River, fish are stirred up into the net.

We catch about twenty-six species in Beczak’s net. The chart below shows you some of our fish counts over the past four years. Can you see which species are increasing? Which are decreasing?

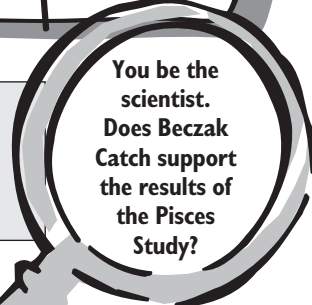
Riverkeeper, another Hudson River environmental group, studies the fish. Last spring the Pisces Report presented

its results. (You can read it at Riverkeeper.org.) The report found that the number of striped bass and bluefish were increasing, while white perch, hogchoker and herring (specifically alewives, which are a type of herring) were decreasing.

WHAT'S IN THE NET?

YEAR	BLUEFISH	HERRING	HOGCHOKER	STRIPED BASS	WHITE PERCH	OTHER SPECIES	TOTAL
2005	1	56	11	322	98	1,497	1,985
2006	14	16	2	204	164	2,521	2,921
2007	4	10	11	337	63	1,529	1,954
2008	15	1	45	295	102	3,580	4,038

Beczak’s complete catch for the last year is available on our Website. You can download, manipulate and print it out to create your own graphs, charts and statistics. It’s a great teaching tool for home or the classroom. Go to www.beczak.org/fishtally.htm

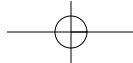


BEZAK BIRTHDAY PARTIES

Where Children Discover the Hudson

Come to Beczak for an environmentally-themed party featuring two hours of Hudson River-related crafts, games and exploration for children ages 4-10.

For more information, contact Dorene Sukup at dsukup@beczak.org / 377.1900 x 13.



What's Swimming at Beczak?

by Vicky Garufi

American eels, striped bass, white perch, blue crabs and northern pipefish are just some of the Hudson River species currently living at Beczak. These fish were caught during seining programs and are "on vacation" in our three fifty-five gallon tanks. Our biggest tank is a three hundred gallon tidal tank, where mummichogs, northern pipefish and shrimp live. There's a small marsh in this tank, and the water level moves from high tide to low tide every six hours, just like the tides do in the Hudson River. Depending on when you visit, it may be high tide or low tide, come see for yourself.

We also have Gloria, our snapping turtle. She was found in Tarrytown near the Tappan Zee Bridge, and Joseph Cotter of National RE/sources made a home for her in its offices. Joseph donated the turtle



after visiting the center and realizing Beczak was a more suitable home for her. Gloria has a tank near the west window, so she can receive sunlight. She has become the main attraction for many visiting classes. The students love when they can watch her eat. Gloria hunts live fish and quickly snaps and swallows each one in a big gulp!

See Gloria swim and snap at www.beczak.org/newandexciting.htm

Turtle Rescue 911!

In early November 2008, Gloria was spotted having an organ prolapse, and she needed immediate attention. Beczak staff members took her for a visit with the local vet, Dr. Lester Sills of Central Animal Hospital in Scarsdale. Gloria was the first snapping turtle to visit the office, and caused a scene as everyone gathered around to meet her. The turtle needed two stitches, and Dr. Sills generously provided care at no cost. Gloria is now safely back at Beczak and recovering slowly. Stop by and see how Gloria is doing.

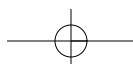
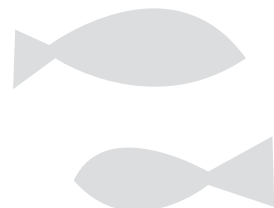
GO FISHIN'

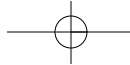
As you look for the hidden words, remember that they can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal; frontward or backward!

E	P	A	L	I	S	A	D	E	S
D	S	B	R	A	C	K	I	S	H
I	T	E	L	M	H	S	H	O	R
S	Z	A	O	U	M	B	E	Z	I
R	A	Q	W	Q	E	E	C	E	M
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S	T	U	R	G	E	O	N	B	S
M	U	M	M	I	C	H	O	G	O
M	C	E	S	S	L	I	R	T	A

WORD LIST

- AQUARIUM
- BECZAK
- BLUE CRAB
- BRACKISH
- CARP
- LOW TIDE
- MUMMICHOG
- PALISADES
- SHRIMP
- SILVERSIDE
- STURGEON





ADULT EDUCATION SERIES

Saturdays by the Fire by Steve Ruff

President Roosevelt raised America's morale through the Great Depression with his "Fireside Chats."

Let Beczak cheer you through today's financial crisis with *Saturdays by the Fire*, three entertaining evenings of Hudson River learning in Beczak's cozy living room by our crackling driftwood fire. These programs are part of Beczak's celebration of the Quadricentennial, the four hundredth anniversary of

Henry Hudson's voyage up the river which bears his name.

Admission is \$5 per person, or all three FREE to *Friends of Beczak* by sending in a minimum donation of \$10 (envelope provided in this newsletter). Each program begins at 7 PM and includes live music, refreshments and a free souvenir. For more information, contact Steve Ruff, Director of Programs, sruff@beczak.org / 377.1900 x 11.

January 24 **The Hudson's First People**

Dr. David Oestreicher, a widely recognized authority on the Lenape, leads a lively presentation on these Native Americans and how Henry Hudson and his crew encountered them. Dr. Oestreicher is curator of the award-winning exhibition *In Search of the Lenape: The Delaware Indians, Past and Present*, which will be on display at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum from July 2009–January 2010 as part of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial celebration.

February 28 **The Real Story of Pirates on the Hudson**

Kimberly Flook, historic site manager of Philipse Manor Hall—Westchester's oldest building—tells the true tales of pirates on the Hudson River and their fascinating connection to Henry Hudson. Discover the shady dealings that link merchant Frederick Philipse with legendary pirate Captain Kidd and a pirate enclave in Madagascar. Flook is an authority on the pirates of the Hudson River and has presented exhibitions about the Dutch history of Yonkers.

March 28 **The Palisades Revealed Exhibition Opening**

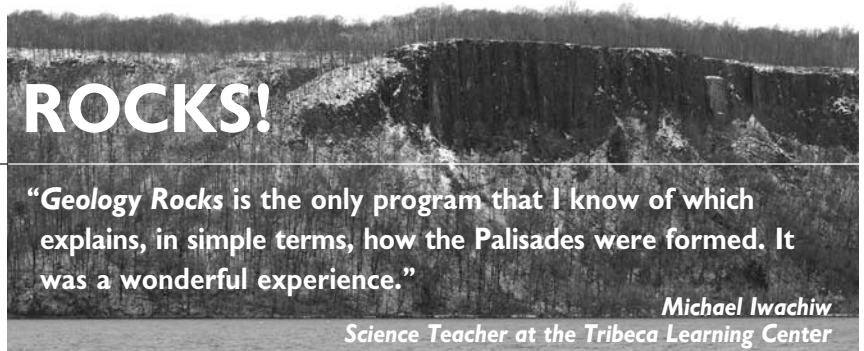
Eric Nelsen, historic interpreter from the Palisades Interstate Park, uses photographs, artifacts and film to tell the story of the Palisades and what Henry Hudson saw as he sailed up the river. This engaging presentation celebrates the opening of *The Palisades Revealed*, a new permanent exhibition at Beczak. Touch the rocks of these majestic cliffs and view the 130-foot banner featuring the animals and plants of the Palisades' two hundred million year history.

New River Exploration Program **ROCKS!**

By Vicky Garufi

The view from Beczak is gorgeous—a panorama of the Hudson River, the sky and, in between, the mighty Palisades. Children often look over at the cliffs and ask, "What are those?" When I answer, "The Palisades," they respond, "You mean *the mall?*" Because of conversations like this, Beczak has developed a new educational program called *Geology Rocks*. It gives students a hands-on understanding of the formation of the Palisades, and debuted in October 2008 to a fourth grade class from the Tribeca Learning Center in New York City.

In *Geology Rocks*, students look at the actual Palisades cliffs through telescopes, handle rock samples and walk through the timeline display of *The Palisades Revealed*, the new exhibit in our interpretive center. Soil and water shaken in a jar



"Geology Rocks is the only program that I know of which explains, in simple terms, how the Palisades were formed. It was a wonderful experience."

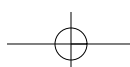
Michael Iwachiw

Science Teacher at the Tribeca Learning Center

PHOTO CREDIT: DON POLLARD

demonstrates sediment, while sandpaper against wood shows erosion. The highlight is when children stack three-foot lengths of foam (which washed up on Beczak's beach last year) to build their own Palisades cliffs.

Beczak's education department currently offers sixteen hands-on Hudson River educational programs that meet the New York State Department of Education Learning Standards. To book a program for your school or for more information, contact Vicky Garufi, Education Program Manager, at vgarufi@beczak.org / 377.1900 x 12.



NEWS FROM THE BOARD

First Annual “Sunset on the Hudson” Raises \$25,000!

“You people know how to throw a great hurricane party!” said Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone to the crowd gathered under the white tent on Beczak’s back lawn. Although it was drizzling and cool, more than 150 attendees gathered on the evening of September 12, 2008 to toast Beczak at its first annual event. Chefs from ten local restaurants, from Anselmo to Zuppa, hosted tasting tables, while Eta, a local jazz band, set the thermostat to fun. Clifford D. Schneider, Beczak’s executive director, auctioned off one-of-a-kind gifts ranging from a golf outing at Westchester Country Club to VIP grandstand seats at Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Beczak Board Vice President Michael



From left: Kay Amicone, Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone, Beczak Board Member Andrew Simmons and Beczak Board President Rochelle Odesser.

Crinieri chaired the event, supported by honorary cochairs Carole Crinieri and Shannon Gallagher. “I had a terrific time,” said Michael at the end of the

evening. “We made more than twenty-five thousand dollars, which will help sustain the crucial environmental foundation Beczak is giving our children.”

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Hooray for Beczak Volunteers!

Look at Beczak’s staff list and you’ll see only seven people. What you don’t see is our team of amazing volunteers!

Samantha, a teenager from Bronxville, helps out at birthday parties. Richie, a retired dentist from Irvington, prepares program materials. Jim, a computer consultant from Connecticut, mans Beczak’s table at festivals.

“Beczak is a great fit for me because it helps the local community and has a ‘green’ mission,” says Alain Began, a publishing executive from Yonkers.

“I am very interested in marine science. Beczak is a great place for me to learn and gain valuable work experience,” says Katrina Deptula, a high school senior from New Rochelle.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!



Beczak’s volunteer crew at “Boo-zak,” our annual Halloween party. From left: Bobby Elliott, Alex Heinman, Javaruis Matthews, H. J. Spagnuolo, Lindsay Andrews, Amelia Woodside, Bruno Antenucci.

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

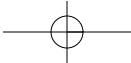
**January 24, 2009
10 AM – 2 PM**

Bagels and coffee provided.

Find out how you can volunteer at Beczak with the education staff. We’re looking for people ages sixteen and up, with a six month commitment. Meets school requirements for community service.

Positions needed:

Weekend Docents, Education Assistant, Marsh/Aquaria Helpers, Festival Educators. Please register by January 15, 2009 with Steve Ruff at sruff@beczak.org / 377.1900 x 11.



BECZAK
ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION CENTER
LEARN TO LOVE YOUR RIVER

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Tear off and save

BECZAK EVENT CALENDAR Winter 2008-2009

All events are at Beczak unless otherwise noted. Check Beczak.org for more information. Registration required.

JANUARY

January 17
Winter Hide-and-Seek
Family Educational Program \$5
11:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:30-3:00 PM

January 24
The Hudson's First People
Saturdays by the Fire
Adult Education Series \$5
7:00 PM

**DONORS RECEIVE
FREE ADMISSION
SEE PAGE 1!**

FEBRUARY

February 7
Hudson River EagleFest
Beczak Educators at Croton Point
Park in Croton, NY
9:00 AM-4:00 PM

February 14
**Love Your River on
Valentines Day**
Family Educational Program \$5
11:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:30-3:00 PM

February 16-20
Midweek Break Programs
Family Educational Programs \$5
Schedule to be announced

February 28
**The Real Story of Pirates on the
Hudson**
Saturdays by the Fire
Adult Education Series \$5
7:00 PM

MARCH

March 28
**The Palisades Revealed
Exhibition Opening**
Saturdays by the Fire
Adult Education Series \$5
7:00 PM

March 14
Going Green on St. Patrick's Day
Family Educational Program \$5
11:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:30-3:00 PM

March 21
Welcome Spring
Family Educational Program \$5
11:00 AM-12:30 PM and 1:30-3:00 PM

COMING IN APRIL!
**Family EcoArt Workshops with
Environmental Artists**

