

Rachel Carson in the Adirondacks

Centennial Celebration

Project Summary: May 27th 2007 marks the 100th birthday of Rachel Carson, the naturalist, marine biologist and writer whose 1962 book, Silent Spring, awakened the nation to the danger of pesticides. *Rachel Carson in the Adirondacks Centennial Celebration* is being planned to embrace Carson's important legacy and cultivate broad social engagement in responsible stewardship of the Earth, particularly among children and youth. A second priority of this project is to increase students' comprehension of conservation issues and the environmental challenges they will encounter in their lifetimes. A third goal is to highlight Carson as a role model for girls interested in the sciences.

From simultaneous artist residencies in Adirondack schools to concerts by the folk duo Magpie, the arts—with their proven power to educate, transform powerlessness into hope, and inspire people and communities to action—are a fundamental component of the celebration.

Rachel Carson in the Adirondacks Centennial Project is the catalyst bringing numerous area stakeholders together for the first time to work toward these common goals. Partners include ten school districts, three regional colleges, the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks (The Wild Center) in Tupper Lake, the Foundation for Excellent Schools, national and regional conservation organizations, and a diverse group of artists, musicians, poets, actors, and writers.

200 students will be directly affected through the residencies and hundreds more stand to be reached indirectly. Each participating student will receive a *Rachel Carson Leads the Way!* T-shirt. We are encouraging teachers in different disciplines, from Social Studies and Science to English and World Languages, grades 3-12, to engage their classes in this project.

Pre-Residency Activities: In addition to advance press and word-of-mouth excitement, a portrait of Carson by artist Robert Shetterly will rotate among the participating schools, on display for 1-2 weeks in order to generate school-wide awareness and interest in the *Rachel Carson Leads the Way!* artist residencies. Before the residencies begin, students from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF), and Middlebury Colleges will visit schools in April and May to introduce Carson and rekindle a sense of wonder about the natural world.

Artist Residencies & Student Showcase: Our visiting artists have been carefully selected for their mastery of their medium as well as their experience as teaching artists and commitment to instilling in students the sense that "*I can make a difference!*" in taking care of the Earth. Our roster reflects our wish to engage students in and expose them to a wide range of artistic medium. Artists in residence include illustrator Sheri Amsel and Elizabeth Lee who will help children create their own *Sense of Wonder* posters; musicians Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino (Magpie) who will help children compose *Friends of the Earth* songs; and director/actor Lindsay Pontius who will weave students' original writings with Carson's words into a *Speak Chorus*. Poet Gale Jackson (confirmation pending) will work with children to craft original poetry.

To formally open the residencies Magpie will perform a concert for all participating schools, playing songs dedicated to Carson, on May 16 at Newcomb Central School. The residencies will close with a birthday celebration and showcase of all student work on May 19 hosted by The Wild Center in Tupper Lake. All participating students, teachers, artists and family members will be invited to attend both events.

Women in Science Panel: We are producing a day designed around young women interested in natural sciences. As part of their Earth Day Celebration, the NYS Adirondack Park Visitor Interpretive Center (VIC) in Newcomb will host our **Women and Girls in Science** day which includes workshops and a panel discussion. Charlotte Demers (SUNY-ESF Adirondack Ecological Center), Michale Glennon (Wildlife Conservation Society), Nina Schoch (WCS' Adirondack Cooperative Loon Project), Karen Roy (NYS Department of Environmental Conservation), Michelle Brown (Adk Chapter of The Nature Conservancy), Hillary Oles (TNC's Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program) and Jorie Favreau (Paul Smiths College) will explore Carson's influence in their lives during the 90-minute panel also designed to introduce young women to female role models in the sciences. This event is being coordinated with both the Girl Scouts of the North Country and Adirondack Councils to complement the panel with a field work component, enabling Scouts to make progress on Nature, Career or Outdoor World badges.

Children and Nature Panel: The national discussion about *nature-deficit disorder* among U.S. children will be addressed on Saturday afternoon, May 19, when Cheryl Charles, Valerie Trudeau, Brother Yusef Abdul-Wasi Burgess and Libby McDonald lead a discussion on the importance of ensuring children of all backgrounds have an abiding connection to the natural world. Current CEO and President of the Children and Nature Network, Charles was the director for over twenty years of Project WILD and Project Learning Tree, the nation's two most widely used environmental education programs in North America. Formerly the Education Development Director for the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks, Trudeau has directed environmental centers in more than twenty countries. Presently, she is the CEO for the Girls Scouts of the North Country Council. Wasi Burgess is an Environmental Educator at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) where he coordinates the DEC Diversity Program. As current Chairperson of the Environmental Awareness Network for Diversity in Conservation, he exposes young people to the natural world with engaging outdoor activities and encourages them to participate in environmental stewardship projects. McDonald is an author and educator whose new book "The Toxic Sandbox: The Truth about Environmental Toxins and Our Children" will be published this summer.

Closing Concert: Following the afternoon panel, Magpie will perform a concert for the general public and a group of women from across the Adirondacks will recite the *Speak Chorus* comprised of students' and Carson's interwoven words and thoughts about the Earth around us.

Organization/Coordination: *Rachel Carson in the Adirondacks Centennial Celebration* is co-coordinated by Martha Swan and Paul B. Hai. Ms. Swan currently teaches and coordinates the Arts-in-Education program at Newcomb Central School and was Development Director for the Adirondack Council in the late 1990s. Mr. Hai is the Program Coordinator at SUNY-ESF's Adirondack Ecological Center. The ESF College Foundation is serving as the project's fiscal sponsor.

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