

NewCastleNOW.org UPDATE: Students for a Sustainable Future EXPO



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by Sarah Hodder

Green jobs are all the buzz. President Obama, his fellow politicians and populists are looking to the green workforce to pull our faltering economy out of the doldrums and simultaneously start healing our ailing environment. Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELf), a Chappaqua-based non-profit that promotes sustainability education, is hosting its annual Students for a Sustainable Future EXPO on Thursday, April 23 at Pace University in Pleasantville, New York.

The purpose of the event is to showcase companies and organizations that have embraced environmentally friendly products and practices in innovative ways. CELF hopes the 1,200 students from throughout Westchester who are registered to attend will leave not only excited and informed, but eager to usher in the emerging green economy and, perhaps, in the future look to don green collars themselves.

"The chance to show students so many exciting and viable career paths in science and technology, business and consumer goods, education and services is empowering given the economic and environmental challenges we currently face," said Katie Ginsberg, CELF's founder and director.

Exhibitors line up to sign up

Despite the recession, companies have been enthusiastic about registering for the EXPO, reported CELF's Programming Director Patti Bressman. "We have 65 exhibitors, 15 more than last year, and are still getting calls every day from companies and organizations who want to register for the event." New exhibitors this year include IBM, who is also sponsoring the event; KG&D Architects, who designed and built Seven Bridges Middle School in Chappaqua and the newly completed Jacob Burns Media Arts Lab in Pleasantville; Green Worker Cooperatives, which offers an innovative approach to solving joblessness and environmental degradation in the Bronx; Groundworks Hudson Valley, proud new owners of the Science Barge; and Warner Music Group, known for its eco-friendly Grammy party and ongoing work to green the company's paper products and packaging. Also new this year, a small company called Mr. Ellie Pooh that makes paper out of collected elephants' . . . you guessed it, pooh!



Students gathered around the US Green Building Council booth learned about how the organization is working to make green building accessible to everyone.

Also new this year, representatives from higher education will exhibit at the EXPO. College of the Atlantic, based in Bar Harbor, Maine, which boasts the first carbon neutral college campus will have a booth, as will Cooper Union SEA2M3, the Center for Sustainable Engineering, Architecture and Art - Materials Manufacturing and Minimalism. Students from that Cooper Union will showcase their sustainable design for an electric, solar and rechargeable lantern that they developed for use in rural, remote parts of the world.

The EXPO exposes students to sustainable development as demonstrated in a business model, explained Ginsberg, as well as shows students how choosing various academic pursuits can help them promote a green economy, and equip them to support it.

The many new exhibitors will join numerous returning participants, including co-sponsor Whole Foods, to demonstrate the newest environmentally-friendly technologies and products and highlight emerging career opportunities in green and sustainable technology, design, manufacturing and business.

The cornerstone to a green future is education

Through the EXPO and many other educational and professional development programs, including its Summer Institute, CELF aims to help incorporate sustainability education into K-12 curriculums. Educators are responding enthusiastically. Despite school budgets contracting dramatically in the area of field trips and events, the field trip spots for the EXPO are all filled, reported Bressman.

Schools are attending from across the county, as far north as Brewster and reaching south to Yonkers and even Manhattan. Chappaqua is sending 118 students from four schools. More than 1,200 students and teachers are registered to attend the event.



At the Port Chester Middle School booth, science teacher Charles Fulco (holding lamp) and his students demonstrate the results of their studies on the effects of light pollution on health and the environment.

Students are not only participating in the CELF EXPO through field trips, but also by exhibiting. Both Chappaqua middle schools will be contributing booths to the EXPO. Science teacher and environmental club advisor Annie Madden, a graduate of CELF's Teacher Institute, is bringing eighth graders to demonstrate how they are working to "green" Bell Middle School. Seven Bridges will have two booths. Teachers Ray LoGuidici and Sue MacLean are bringing 12 eighth graders who have explored the concept of sustainability. Technology Teacher Mike Debellis is bringing a fifth through eighth grade exhibit on Kids Against Pollution, an active club at the school.

The kids are excited about the event, reported DeBellis. "We think it is a great way to network with other like-minded youth. This will give the students in [Kids Against Pollution] the opportunity to see where they fit in and how they can be a part of the revolution." The L.I.F.E. School Environmental Science Class at Horace Greeley High School, led by teacher Bob Oddo, will exhibit various initiatives the students have worked on to reduce their ecological footprint on campus as well as in their community, including their organic garden, vermiculture project and recycling program.

"With a solid foundation in sustainability education today's students will be better equipped than previous generations to thrive in the new green economy," Ginsberg stated.

Students will tour the EXPO exhibits in small groups armed with EXPO Quest questionnaires. The EXPO Quest encourages students to engage actively with each exhibitor and fully grasp the message of the exhibit. Many booths have hands-on activities, products, games or videos. Gadgets and gizmos such as the hydrogen fuel cell miniature car or the solar-charged computer bag always attract enthusiastic crowds.

Public invited to view the exhibit in the afternoon

After the school groups leave, CELF is hosting a new afternoon EXPO event. In response to growing interest in sustainability issues among local business owners and organizations, EXPO initiated "Corporate Connections" this year, an opportunity for the public to attend the EXPO in the afternoon.

This program includes a Green Building presentation by architect Erik A. Kaeyer, of Kaeyer, Garment & Davidson Architects & Engineers, PC of Mt. Kisco followed by a “green building tour” of the exhibit floor. “Corporate Connections” participants may arrive starting at 2:30 p.m. to tour exhibits and meet with the exhibitors. Online advance registration for “Corporate Connections” is \$15 at <http://www.celfoundation.org/expo>, or \$25 at the door, \$5 for students.

A closing panel with Omar Freilla of Green Worker Cooperatives, Andrew Revkin, author and New York Times science reporter and Katie Ginsberg will address this year’s EXPO theme, “Empowering a Green Workforce.” The panel begins at 5:30 p.m.

Renewable energy is a huge growth field

Renewable energy alone represents a huge growth field. According to the American Solar Energy Society based in Boulder, Colorado, and Management Information Services, Inc., an internationally recognized economic research firm based in Washington D.C., the renewable energy industry could create more than 37 million jobs by 2030. A wide range of EXPO exhibitors will address renewable and alternative energy topics ranging from solar energy installer Mercury Solar and energy provider and event co-sponsor Con Edison to the private equity firm U.S. Renewables. KidWind Project is coming from Minnesota to teach the students about wind energy and turbines. The Liberty Science Center together with Noveda Technologies will showcase how energy monitoring has helped them achieve high performance goals.

Environmental, economic and equity issues are interconnected

Energy is by no means the only up and coming “green” opportunity. In the near future experts predict these “green collar jobs” will emerge in about every sector of the economy and region of the United States. Omar Freilla, founder and executive director of the Green Worker Cooperatives network, defined a green collar job as “any job that can improve environmental conditions.” But, Freilla added, as environmental, economic and equity issues are always interconnected, a business that neglects the well-being of its workers, customers and community cannot be truly “green.” Freilla and other exhibitors will highlight the concept of eco-justice, an important element of sustainability.



At their 2008 CELF EXPO booth, Seven Bridges eighth graders present “The Girl Child: the importance of educating women in third world nations.”

Aid To Artisans, another exhibitor, similarly creates economic opportunities for artisan groups around the world where livelihoods, communities, and craft traditions are marginal or at risk. The Connecticut-based organization provides business training, gives small grants and connects products and artisans to new markets. They will bring handcrafted products to the EXPO and demonstrate how the organization works with communities and craftspeople. Aid to Artisans explained that environmentally sound practices are at the foundation of their methodology. They recognize that “we can only bring lasting economic growth if we provide an integrated approach to product development, business skills training, market access and eco-effective processes.”

“The growing recognition of the interconnectedness of the economy, the environment and society requires a new way of designing, conducting and evaluating all business,” Ginsberg stated.



Students sporting recycled bags courtesy of CELF EXPO 2008 co-sponsor Whole Foods Market learning how “nature works” for both sustainability and the bottom-line at Aveda.

Sarah Hodder has lived in Chappaqua for four years with her husband and three sons. A former producer for NBC News, Hodder has worked as the environmental committee co-chair for the Chappaqua school district and at Roaring Brook Elementary School. She is on the board of CELF and helped to coordinate the EXPO.

Photos by Will Ginsberg

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