



BREANNE MCCARTHY THE OCEAN STAR



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Seventh-graders Gwen Attridge [from left], Lily Brouder, Meg Leahy, Rachel Pausz and Jackie Kluxa of Memorial Middle School volunteered for the day.

Toney Dodson, a water supply data analyst, cleaned up trash at the lagoon on Bayberry Lane.

A handful of students from Joe Bruno's [third from right] freshman biology class at Point Borough High School volunteered their time for the blitz.

FOURTH ANNUAL BARNEGAT BAY BLITZ

Keeping the watershed clean

BY BREANNE MCCARTHY
THE OCEAN STAR

Thousands of people participated in the fourth annual spring Barnegat Bay Blitz this past Friday — the first blitz aimed at cleaning up the Barnegat Bay watershed since Superstorm Sandy hit in late October 2012.

The blitz was started as a partnership event spearheaded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection [NJDEP] and the New Jersey Clean Communities Council in an effort to bring together citizens, students, businesses and local government to clean up and foster a greater appreciation for the Barnegat Bay and its 660-square-mile watershed, according to nj.gov/dep/barnegatbay.

Hundreds of volunteers participated in the spring blitz from many parts of the state, and each of the 37 municipalities in the watershed, which encompasses 33 municipalities in Ocean County and four in Monmouth County, hosted a cleanup.

DEP Commissioner Bob Martin, who joined the volunteers at the blitz, said he was overwhelmed by the amount of support.

"The spirit of volunteerism and stewardship that has been built throughout the Barnegat Bay watershed since the first blitz has taken on even more meaning this year as these same communities rebound from the devastation of Sandy," Commissioner Martin said. "I am truly moved by the amazing response from our volunteers considering all the challenges this region has faced over the past six months."

Being the first blitz since Superstorm Sandy, this spring's focused on the removal of storm debris and dune restoration projects in addition to typical litter and debris cleanup.

POINT PLEASANT VOLUNTEERS

Each of the 33 municipalities encompassing the Barnegat Bay Watershed approach the cleanup in their own way.

The groups are all run by captains who are DEP workers that organize the events in a specific municipality.

Locally in Point Pleasant Borough, Jennifer Feltis, a regional planner at the DEP, was the captain who led a team of more than 100 volunteers around the borough to clean up debris.

The volunteers consisted of other DEP employees, local residents who showed up in their workboots, and 100 students consisting of middle- and high-schoolers.

Everyone met at Community Park at 9 a.m. Friday, May 10, to begin the cleanup there.

The DEP workers handed out plastic bags along with safety sheets and "talking points" for the volunteers to follow.

Ms. Feltis said the participants were going to mark everything they found to keep track of the debris, "especially after Sandy."

The groups were all given a checklist to mark the items they collected — anything from bags balloons and bottles, to fishing



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GEORGE NICHOLAS Supervising Geologist, Department of Environmental Protection

nets, car parts and cigarette butts.

A handful of high-schoolers from Frank Joseph Bruno's freshman biology class at Point Pleasant Borough High School were out bright and early helping to clean up the bay.

Mr. Bruno, who lives in Brick but grew up in Point Pleasant, said it is important for the young students to understand how they affect the Barnegat Bay watershed, and vice versa.

"This is just to help to clean up the community especially after getting hit with Sandy," he said. "We're in ecology right now and so it's such an important subject we're covering based on where we live and based on how we are just dependent on this whole waterway system and watershed, so I'm trying to help them see how it all relates to them, their families and community."

Ryan Griffith, a freshman in Mr. Bruno's class, said he did it because "it was something to help out the community."

Holland Collianseach, also a freshman, said "we live here, so we might as well help to keep it clean."

Also in attendance were more than 80 seventh- and eighth-grade students from Memorial Middle School's National Junior Honor Society.

Lauren Mangiafico — a language arts teacher who took over the position of running the honors society as the current advisor of the group, Ellen Keelan, is out on maternity leave — said the middle-schoolers have participated in the blitz since the beginning of last year. The students are both individually responsible for volunteer work and have to complete a certain amount of hours as part of the honors society.

Ms. Mangiafico said the students really enjoy volunteering to clean up as part of the blitz.

"They know about it by word of mouth. They've heard about their upperclassman talking about; it's something they look forward to, especially when we have a nice day," she said. "They're especially excited because it's the first trip after Sandy, so they're really looking forward to it and what they find at some of the different locations we go to today."

Both the middle school and high school students were planning to spend the entire day helping to clean up the watershed area beginning in Community Park, then going to Dorsett Dock, Riverfront Park and Beaver Dam Park.

Jess Sponagle, who recently graduated as a marine biology major from Monmouth University and interned with the DEP, brought a few of her friends to the borough to help out with the cleanup.

"We try to give back," she said. "From everything I learned in classes about the importance of the bay and everything, it's good to clean it up and help out as much as I can."

Point Pleasant Beach resident Chantale Taurozzi attended the blitz, as well. She said she wanted to help clean up and to get some extra credit for her environmental science degree at Ocean County College.

"I've cleaned up since the storm — it's like no matter where I turn around, [there is debris]. You know, my kids have done beach cleanups and I'm also getting extra credit for a class, and there's just so much to clean up," she said. "I like to do my part and to teach my kids by example."

After the groups finished cleaning up Community Park around 10 a.m., they spilt up into smaller groups traveling to different areas of the borough including Beaver Dam County Park, Seagull Terrace, Dorsett Dock, Bayberry Lane and

the Point Pleasant Canal fishing area.

BAY HEAD VOLUNTEERS

George Nicholas, supervising geologist with the DEP, was the captain for volunteers in the Bay Head area.

He said because of the effects of Sandy, he did not want to lead volunteer activities in Bay Head directly, but brought a handful of volunteers to Traders Cove Marina to clean up trash on the southern tip of Herring Island and parts of the Forsyth Wildlife Refuge.

He said Towboat US provided a work boat and two Towboat US staff members to help the volunteers in their cleanup. The captain for the day was Christian Zimny, 18, who is a Bay Head Elementary School graduate and Point Pleasant Beach High School graduate, along with Mike Sonta and Sarah Hurst, who is also a Point Pleasant Borough High School graduate.

During the cleanup, Mr. Nicholas said the group recovered a one-half-full, 5-gallon bucket of chlorine powder, a 5-gallon bucket of paint, three gallon containers of paint, several containers of household cleaner scattered across the marsh, 10 large trash bags with collected trash and plastic debris.

Mr. Nicholas said all the volunteers and staff at Towboat US did a great job.

"Everyone involved worked hard and it was a beautiful day to be on the water," he said. "The Towboat US staff were absolutely awesome and we greatly appreciated their help. The NJDEP staff were also impressive in their efforts as they happily navigated the marsh, and never complained about the mud or the emerging gnat population that were happy to see them. All in all, it was a great day on the water and I think we had a positive impact on the ecosystem of the bay."

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

The team of volunteers in Point Pleasant found everything from tires to glass and plastic bottles to an iPod while at Community Park, while the Bay Head team on the water found everything from chemicals to garbage bags and paint.

Jane Kozinski, assistant commissioner for DEP who was responsible for all of the waterway debris removal for the state of New Jersey post-Sandy, was on hand at Point Pleasant's Community Park location.

She said it is important for the DEP workers to show their support of Gov. Chris Christie's plan to improve the health of the Barnegat Bay, as well as show support for the communities in the watershed areas that were so severely affected by Sandy.

"We're fully supportive of the governor's initiative to restore Barnegat Bay and to underscore our support, and that's why Commission Martin encouraged DEP workers to come out here and to show our support for the communities that live in the Barnegat Bay watershed," she said.

Ms. Kozinski said the cleanup has been going really well, and raising awareness is important.

"The Barnegat Bay Blitz is about raising awareness of our impacts on the quality of the water for the entire Barnegat Bay watershed and part of that is, of course, the litter," she said. "It remains an unfortunate fact that people litter — we see improvement but events like this are very helpful in getting young kids and the middle-schoolers and high-schoolers aware of all the litter around them so, hopefully, they will be good environmental stewards as they get older."



10 POINTS Of The Barnegat Bay Action Plan

The Idea

The action plan spearheaded by the Christie Administration includes a plan to address the Barnegat Bay watershed.

The Funding

Gov. Christie has made available \$28.8 million for stormwater management projects with a pledge of \$100 million over the next 10 years.

The 10 Points

- 1.] Close Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Plant
- 2.] Fund stormwater runoff mitigation projects
- 3.] Reduce nutrient pollution from fertilizer
- 4.] Require post-construction soil restoration
- 5.] Acquire land in the watershed
- 6.] Establish a special area management plan
- 7.] Adopt more rigorous water quality standards
- 8.] Educate the public
- 9.] Fill in the gaps on research
- 10.] Reduce watercraft impacts