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Subject: Environmental Volunteers Newsletter: June 2011
Date: June 8, 2011 11:20:58 AM PDT
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Environmental Volunteers

Innovative environmental science education that improves student learning

Newsletter for EV Community

June 2011

EcoCenter



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The EcoCenter Is Almost A Reality

by Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director



Wow. After years of planning and dreaming, the EcoCenter will soon become a reality. As we reported last month, the capital campaign received a challenge gift of \$600,000. This represented 50% of the remaining funds needed to complete the project. The terms of this challenge gift are straightforward: the donors will match -- dollar for dollar -- every contribution of \$5,000 or more through December 31. Their goal is to inspire new contributions that will allow us to complete this project and open the center.

Our progress? In the first 6 weeks since receiving the challenge, we have raised \$300,000 - including a \$100,000 commitment just last week. With only \$300,000 to go, the light at the end of the tunnel is shining bright. So bright, in fact, that our Project Management Group (the committee that oversees construction for us) is meeting to plan the restart of construction. I think it is very, very likely that we will complete construction within this next year and open the center in summer 2012.

Think about that. In just one year we will move into our beautiful new headquarters, begin hosting the community for birdwatching,

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explorations of flora and fauna, and baylands nature scavenger hunts. In just one year you will find yourself standing on the Bridge Deck with a bird's-eye view of the bay. Below you, on the Promenade Deck, might be a nature photography club waiting for a clapper rail to appear. Over to your right, between the marsh-sensitive landscaping, might be watercolor painters capturing the view. And later that day, as a beautiful sunset unfolds through the porthole windows, EVs might be enjoying an educational enrichment about the 150 bird species found in the baylands preserve.

Everybody: buckle your seatbelts. Things are heating up and it's going to be a wild ride as we bring this long-held vision to reality. I can only think of one word to describe it: WOW!

School Services Update

by Laurie Lopez, Programs Coordinator

We finished our school year with great numbers for May and June!

If we combine the numbers for both months, our volunteers gave 728 hours to deliver services to 64 classrooms, guided 15 field trips and inspired 1774 students to love science and nature.

**What an incredible job, EVs!
Thanks for all that you do!**



"Thank You" card from one of the children we serve

Who's News: Shalini Saxena

by Jan Whitmer

Interested in environmental issues for a long time, **Shalini Saxena** decided to act on her beliefs last fall and joined the Environmental Volunteers training class. She has especially enjoyed working with the Nature in Your Neighborhood and All About Birds programs. She loves seeing the children's wonder at the tiniest of discoveries.



Shalini grew up in northern India, and became interested in nature while helping her mother in their garden. In school, her study of biology and botany enhanced this awareness. Shalini graduated with a B.Sc. majoring in Biology as well as earning an M.B.A. in Human Resource Management. She also became interested in industrial and labor law and completed the study

of law before coming to the US. She and her husband **Anubhav** lived for a while in Mumbai before moving to California.

In addition to volunteering with the EV, Shalini also volunteers as a writer for our neighbor, Acterra. But much of her time right now is focused on her second-grade daughter **Arushi**, who loves to have her mom involved at her school. Shalini helps to organize activities, such as picnics and book fairs and chaperones field trips. Shalini and Arushi enjoy exploring nature together-investigating and reading about plants and insects. This summer the Saxenas are planning to visit family in India, where Arushi will be able to brush up on her Hindi. Thank you, Shalini, for sharing your time, your knowledge and your enthusiasm for nature with the young people of the Bay Area.

Monterey Cypress Trees

by Garik Iosilevsky, Intern

Try to think about the strangest looking tree that you have ever seen. I am sure that the one you are thinking of looks funny, but I doubt it looks as odd as the Monterey Cypress Tree (scientific name: *cupressus macrocarpa*). This special tree only grows naturally in two places in the world! The amazing thing is that those two places are so close to where we live. The only naturally occurring stands of this native species are just a short drive south of the San Francisco Bay area, in Carmel and Pebble Beach. Monterey Cypress trees can grow to be over 80 feet tall, but most of them are short because they grow on rocky surfaces near the shore. Another cool thing about this species is that the trees can live to be about 300 years old.



The "Lone Cypress"



The "Old Veteran"

Their location is what determines what these trees look like. No two Monterey Cypress trees look identical, and that is because the weather and soil conditions that they live in change their shape and size. For example, at Point Lobos State Reserve in Carmel, there is a Monterey Cypress tree called "The Old Veteran". This tree is very old, short and looks very strange. This is because it grows in very infertile soil, and it has been exposed to constant wind and storms its entire life. As an adaptation to these extreme weather conditions, the trunk,

protruded roots, and leaf formation of this tree has been warped, which gives it a very unique appearance.

There is another very famous Monterey Cypress tree in Pebble Beach known as "The Lone Cypress". This tree has been standing alone on its rocky perch for over 250 years, and it is the corporate logo of the Pebble Beach Company. This tree is so important to the people that live there, that they even added cables to tie it down so that it will not fall off. Monterey Cypress trees are very important to the Monterey Bay area, and although they only grow there naturally, that does not mean they do not exist elsewhere. This species is very popular as a decorative tree, and people plant them in many other places all over the world!

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EcoCenter Update: **Andrei Sarna-Wojcicki**

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Monterey Cypress Trees: **Garik Iosilevsky**

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