

the watercolumn

FALL 2008

A Newsletter of the New Jersey Academy for Aquatic Sciences

Academy Staff Makes Strong Showing at ASTC

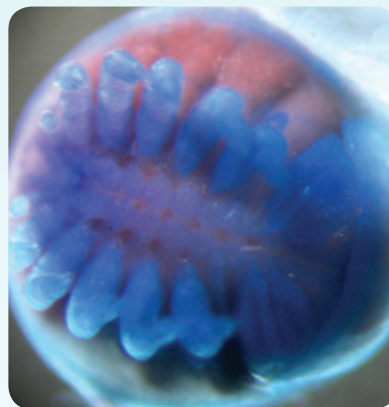
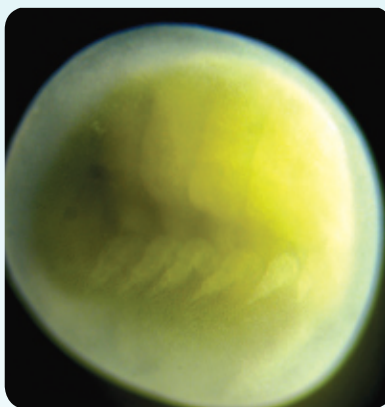
This year the international conference of ASTC (Association of Science-Technology Centers) was held in Philadelphia. Academy Vice President and COO Angela Wenger was on the conference committee, and she and other Academy staff members presented at several sessions.

Angela led a networking session on youth programs, and the Academy's newest staff member, Don Wittrock, was one of the presenters. The session featured activities-sharing, a panel on current practices in youth development, and round-table discussions.

Youth and Community Programs Mentor Astrid Roman (a CAUSE graduate herself) presented a session called Shall We

Dance: Engaging Science Through Movement and Culture, sharing her unique way of blending art and science with the entire science museum community the way she does with the CAUSE teens. She also helped present a workshop on getting teens out of the museum and into the community as educators.

Cheronda Frazier, the Academy's Director of Community Initiatives, helped present a session about using team building and mentorship in meeting organizational challenges, and another called Equity and Diversity: At the Juncture of Science and Culture. Don Wittrock was a co-presenter of this session, which focused on increasing the number of women, people with disabilities and members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups who visit and work in museums. We are proud of the Academy staff's strong presence at this prestigious conference.



Academy Photos Aid Horseshoe Crab Research

Sometimes the Academy's Director of Science and Conservation, Dr. Alex Vagelli, is called upon to help with studies being conducted by scientists from far-reaching parts of the world. Dr. Vagelli met Dr. Slava Ivanenko from Moscow State University when the latter visited the Academy to study microcrustaceans that Dr. Vagelli had discovered in the stomachs of Banggai cardinal fish. Recently, Dr. Ivanenko began working with Dr. Frank Ferrari and Dr. John Fornshel from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, and Hans-Uwe Dahms from the National Taiwan Ocean University on a study of the development of the appendages of crustaceans (such as crabs) as compared to the development of similar structures in two primitive marine arthropods—mesostomates (such as horseshoe crabs) and pycnogonids (such as sea spiders). Dr. Ivanenko remembered seeing some photographs that Dr. Vagelli had taken of developing horseshoe crab embryos and asked if he would consider doing so again to help with this research. Four of Dr. Vagelli's photographs appear with this article. It was a treat for the entire Academy staff to be able to watch the horseshoe crabs develop, even shedding molts of their tiny shells inside the eggs.



In the issue of the *Water Column* you'll be reading about Don Wittrock joining our staff to head up youth recruitment and the new middle school component of our wonderful CAUSE (Community and Urban Science Enrichment) program. Don brings an amazing combination of education and experience to this important post and will strengthen an already stellar staff focused on CAUSE. I am very pleased to have him on board.

Behind the scenes we continue to work hard on the Banggai cardinal fish conservation project. There has been frustration with the pace of official pathways in protecting this beautiful endangered fish from collection for the pet trade, so we are adding a more grassroots approach as well. We are collaborating with a number of groups and individuals to appeal directly to aquarium hobbyists and clubs, asking them to refrain from buying wild caught Banggai cardinal fish. Instead, we are asking that people interested in this species seek out breeders who can make fish available for sale. Our hope is to dramatically reduce demand for wild caught specimens and encourage the growth of captive breeding activities so this fish will not be lost forever. We have a new website (www.banggai.org) which we are currently using to make available relevant publications and information about Banggai cardinal fish. Our goal is to eventually grow this site into a significant tool for communicating with lay people and scientists alike with regard to these important issues.

New Additions to Academy Menagerie

In order to meet the demand for animal appearances in Academy programs, now and then the education department must add to their collection of critters. Most recently, the Academy welcomed two snakes, a turtle and a lizard.

Boggle is a Veiled Chameleon. These interesting creatures have eyes that can move independently and look in two directions at once, as well as swivel nearly 180 degrees. They have a prehensile tail that they can use like a fifth foot, and, of course, they can change their color depending on their mood. Boggle quickly became a favorite of the Academy staff.

Needle is a Northern Pine Snake, one of the largest species of snakes in North America, reaching lengths of five to seven feet. In the wild, they feed mostly on rodents, lizards and eggs.

In New Jersey the Northern Pine Snake is listed as a threatened species due to the isolation of the population, vulnerability to illegal collecting, and loss of habitat to development.

Lola is a Spotted Turtle. These little round reptiles are semi-aquatic, found in marshes, bogs and other wetland areas. They can be identified by the tiny yellow spots on their shell. When Lola first came to Academy, we thought she was a male—and then she laid a few eggs.

Last but not least is Maizie the Corn Snake. These snakes get their name from a pattern on their bellies resembling corn. They can have many different colors and patterns and are very secretive, spending most of their day in hiding. This may be true for Maizie if she were in the wild, but here at the Academy she gets a lot of face time with school children.

Stay tuned to see what swims, crawls, or slithers into the Academy next!



staffprofile

We are pleased to welcome Don Wittrock to the Academy staff. Don will serve as Youth and Community Programs Manager for the CAUSE (Community and Urban Science Enrichment) program, recruiting for the program and managing the new CAUSE Explorers program for Camden middle school students.

“I’m really excited to be here.” Don said. “I’ve seen a lot of programs, and CAUSE has an amazing impact because of the individualized attention and focus on each student’s development.”

Don comes to us from the Cincinnati Museum Center where he fabricated exhibits and ran youth programs for 8 years. He has collaborated with the Academy’s CAUSE staff for many of those years, sharing ideas for engaging youth in science and providing them with meaningful experiences. He was given the Key to Cincinnati by the city’s mayor, and has received the Presidential Award for Youth Service. When the Academy received a grant from the William Penn Foundation to institute a program

for middle school students, we were hoping to get someone “like Don” to create and manage the program. We are thrilled to have been able to get the man himself for CAUSE’s exciting new venture.

Don has a Bachelors degree in Human Development and Family Studies from Colorado State University and a Masters degree in Family Studies from Miami University. Don enjoys carpentry and furniture making in his spare time. He is married to Brenda. They reside in Burlington with their funkdog, Macey.



Grab Your Sleeping Bag! It’s Time for Deep Sleep 2009

This year’s Deep Sleep overnight programs will feature animals at the beach. Participants will be able to talk to divers at our Dive Show, take a behind-the-scenes tour of the top of the Ocean Realm exhibit, meet sharks at both the Touch- A-Shark exhibit and Shark Show, and see a show in the 4-D Theater. Camping out in front of the aquarium’s many exhibits is sure to be the highlight of the evening!

Some spaces are still available in January and February, so call the Deep Sleep hotline at 856-361-1018 to reserve your space soon!



fundraisingnews

The Academy is thrilled to report that the William Penn Foundation has awarded the CAUSE (Community and Urban Science Enrichment) program a generous, three-year grant of \$274,450 to help support the inception of a new component for middle school students. The United Way of Camden has renewed its support of CAUSE with a \$60,000 grant for this program year, and the Geraldine Dodge Foundation has committed to renewing support as well. The most recent grant received is \$5,000 from the TD Charitable Foundation. These grants will be a huge help in meeting the funding needs of CAUSE.

Soon you will have the opportunity to give to the Academy yourself through the annual appeal. Your letter (and email) should arrive in a couple of weeks, so please keep an eye out for it. And remember, you can give a secure online gift anytime on our website: www.njaas.org. Thank you so much, in advance, for your gift to support the Academy this year.

annualappeal



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the watercolumn

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CONSERVE?

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