

HUMANE ED NEWS

UFT Humane Education Committee



Field Trip to Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, NY to see the Monk Parakeets

On a warm Saturday afternoon — on June 13, 2015 — the UFT Humane Education Committee hosted a group of teachers

at historic Green-Wood Cemetery for a Monk Parakeet walk. Our guide, Gabriel Willow, a representative of the Audubon Society, took the group on a two-hour walk in which we saw a small number of monk parakeets -- as well as their nests -- through binoculars and Gabriel's telescope. We also toured some of the famous sites within the cemetery.

The monk or Quaker parrot (*Myiopsitta monachus*) has made a home in New York City for almost 50 years. Tropical green, with blue wing tips, monk parrots measure about 12 inches from beak to tail. They are natives of central and southern Argentina, where hot summers and snowy winters have prepared them well for life in the five boroughs. In

New York City, the monk parrot has generated volumes of urban mythology. They are alleged to have been released to colonize the Northeast through broken shipping crates and other misadventures at Kennedy Airport.

Designated a historic landmark in 2006, Green-Wood Cemetery maintains an international reputation for its 478-acre greenery and beauty and attracts up to 50,000 visitors a year. It contains hills, valleys, glacial ponds and fountains and winding paths. Family outings and magnificent sculpture viewings are some possible activities at the cemetery in addition to bird watching. Green-Wood is a magnet for history buffs and bird watchers alike as it is not only a Revolutionary War site (the Battle of Brooklyn occurred on its grounds) and the site of the Civil War Discovery Trail, it is also a registered member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System.

The UFT Humane Education Committee hopes to go back sometime in the late Fall or early winter when the abundant spring and summer greenery on trees and bushes won't be there to obscure the view of the Monk Parakeets. and other birds.

For additional information about the Monk Parakeets, log on to YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69hvxjaFXDg/>. This video features Steve Baldwin who offers a free, one-hour walk at various sites in Brooklyn on the first Saturday of each month weather-permitting.

Other interesting bird websites include:

<http://www.birdsleuth.org>

http://digital.livingbird.org/livingbird/spring_2015?sub_id=C17oYXFXhG3y#pg1

http://www.nycaudubon.org/?utm_source=NYC+Audubon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=a2854575c3-eGret_June_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_733203fc0f-a2854575c3-232607989

Log on to <http://www.green-wood.com> for information about Green-Wood Cemetery. Log on to <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=3319&PIpi=59931478>

to view Henry Bergh's gravesite at this cemetery (ASPCA founder).



After you tour Green-Wood Cemetery to better understand all that it has to offer, you may want to bring your students here for an outstanding field-trip.



At Green-Wood Cemetery

Photo to the left: Pictured left to right, back row, standing in front of a statue of Minerva are Virginia Ray, Dianne Nudelman, Janet Glickman and Gabriel Willow.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green-Wood_Cemetery

Front row left to right are Evelyn Norman, Miriam Mendoza, Gail Frydkowski, Sheila Schwartz and Francesce Delle.

Picture below (left): some members of our group relaxing by a pond in the cemetery

and (right) the gravesite of Henry Bergh, founder of the ASPCA



The ANTI-FUR SOCIETY Conference will be held on Saturday, November 21, 2015 in New York City. It's an animal-rights gathering which focuses on anti-fur activism and other animal issues. The program will feature over 30 speakers from the US and abroad and the opportunity to network. The fee for attending all speaker sessions and the exhibit hall is only \$10. The fee for attending the aforementioned as well as a reception and fur-free fashion show is \$45. For additional information, log on to <http://www.afsconference.org/>. If you decide to register, please indicate that you are a UFT member on your registration form.

ROOTS & SHOOTS is the youth community action and learning program of the Jane Goodall Institute. Through the program, teachers and students identify specific challenges their neighborhoods face. They develop a plan and take action while developing humane attitudes and problem-solving skills. See the article that follows about the outstanding activities of one teacher and her class. Then log on to <https://www.rootsandshoots.org/> and decide how you and your students can become involved as well. Many approved programs receive a \$200 mini-grant to help with implementation.

Roots and Shoots: Make That Change

by Felice Clyne-Davis and Her Fifth Grade Students at P.S. 165Q

My most important goal as an educator is to teach children to think for themselves and help them realize that all of our choices and decisions come with consequences that greatly impact other people and living things. It is essential to raise kind, compassionate empathetic young people who care about the world they live in.

As John Lennon once said, “The more I see, the less I know for sure,” my students have learned there are no easy answers or solutions and that in order to attain success they must persevere and never give up. They are empowered to know that they can make a difference in making the world better and brighter.

I have been a New York City public school teacher for the past 24 years. For the past 11, I have been fortunate to work with a self-contained fifth grade gifted and talented group, many of who are already quite sensitive and intuitive. I always try to nurture these qualities and have them learn how to look within themselves for answers, be leaders and “do the right thing” even when it is not the easiest thing to do.

There’s a wonderful picture book I share with my students called *All the Cats in the World*. In it, a little old lady receives a lot of taunting and criticism for feeding and taking care of several stray kitties down by a beach. We learn that while you can’t save every cat, you can certainly make a difference in the lives of the one, two or the few that you can help.

That is true of anything. So many animal-environmental-humanitarian issues seem overwhelming. We often feel disempowered and helpless. Poverty, pollution, global warming, animal abuse, child labor

are HUGE mountains of problems that seem insurmountable. Sad sigh! But as we know, each and every one of us can and must make a change—no matter how small.

And that has been the message of our Roots & Shoots service learning campaign during this school year. There are little steps we can all do to help. It begins by acknowledging that these conditions exist. We don’t close our eyes to the suffering and as educators, we guide students to come up with their own solutions—and contributions to their world.

Like Will Rogers said, “Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” Or like my fabulous fifth grader Katie H. pointed out, “It makes me feel like I can make a difference and I have a job to do. The important thing is to get the message out so everyone everybody knows, then you can move forward with action.”

With Roots & Shoots, it has been an action-filled year of service learning. My students and I began this past school year by immersing ourselves in an enrichment unit on primates where we studied the work

of Jane Goodall, Birute Galdikas and Dian Fossey. Kids prepared PowerPoints and other presentations where they shared their knowledge about the interconnectedness of all species, about our similarities to these precious creatures and why it is essential to protect their habitats.

Additionally, during a class presentation by a retired teacher who spent time with Dr. Galdikas and the orangutans for a week in Borneo, we all became fascinated by the deforestation of the orangutans’ environment in order to profit from palm oil production. We were all shocked by how palm oil is used in everyday products including potato chips and Dunkin Donuts. Jen D. observes, “We are now aware of not only which products contain palm oil but also about protecting the orangutans’ habitat and how they react to this sudden loss of home. We also want to stop big industries like Lay’s from destroying and causing deforestation just because they want money. Yeah, they could find alternatives and substitutes that work just as well but those alternatives and substitutes are too ‘expensive’ to afford. I mean like, if



you are willing to afford and pay for the orangutans' life in general, you should be able to afford the 'cost' of butter and other alternatives."

So began our Roots & Shoots "Behind the Scenes" campaigns where the kids researched the true cost of what goes into the process, production and distribution of popular products including iPhones, Hershey bars, Poland Spring water bottles and the impact on humans, animals and the environment.

They had a video Skype session with Roots & Shoots NYLC Member Madison Vorva, who launched a crusade against using palm oil in Girl Scouts cookies. The kids learned about the devastating impact of palm oil production on the environment. As Kelly C. observed, "Madi taught us for what we believe in and follow our dreams."

Students conducted a special assembly and created a PowerPoint for their presentation in which they advocated for all kids using recyclable water bottles, citing the fact that only one of 6 actually make it into the recycle bin. As Vashya P. noted, "We were given new knowledge about being fair to everyone and everything in the world. I got to know there are many negative impacts on the Earth that plastic water bottles create—mostly ending up in landfills and causing pollution I got my parents and my neighbors to stop using these plastic water bottles. I figured that if most people don't buy the product and the companies sales go down, they will be discouraged and might even stop the manufacturing their products or come up with alternatives."

Thanks to funding from a **Pollination Project grant**, we

were able to build our humane education library by purchasing fiction and nonfiction resources including group sets of environmental novels by Carl Hiassen (which included *Hoot*, *Flush & Scat*) and a class set of the Scholastic version of Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*. Vashya observed, "It was an amazing experience because we learned a lot of things about how we can help the environment and how we have been destroying our planet with everything we have been doing like using fossil fuels." Afterwards, students explored how they can reduce their own carbon footprints.

During an informational writing unit, they published their own "Compassionate Kids" ecological magazine, a collection of humane topics that they were passionate about from "The Zoning Out of the Ozone Layer" to "The Truth About Trash: Where Does Our Garbage Go?" to "Devastation in Decoration: The Truth Behind Ivory." In an introduction to our class magazine, Michelle K. , Jennifer D. and Vashya P. write, "We learned how there is more to nature than we see with our eyes. We have to look deeply inside and understand with our compassionate hearts."

Other humane, service learning endeavors included a musical fundraiser, the Graduation of Jake Moon, (based on the novel by Barbara Park where a boy deals with his grandfather's Alzheimer's.) The kids shared their musical and dramatic talents while helping raise over \$900 for relief efforts in the Philippines. Recalls Vashya, "We had so much fun doing it and knowing that it was for a good cause just brightened our day!"

Our students also launched their own "Compassionate Kids" website. On the home page they

wrote, "We hope you go and find out about issues that you are passionate about and do your part to make the world better and brighter. We would love it if you tried everything to help others and be compassionate!"

We were so thrilled to be chosen to participate in Dr. Jane Goodall's 80th birthday celebration on Google Hangout. Kelly reflects, "Dr. Jane Goodall has been my inspiration, and that she had been the role model to teach me empathy and that you are capable of jumping over any obstacle, and anybody who is willing to help, will lend you a hand, just like Dr. Jane Goodall's mother helped Dr. Jane Goodall on the way, when she was only beginning to study chimpanzees." And as Joey O. observes, "Dr. Goodall said that it was up to us because she won't always be here. It is in our hands to continue to do something that can change the world."

I am going to miss this special group of kids and I've reminded them to bring their missions, dreams, passion and compassion with them to middle school where hopefully, they can continue making the world better and brighter. I look forward to continuing the Roots & Shoots mission with next year's group of fabulous fifth graders.

We concluded with a musical message using Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror*. I think the song sums up the entire Roots & Shoots mission. Kyle reflects, "I think the message is that you should always try to make a change even if you are a kid. You can spend more time thinking about what you can do to change something and try to help instead of watching TV or playing video games. If we don't all pitch in to help, the world will be in trouble. We shouldn't be selfish and should start to make a change."