VASUDHA

Spring 2015 Newsletter

Spring 2015 was packed with activities for Vasudha residents to get involved in both on and off campus. Those off campus events included: a student-planned Overnight Camping Trip to Dyken Pond, a tour of the Radix Ecological Center in Albany, and the opportunity to co-host a meal with Oakwood Community Center. These events focused on the intersections of our own Vasudha community with those communities located primarily outside of the RPI's campus. Connections we hope to continue to grow in the coming years.

Trips

On the weekend of April 25th, nine Vasudha residents and classmates from Nature and Society spent the night at Dyken Pond, enjoying some

much needed time off campus in the company of trees. Although they were challenged by the recently-turned-spring weather, and sadly could not go into the water, they had a great time hiking around the trails nearby. This event was coordinated by resident Amanda Harrold, who suggested camping at Dyken at the beginning of the semester. It's always wonderful to have student ideas come to fruition!

Volunteering

Jimmy Buckley, Sofia Jacobs, and Amanda Harrold, three current Vasudha residents, helped plan a meal for Oakwood Community Center's Soul Café. Each 2nd Monday of the month, Oakwood Community Center hosts a Soul Café Dinner, in which volunteers prepare meals for 80+ individuals. These meals are open to the Troy

Community - the cost to attend is on a sliding scale, with a $3 suggested donation. These dinners feature local chefs and are made possible by donations from Honest Weight Food Co-op, the Troy Farmer's Market, the Veggie Mobile, and many more groups. There was an assortment of

fresh salads, deviled eggs, pea soup, and our homemade dessert. Read the Times Union article about the dinner they worked on with Russell Sage's Health and Nutrition Club … and the wonderful apple butter cinnamon rolls they made!

Film & Speakers Series

Vasudha also held a Spring Film Series, with some films shown on-campus and others co-sponsored at the Sanctuary for Independent Media in North Troy. *Libby, Montana* and *Nostalgia for the Light* were both shown in the Student Union. Though geographically placed thousands of miles away from each other both films focused on the interrelationship between environmental and social aspects of issues. *Libby, Montana* focuses on "the worst case of industrial poisoning of a whole community in America" as a result of strip mining. And, *Nostalgia for the Light* artfully addresses the socio-political issues that Chilean citizens face/d following Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship through a reexamination of space/time, soil and stars.

Meanwhile, at the Sanctuary, Vasudha co-sponsored two wonderful events this spring. The first, *Civic Engagement & the Management of Water Resources: From the Nile to the Hudson,* brought a group of musicians from countries that border the Nile River Basin working to produce music that unites them. In parallel to their efforts, Vasudha Program Assistant Natalie Yap worked with the Sanctuary to contact groups along the Hudson River Watershed. This included other colleges and water-health based organizations. The event also included a workshop about the importance of keeping the Hudson clean as well as efforts to better understand how our communities here in the Capital Region are all affected by the waterways we share.

The second event was *Down and Dirty- A Celebration of the Soil; workshops about soil with a screening of "Symphony of the Soil" film/talk with Filmmaker Deborah Koons Garcia at the Sanctuary.* In correlation with the UN's Year of the Soil, the Sanctuary for Independent Media hosted a full day of workshops focused on the soil - from how to build your own vermicompost bin, to bioremediation. The workshops were followed by a potluck, then a preview of Deborah Koons Garcia's most recent film (on the oldest/ most established organic farmers in the world). The night ended with a special condensed screening of Symphony of the Soil, followed by Q&A with the filmmaker.

End Note

This summer we're looking forward to planning for the upcoming fall semester! We will also be looking at the applications for the incoming class – which we're extremely excited to welcome to Vasudha in August. Given all the work done this semester its clear that 'sustainability' not only refers to the direct ties we have with the environment, but also to the connections we form with people in and across our communities. We hope to continue to build the Vasudha community through these engaging events. Thank you to all the Vasudha students, and especially to the class of 2018 for an incredible year!

Rensselaer