

## President's Message

(Originally prepared for inclusion in the Winter 2005-2006 issue of the Daily Planet)



Several members of the ANJEE executive board (myself included) recently returned from the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Although I had never attended an NAAEE conference, I had many expectations based on conversations I had with other ANJEE members who have gone to one in the past. In brief, it was everything I had been told to expect and more! The workshops were insightful and well conducted, the exhibit hall featured many useful resources, and the pre-conference workshop exposed me to many other people who all seem to have the same problems and successes that confront many environmental education (EE) alliances and associations. It was comforting to know that ANJEE is not alone and in fact we are doing far more for our constituents than most other states/provinces.

The greatest aspect of the conference were the people in attendance. Over 950 people from all over the world, with one common goal - to promote EE! Unlike other conferences and conventions, it resembled an extended family reunion. (One would not expect a dentist's convention to end the day with a sing-a-long in the hotel lobby or a group quest after lunch to find the nearest recycling receptacles.)



A special highlight of the conference was when our own recording secretary and former President ('01), Tanya Oznovich received the award for "*Outstanding Service to Environmental Education by an Individual at the Local Level*". Congratulations, Tanya!

This was the 34<sup>th</sup> annual conference of NAAEE and yet after 34 years the subject of EE is still considered to be a grass-roots movement or it is conveniently placed within the sciences. One presenter commented that his association had conducted a survey of non-EE professionals in his state and had asked how they would define EE; their answers were not anywhere near what the EE community would appreciate hearing. I think it would be interesting to conduct a similar survey here in New Jersey and I would be curious to see the results. Any volunteers?

Appearing in this issue of "The Daily Planet" are several articles focusing on topics featured at the NAAEE conference - each pertinent to ANJEEs' growth and development as New Jersey's EE Alliance.

- Marc Rogoff



## **NAAEE Conference Review**

### Pre-Conference Workshop: Professional Development for Affiliate Organization Leaders

Designed to meet the needs of NAAEE Affiliate organization leaders, this workshop provided a rare face-to-face opportunity focused on enhancing communications, planning, sharing information, and developing the knowledge and skills necessary for successful leadership of affiliate organizations.

The group consisted of representatives from over twenty state and provincial affiliate members and focused on the following topics;

- Ensuring Excellence and Innovation
- Expanding Influence
- Strategic Planning
- Technology
- Organizational Development
- Membership
- Fundraising
- Events

Each of the participants was directed to list “pro’s and con’s” for each of the topics listed above and then discuss their concerns with others who may have suggestions or advice.

ANJEE had “pros” for each of the topics and was clearly considered to be a leader and role model for other states because:

- Only three other states present had more members than ANJEE in their organizations;
- ANJEE’s board diversity, in terms of professions represented, was ranked high;
- The current plans for the ANJEE web-site represent technological achievement; and
- 20 annual conferences to date all gave ANJEE high marks.

The “con’s” that were shared with other affiliates were discussed and a few ideas were discussed that can be applied to the Alliance.

- A) Establish “Teacher Liaisons” with school districts to disseminate information about EE and ANJEE, they would be given free membership for the year they serve;
- B) Hold a second conference just for formal educators, in the fall;
- C) Offer a discount on membership to educators who attend a professional development workshop. (PLT, WILD, WET, Bridges...etc.);

- D) Create board positions for non-EE professions;
- E) Create a board whose sole role is fundraising and policy setting; (The EE practitioners would act as the Advisory council.)
- F) Build diverse relationships with EE and non-EE community;
- G) Subscribe to local business journals, then seek out their marketing people - they will use you to advertise themselves and you in the process;
- H) Everybody on your prospect list should get your newsletter; (Awareness to Action!)
- I) Board members should all be documented financial donors; and
- J) Connect formal and non-formal educators with each other. (You are the dating service!)

Not only were the affiliate members a great resource for sharing information and advice, they also were great company at restaurants throughout the remainder of the conference.

- Marc Rogoff



### Environmental Education Certification Program

NAAEE is seeking to establish a nationally accredited program that will certify non-formal environmental education professionals. This certification will be through NAAEE or through a partner, such as an affiliate or government agency in each state.

According to the draft guidelines established at this point, the certifying agent should be a coalition of stakeholder groups which includes the NAAEE affiliate, that oversees the content, evaluation, certification requirements, policies and administration of the program.

Before the program is established, a needs assessment should be conducted to determine who, what and why certification is appropriate for New Jersey.

Once the decision to develop a certification program is made, the following steps should be followed:

1. Determine which agency will issue certification;
2. Create an advisory board (if not already established);
3. Ensure competency based criteria such as standards and rubrics; and
4. Develop the structure, funding mechanism, and staff to oversee the day-to-day issues.

NAAEE recommends that a minimum fee of \$100.00 be set for certification applications.

The following themes represent the minimal competencies that must be demonstrated by the candidates for certification recognized by NAAEE. (From “*Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators*”, 2004):

- Environmental Literacy
- Foundations of Environmental Education
- Professional Responsibilities of the Environmental Educator
- Planning and Implementing EE
- Fostering Learning
- Assessment and Evaluation

According to participants at the workshops, four states have established an existing certification program and nine states are in the process of establishing their own guidelines.

For more information about the program, go to <http://naaee.org>.

- Marc Rogoff