

WINTER 2006

Independent Evaluator Gives O'Neill Sea Odyssey Top Scores

By Laura Barnes, Education Coordinator

Last year O'Neill Sea Odyssey worked with Applied Survey Research, a local non-profit research firm, to revise the surveys we use to evaluate our program. Our goal was to get a more in depth look at how much our students are learning from the program and how teachers are using the learning materials we provide to teach environmental education in the classroom. At the end of the school year, ASR provided us with an in depth analysis of these surveys.

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State Study: Positive Impact of Outdoor Education

By Laura Barnes, Education Coordinator



Sea Odyssey students take compass bearings as part of the navigation station onboard the Team O'Neill catamaran.

“Many who do not do well in a classroom setting, excel at outdoor science school. They are able to gain a wealth of background knowledge we use for nearly every other academic area.” This quote is from a teacher whose class participated in a research study funded under mandate of California Assembly Bill 1330 entitled “The Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California”.

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Americans Want To Protect the Environment, Give Them The Tools

By Bridget O'Neill and Jack O'Neill

Founders, Chair and Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, O'Neill Sea Odyssey

A recent Harris Poll made an astonishing finding: that 74% of adults in the United States agree that “protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost.”

47% agree that “there is too little government regulation and involvement in the area of environmental protection.” These attitudes are significantly more pro-environment than in 2000, the last time Harris Interactive examined these issues. The survey was conducted prior to hurricanes Katrina and Rita, some additional focus on

“74% of adults in the United States agree that protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high”

What these survey results protect our water, air, soil becoming a priority for

of environmental degradation grows. But what does that mean? Just because Americans believe that protecting the environment is important does not mean that there will automatically be improvements in how to protect our natural resources.

To improve our environment, citizens must be given the tools necessary to do the job. The first tool needed is knowledge. For water quality, that includes knowing how watersheds work, that they are systems by which water flows downhill to rivers or to aquifers, eventually to the sea. O'Neill Sea Odyssey teaches youth how watersheds work and gives them practical tools to protect water quality.

Providing the knowledge necessary for citizens to protect the environment is the work of educators, including those at O'Neill Sea Odyssey. As popular sentiment to protect the environment grows, we hope that a strong commitment is made to hands-on environmental education, including programs like O'Neill Sea Odyssey. Our future depends on it.

tell us is that the need to and our ozone layer is Americans as evidence

UNITED WAY HONORS WEBSTERS AS “COMMUNITY HEROES”



Tom and Judy Webster, longtime OSO volunteers who have spearheaded the Adam Webster Memorial Fund, were named “Community Heroes” by the Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project and the United Way. They were honored in the category of “Children with special needs will have access to a full range of educational, social and community opportunities.” Tom and Judy received their award in November, 2005.



Dear O'Neill Sea Odyssey Crew,
 I really enjoyed your trip. It was
 the best field trip I've ever been on.
 I really enjoyed marine biology, ecology
 and navigation. The catamaran was
 amazing! I also liked the followups
 on land. I appreciated being able to
 come on this great trip.

Sincerely,
 Skyler Lewis

Independent Evaluator Continued from pg. 1

The results of the survey analysis for the 2004/2005 school year showed the highest overall score that our program has ever received. Teachers and educators who attended our program unanimously gave OSO 100% top ratings in the 'Overall learning experience' category, while the rest of the learning stations placed well above the 90th percentile for positive results. The new survey also reported that more teachers are visiting our web site to utilize the pre and post trip educational materials. In 2004/2005 67% of teachers that participated in our program used OSO activities and curricula from our web site to bring more environmental education into their classrooms. That number jumped up from only 28% of web site users in 2002.

OSO staff and crew are proud of our success, and we look forward to using the suggestions and comments from our surveys to help us develop the program for future students. OSO remains dedicated to helping teachers reach their educational goals by providing free marine education that is aligned with National and State educational standards in natural sciences and mathematics.

To receive a copy of the analysis, please contact Laura Barnes at lbarnes@oneillseaodyssey.org.

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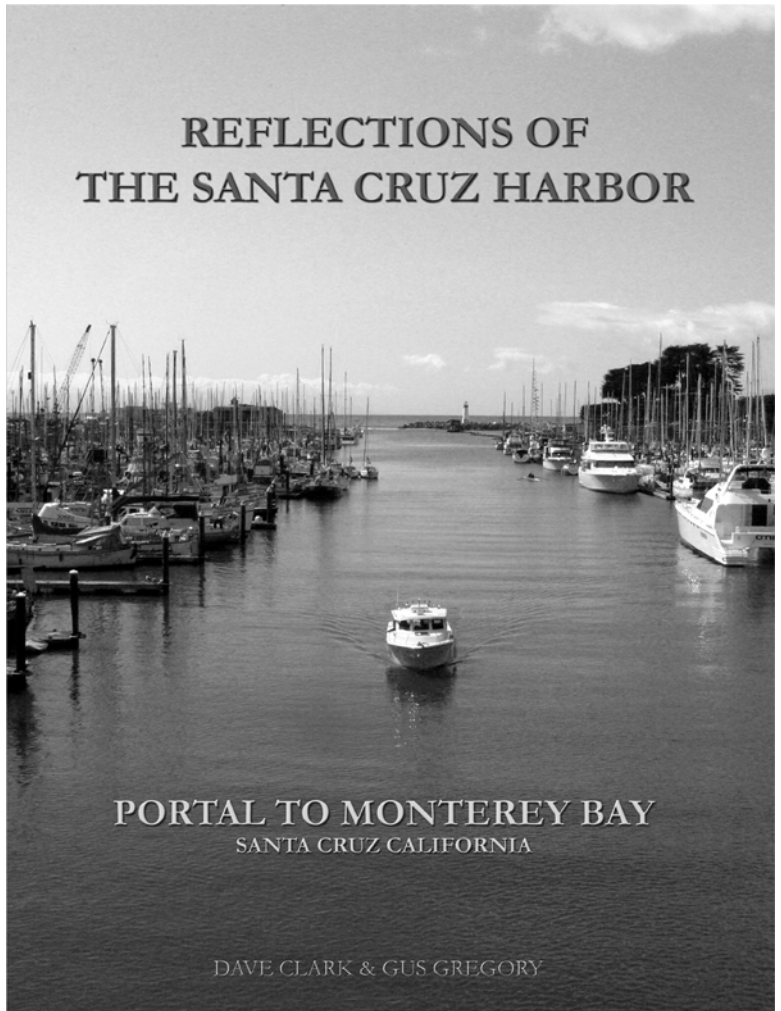
AB 1330 was carried by Senator Joe Simitian, a member of O'Neill Sea Odyssey's advisory board, who worked with the Sierra Club Youth In Wilderness program and OSO Director Dan Haifley. The final version of the bill as signed by the Governor sought to investigate the results of outdoor education programs in California. The study surveyed teachers, parents and students before, immediately after, and six to ten weeks after their outdoor science camp.

The AB 1330 study focused on 255 sixth grade students from four California schools that participated in a weeklong residential outdoor education program. Like OSO, these outdoor ed programs utilize hands-on education and have curricula that align with the California State Science Framework and the California Academic Content Standards for Science. Also like OSO, the outdoor schools used in the study have activities to help their students understand the role of humans as participants in their ecosystem, developing their skills, attitudes, knowledge, and commitments concerning the natural world.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. The study showed that students who participated in outdoor education improved their science scores 27%. They also found that the students perform better in classroom science, get along better with their peers, change their behavior toward taking care of the environment and have more general interest in science when they participate in outdoor science school. The most shocking statistic uncovered by this study is that 56% of the participating students reported that outdoor school represented the first time they had spent time in a natural setting.

The staff and crew of O'Neill Sea Odyssey have been aware for years that there is a growing disconnection between children and the natural world. For many elementary school children, especially at risk students, their educational world consists of sterile classrooms, paved playgrounds and video science lessons. Children's home lives are increasingly driven by television, video games and computers that hold more interest and entertainment value

HARBOR BOOK ON SALE



Harbor neighbor Gus Gregory and local photographer Dave Clark have produced a beautiful photo book about the Santa Cruz Harbor. *Reflections of the Santa Cruz Harbor: Portal to Monterey Bay*, released in December 2005, is a beautiful photographic essay and a great education tool about the purpose of the Harbor, its economic impact, and its unique role in the region. Proceeds from the book benefit O'Neill Sea Odyssey. The books are on sale at the Capitola Book Café, Bookshop Santa Cruz, Aquarius Boat Yard, Bayside Marine, Made In Santa Cruz, Trinideli, Surf City Catamarans or at www.oneillseaodyssey.org.

for them than the natural environment. Public schools limit the amount of time students can spend outside the classroom and are restricted further by lack of funding, insurance costs and concerns about liability incurred during outdoor ed. Teachers do their best, but with increased pressure to deliver successful test scores, the natural environment often gets left behind. This tragedy

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is detrimental not only to the student's education, but to the environment itself.

The AB1330 study was concluded with this summary; "Findings from this study suggest that outdoor education programs may contribute to academic leaning and social development for at-risk students in ways that cannot be duplicated within the classroom environment. The preliminary results from this study, along with the potential for long-term benefits for students and cost savings to the state, make a strong case for continued support, possible expansion and a further study of outdoor education programs for at-risk students."

Communities that support integrating outdoor education into our classrooms give their children the gift of perspective and real life skills that can lead to long-term academic success. By supporting environmental education we provide for both our children and our environment.

Comerica Bank Pitches In



O'Neill Sea Odyssey Executive Director Dan Haifley receives check from Comerica Bank's First Vice President Reed Geisreiter.

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WINTER 2006

OSO Board Expands

In December 2005, the Board of Directors of O'Neill Sea Odyssey elected Bridget O'Neill as Chair, and Founder Jack O'Neill will serve as Co-Chair. Joining the Board this year will be long-time supporters Steve John, and Dr. James Beckett. Mr. John is the proprietor of Ocean Honda Chevrolet and has long been involved in community affairs including a just completed term as President of the Cabrillo College Foundation. Ocean Honda Chevrolet was recognized as 2005 "Business of the Year" by the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce. James Beckett, M.D., is a board certified Dermatologist at the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic. He was recently presented with the Stripes Award for HealthCaring, presented annually by the William S. Graham Foundation for Melanoma Research and is given to an individual for his or her "service and dedication" in the health field as it pertains to melanoma. Dr. Beckett was recognized for his efforts providing skin cancer screenings and his work educating the youth of Santa Cruz County about sun safety. Beckett and John will join continuing Board members Donna Blitzer, Dr. Jack McLaughlin, Rep. Sam Farr, Robert Bremner, Shannon Brady, Jack O'Neill, Bridget O'Neill, Tim O'Neill, Mike McCabe, and Nicholas P. Petredis.

PG&E, Bancorp, Sobrato, Applied Materials Named Top Silicon Valley Donors

Pacific Gas and Electric Company, which has been a strong supporter of O'Neill Sea Odyssey classes from Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Clara Counties, received top honors from the San Jose/Silicon Valley Business Journal on December 8, 2005, when it was named one of the top ten companies in corporate philanthropy in the region. Also named were past and ongoing OSO supporters Greater Bay Bancorp, which is the parent company of Coast Commercial Bank, Applied Materials, Adobe Systems and Sobrato Development Companies.

PG&E's support of our program began in 1998 when it provided one of the first grants, in conjunction with the Community Foundation for Santa Cruz County, for O'Neill Sea Odyssey's work. In 1999, PG&E President and CEO Gordon Smith, Public Affairs Area Director Mary Ellen Ittner, OSO Executive Director Dan Haifley and OSO Chair Jack O'Neill observed an OSO class and met to discuss potential partnerships. O'Neill Sea Odyssey thanks PG&E for its innovative approach to philanthropy, including its willingness to support our core program, and to support our watershed-based partnerships through the Nature Restoration Trust.

The Sobrato Family Foundation supported our core program in 2003, Applied Materials supported the development of our seven-minute video, Set Sail, Adobe Systems supported our program in 1999 and Coast Commercial Bank has been a long-time supporter of our work with area youth. Thank you!