



VASUDHA

SPRING 2016

NEWSLETTER

This semester, Vasudha continued to focus on furthering our community connections by collaborating in event creation and implementation alongside sponsoring a number of guest speakers who came on campus to speak about what they do in the environmental field.



Vasudha closed up the semester with participating in RPI's Earth Week 2016 by hosting an interactive workshop; Earth Week was a collaborative effort between student groups and RPI's STS department. We enjoyed having many of the Vasudha Residents stay actively engaged throughout the year, and hope they return to support the incoming class of 2021!

Lee Nelson was introduced to the Vasudha Residents in early February. As a graduate STS student, Lee was tasked to assist in planning out guest speakers for the semester. In the format of a community dinner with open discussion, Teaching and Learning Assistant Lee and Program Director Professor Mascarenhas headed over to the Vasudha classroom for a meal with the residents.



We prompted the Residents (current and former) to brainstorm what activities they would like to see happen with Vasudha and we came up with the following list:

- Vermicomposting
- Berry Bush Planting
- Canning Food
- Partnering with Oakwood Community Center
- Cricket Farming
- Beekeeping
- Hiking Outdoors
- Field Trip to the Radix Center
- Growing Microgreens

And thus were able to plan an agenda of sorts for the rest of the semester!

The first hands on workshop was one focused in teaching the concept of upcycling, or using conventional "trash" and re-purposing it as material to be used in the creation of SIPs, otherwise known as Sub-Irrigated Planters, and Plastic Yarn, which utilizes plastic bags and turns them into a material that can be knit and crocheted into water-proof durable goods.

A graphic for an upcycling workshop. It features a dark blue background with a pattern of diagonal green and dark blue stripes at the top. Below this, the text "UPCYCLING WORKSHOP" is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath the title, there is a horizontal band with a background of colorful, crumpled plastic bags. Overlaid on this band are two green rectangular boxes with white text. The top box contains the text "NASON 130 | 2/22 @7:30PM" and the bottom box contains "BE PREPARED TO CRAFT!". Two green arrow shapes point towards the text boxes from the left and right sides.

UPCYCLING WORKSHOP

NASON 130 | 2/22 @7:30PM

BE PREPARED TO CRAFT!

Some ideas that came from the workshop were:

- Creation of hanging upcycled planters
- Knitting and crocheting of plan to form durable and water resistant bags
- Ideas for a larger-scale compost-generating planter



We were able to construct some SIPs of our own! Sub-irrigated planters help optimize the amount of water for plants. Instead of constantly monitoring the moisture of the soil level, water at the bottom travels up the organic-based fibrous material, which then allows the soil to wick up moisture when needed.

How to make a SIP (Sub-Irrigated Planter)

Supplies to construct a basic SIP:

- Plastic drink bottle
- Blade to cut the bottle and puncture the cap
- Scissors
- Cotton string
- Water
- Soil
- Seeds

First, collect plastic bottles, clean the insides to ensure there is no drink residue, and remove any plastic labeling from the exterior.

Then cut off the top portion of the bottle where the tapered/ domed portion ends. You should have 2 bottle pieces now.

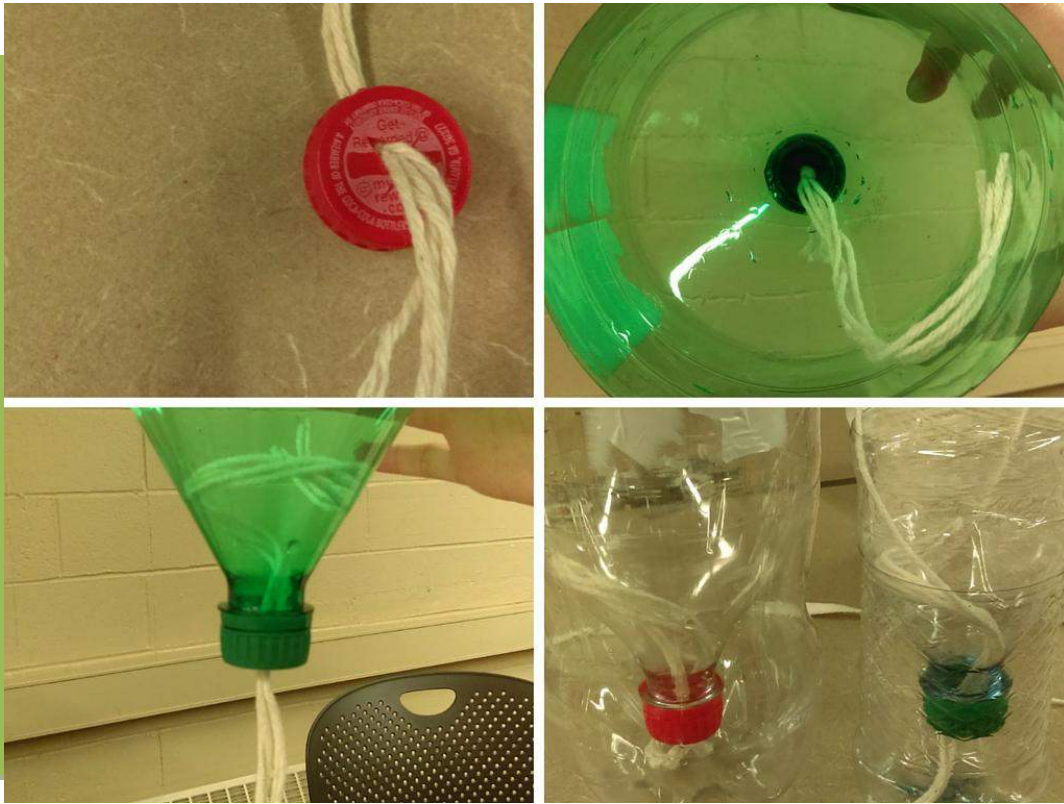
Remove the bottle cap and carefully slice and x- mark on the bottle cap.



Cut four strands of cotton string to lengths a bit over the height of the bottom portion of the bottle.

Knot the four strands of string securely together at one end with at least a 2-inch tail

Next, fit the string through the bottle cap so that the knot is positioned in the inner top of the cap and position the four branching strings outwards with the 2-inch tail coming out of the top of the cap.



Secure the cap back onto the top portion of the bottle, and invert the top portion of the bottle so that it sits inside the bottom portion.

(Doing so will ensure that the soil does not fall into the bottom of the planter where the water is stored, and will allow the cotton string to siphon water from the reservoir to the soil when it gets dry, thus helping to regulate the moisture in the soil.)



Make sure the four cotton strands are able to travel up the length of the bottle, and place them equidistant from each other.

Fill the vessel with soil, and then place seeds accordingly. Lift the top portion, containing the soil and seeds, and fill the bottom with roughly an inch of water.

The cotton strands should be able to touch the water, but the cap should not be submerged. And your SIP is complete!

Vasudha Presents:
Spring 2016 Lecture Series

The Magnificent Honey Bee

By: Aaron Morris

3/2/16 | 5:30-7PM | Nason 130



Our first guest speaker for the semester was Aaron Morris, a certified Master Beekeeper Eastern Apicultural Society of North America, Inc. Mr. Morris has been keeping bees since 1976. He is currently a sideline beekeeper managing 150 hives specializing in nucleus colonies, package bees, honey production, beeswax candles, and private in-hive instruction.

Mr. Morris was able to share his wealth of knowledge about beekeeping, how he no longer needs gloves when interacting with the hives, and even explained that the easiest way to start your own hive is to find a swarm that is migrating to a new location.

Students were able to sample some of the honey that he harvested himself, and asked question to the enthusiastic Mr. Morris about his passion for beekeeping.



Our second featured guest speaker was Mark Bettinger, the Eastern Organizing Director of the Sierra Club. Mr. Bettinger came to talk about about what the Sierra Club does in order to address 21st Century environmental challenges.

Mr. Bettinger shared how he initially got involved with the Sierra Club, what his role entails, and how to get youth involved. Attendees were able to eat dinner with him and ask in a discussion-based format.



NASON 130
5:30-7PM
3/27/16

VASUDHA SPRING 2016 SPEAKER SERIES PRESENTS:
MOVEMENT BUILDING & A THEORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

FEATURING
MARK BETTINGER, EASTERN REGION
ORGANIZING DIRECTOR
THE SIERRA CLUB

This event, as well as the Magnificent Honey Bee, were made possible with contributions from the Vollmer Fries Fund.

For a second year, Vasudha partnered with Oakwood Community Center to plan and facilitate their monthly Soul Cafe Dinner. The Soul Cafe is based on a pay-what-you-can model, where the community is welcomed into the center on 10th and Hoosick to come together to share a monthly meal.

The food is prepared by community members, local chefs, and volunteers, as well as other community groups. The ingredients are sourced through the culling of goods from grocery stores in the area, such as Honest Weight Food Coop and Price Chopper.

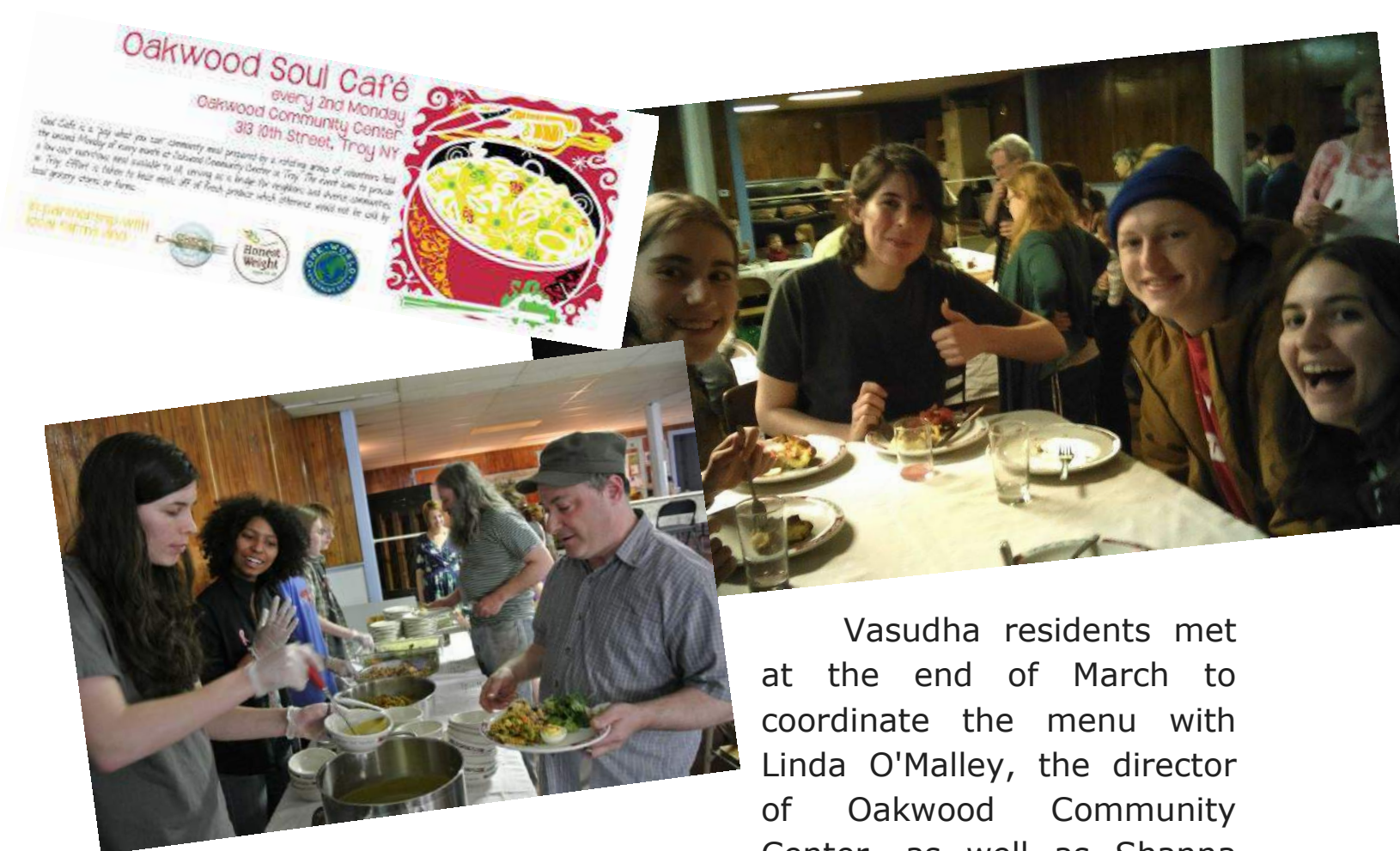


Oakwood Soul Cafe

CO-HOSTED BY VASUDHA

MONDAY, APRIL 11TH | 6-8PM | 313 10TH STREET, TROY NY

In the pooling of resources, each month features a unique meal that feeds upwards of 80 people. Many families attend and it is a fantastic way to get our residents off campus and more actively involved in the greater Troy community.



Vasudha residents met at the end of March to coordinate the menu with Linda O'Malley, the director of Oakwood Community Center, as well as Shanna

Goldman and Kizzi Casale. Our meal consisted of toasted bread and fresh tomato bruschetta, vegetarian and vegan quiche with roasted vegetables, and vegan banana ice cream, which was a big hit with the kids.

We then came the Sunday prior to the meal to cull the produce and prepare the food so that on Monday all we would have to do was heat and serve the food. While Vasudha Sophomores stopped by to help serve and eat the food, we enjoyed seeing familiar and new faces at the event, including RPI

STS faculty Professor Brandon Costelloe-Kuehn and Professor Abby Kinchy. The event was a success!

This year, we also used the event as an opportunity to promote RPI's Earth Week Kick-off on the following Saturday, which was an event open to not only RPI students but the surrounding community. We wanted more families to be present in celebrating Earth Day as well as have a more active presence off campus.



(Logo designed by Siobhan Bailey, RPI Class of 2017, Vasudha Alumn)

Rensselaer's Earth Week Celebration started off with Earth Week Kick Off Saturday on April 16th, which aimed to celebrate and showcase environmental education and stewardship – welcoming kids, families and the entire community. There was music and dance performances, workshops, games, sports activities, and learning kiosks, all run by various environmental student groups.

Vasudha residents participated in the Kick-Off Festivities by volunteering to help get everything setup. The Kick Off Day event, which ran from 9:30AM-4PM, was a great way for elementary and middle school students to interact with and learn

from RPI students. Throughout the week of April 16th-22nd, there were multiple workshops, documentary screenings followed with discussions, guest panels to talk about local environmental issues, radio broadcasts and much more!



VASUDHA PRESENTS: How to Can w/ the ASA!

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20TH | 5-6:30PM | NASON 130

On April 20th, for our Earth Week event, Vasudha welcomed Katie and Ashley from the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) for a workshop on vegetable canning and butter making. They shared with us what the ASA does to help preserve farmland and protect it and the farmers from development in the upstate area.



Katie and Ashley taught attendees how make butter using only mason jars, and we pickled various vegetables. This hands-on workshop was a hit and we hope to volunteer with and have the ASA back in the future.



The festivities culminated with Ecologic's Annual Earth Fest, located on the Union Patio. Vasudha tabled with Terra Cafe to serve some of the lettuce we grew in the raised beds outside Nason, along with the butter and pickled vegetables made in the Canning workshop two days prior. Earth Week definitely had a larger impact on RPI's campus this year, and we hope to be more involved in the implementation in future years.



The Bring Your Own reusable Bottle Campaign was an initiative between Vasudha, RPI Student Senate, and RPI's WeRGold to reduce the amount of plastic water bottles sold and used on campus through the implementation of upright water bottle filling stations around campus.

In order to secure funds for the project, Vasudha appealed to more than 100+ student groups to pre-order a reusable water bottle. The profits generated from this fundraiser would go directly to building the upright water filling stations. Student Organizations that had roughly 80% of their body participate would have their names featured on the back of these bottles.

After securing funding, two upright water bottle filling stations were established on campus. With the model of a WeRGold Campaign set up around this initiative, there is the possibility for more stations being built around campus in the near future.

The first two stations were established in the Renssealer Union in the McNeil Room, and the second is on the 3rd floor of Sage Laboratories. These upright water filling stations also count how many bottles of water are filled, thus equating to the amount of plastic bottles diverted from the waste stream. Upright water bottle filling stations encourage RPI students to reuse and refill their bottles, as it is much more efficient to have a vertical stream of water to refill bottles. Pictured we have Vasudha residents who are happy to promote the campaign with these special water bottles.



The Vasudha residents for the 2015-2016 school year were actively engaged in promoting sustainability on campus. They had inspiring ideas and took the next steps to continue being active in environmental movements through becoming active members in various environmental groups, such as Ecologic, SSTF, Terra Cafe, and the Society of Environmental Professionals. We can't wait to see where their next few years at RPI lead them, and hope they come back in the fall for our annual Welcome Back BBQ on the Nason Patio.



Rensselaer