

The ReSET Report

Retired Scientists, Engineers & Technicians

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Shipboard Class Brings Aquatic Science to Life

The capstone of each ReSET elementary school program is a field trip for students to a site related to the field of study the Volunteer has pursued. On four different occasions last term, students from ReSET classes set sail on the Half Shell, an historic Chesapeake Bay oyster boat.

As part of its expanded environmental science program, supported by the Toyota USA Foundation, ReSET was able for the first time to provide students with this unique field experience – science cruises on the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. More cruises are planned for Spring 2010.

The boat is operated by Living Classrooms Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides interdisciplinary and environmental education programs in Washington and Baltimore.

After each group of 20-25 students and parent volunteers boarded the Half Shell in Southwest DC, students were instructed on boat safety rules

and strapped on life vests. As the Half Shell motored from the Washington Ship Channel toward the Potomac, students were divided into groups and learning stations were set up on different parts of the deck. As one group dissected clams and learned about the functions of their different body parts, another took a river water sample. Water quality tests were run and microscopic plants and animals were examined.

At another station, students dropped a sampler to the river bottom to investigate the organisms that live in the benthic zone. One of the groups joined the Captain in the pilot house where each student took a turn at the steering wheel.



Students from Capitol Hill Center City Public Charter School examine Anacostia River fish caught on a cruise earlier this year.

After the groups rotated through the learning stations, they threw a drift net with floats attached overboard and trawled for fish. Using a scientific classification key, students identified the species of fish they netted before releasing them back into the river.

The Half Shell provides an experience for students that captures the essence of ReSET's philosophy – science is indeed fun!

Record Numbers for ReSET Programs

The 2009-10 school year is shaping up to be the most active in ReSET history. Twenty-five volunteers are working in elementary schools this term, nine of them leading ReSET programs for the first time. Before this the largest number of volunteers

in schools at one time was 17, in the Fall of 2007. Programs are underway in 16 schools, 4 more than our previous high. The new ReSET schools are:

- Center City Public Charter School—Congress Heights, DC
- Washington Lab School, DC
- Jackson Road Elementary School, Montgomery County, MD
- Greenbrier Learning Center, Arlington, VA.

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Science Quiz Answer:

NASA scientist Jim Hansen believes that an atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide that continues to exceed 350 parts per million will result in dangerous global warming for our planet. The rallies called for action on global climate change. Right now, the concentration of CO₂ is 390 ppm. Check out www.350.org for details.

For more information on the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen:

<http://en.cop15.dk/>



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A Rally Big Show...

On October 24, more than 5,200 rallies were organized around the world by a group called 350.org. What is the genesis of the name?

...See inside for answer

ReSET Ramps up Recruitment Efforts This Year

A large turnout and lively discussions marked ReSET's August Volunteer Fair at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Northwest, DC.

Several current volunteers demonstrated their experiments and shared the how-to's of tackling the classroom setting with prospective volunteers. Experiments included such favorites as measuring electricity ("I just bought a \$20 meter from Radio Shack," says Mike Fitzmaurice) and witnessing the contraction of gases as water cools in a plastic bottle.

Perhaps even more helpful to the newcomers was the exchange of tips on everything from experiment supplies (balloons vs. condoms?) to building camaraderie and passion in the students. Long-time volunteer Bob Blumberg recommended bring-



Current and future volunteers share insights on ReSET programs at the August Volunteer Fair.

ing a folder filled with a notebook, pens, and other small items. "It reinforces in the kids' minds that you are interested in them as students," says Blumberg. "And it costs very little."

In addition to the Volunteer Fair, recent efforts to recruit additional volunteers include ReSET booths at the Beacon Expo, hosted by the local senior-oriented newspaper, at Temple Beth Ami's Wholeness and Health Expo, and at the US Environmental Protection Agency's Diversity Action Day.

Another target audience for ReSET outreach is the local education community. Volunteer Mary Jo Redding and ReSET Executive Director John Meagher staffed the ReSET display at DC Teachers' Back to School Night at the US Botanic Gardens. ReSET's Harold Sharlin and Roberta Goren participated in The Center for Minority Achievement in Science and Technology's Education Showcase and Networking Event at Constitution Center in Southwest DC.