



## Environmental Education Council Builds Bridges

By Rachel Stern, Science Interchange Reporter

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With the theme of "Building Bridges," the fourth annual Environmental Education Council of Marin meeting linked a variety of people and ideas. Held in the Pickleweed Park Community Center of the Canal District on May 3, it brought together a group of over two hundred individuals. Whether they were teachers, students, volunteers, or local residents of the Canal, they came equipped with ideas for the betterment of the environment and society.

"I was inspired by the huge turnout of people from fairly diverse walks of life," said Scott Fierabend, executive director of the Marin Conservation League. Fierabend, who moved to Marin from Alaska six months ago, has been trying to involve more youth with his work. His goal of diversification of age was a common one.

Karen Heys, outreach director of the Headlands Institute, came to the meeting partially to gain more contacts with teachers so that she could expand the high school environmental leadership program she works with. She was impressed by the communication that went on between people.

"This was really a meeting: people meeting people," she said. "They were celebrating their successes, and getting inspiration to go on from here."

Indeed, the meeting provided many opportunities for people to interact. It started off with a green vendor fair where earth-friendly vendors displayed their products. To end the meeting, everyone divided into small groups of environmental and community members to identify the issues that face Marin and the Canal District. The top three issues identified were water quality, transportation and education.

"Many people think of the natural built community and the human built community as two separate things," said Sandy Wallenstein, executive director of the Environmental Education Council of Marin. "The two are interlinked. If you get people housing, there's no point if the air they breathe is poisonous, and the water they drink isn't healthy."

There were other highlights of the meeting. Hilda Castillo, a Latino leader who has helped connect EECOM with leaders from the Canal and Marin City, welcomed everyone. Huey Johnson, who among numerous other achievements is the recent recipient of the U.N. Environmental Programme Sasakawa Environmental Prize, spoke about the interconnectedness of all environmental issues. The Earth Day Every Day Awards Ceremony honored local businesses and individuals who played a large role in helping the environment with grants.

After the awards, there was a five minute intermission for people to enjoy organic food and chat with old and new faces.

"I think that this was a wonderful effort by EECOM," said Feirabend. "It was a great idea to try and marry environmental groups, professional environmentalists and volunteers who have real life concerns in their neighborhood and community. I hope that there are successful outcomes."

Wallenstein agreed. "I'm hoping the meeting was the beginning of ongoing community relations so that we can join all the[social and environmental] movements together. We can really empower the community."

## RESOURCES:

Marin Conservation League: [www.conservationleague.org](http://www.conservationleague.org) or contact Scott Fierabend at (415)485-6257.

For more information on Karen's outreach program "TEAM," contact her at [hi@yni.org](mailto:hi@yni.org) or Dan Zucker at (415)332-5771.