



## Quinnipiac River Journey 2004 Program Outcome Report

**Overall Program Goal:** to engage local youth in the exploration and public education of the Quinnipiac River through hands on exploration, community service and teaching others.

**Specific goals:** (1. *Kids Explore!*) Youth spend four days learning to canoe and exploring the Quinnipiac River watershed, guided by Schooner Inc. (2. *Kids Do!*) Youth identify a specific environmental issue they encountered during their exploration and devise a plan to help ameliorate it. (3. *Kids Teach!*) Three Fall meetings of the youth are used to review their journey and plan and execute a project to teach others about the knowledge they gained.

### **Summary**

During the week of August 16-20<sup>th</sup> six self-selected youth from pervious Solar Youth programs ages 9-14 participated in the Quinnipiac River Journey. During this time as part of *Kids Explore!* the children learned from the Schooner Sound Learning Staff about the history, ecology and uses of the Quinnipiac River and other rivers within the local area watershed and watershed of Long Island Sound. The last day of that week the group selected Criscuolo Park at the confluence of the Quinnipiac and Mill Rivers to do a clean-up as part of the *Kids Do!* phase of the project. The youth also wanted to create a poster explaining the ills of littering as a part of their Community Service Action Project. They began brainstorming a poster to help teach others by drawing of how the river appeared clean and polluted, connecting cleaning up and not littering to a better environment. The final *Kids Teach!* project was created in addition to the creation of the poster. The students created a River Bingo game in which prewritten questions are drawn and players put a “chip” over a picture on their card that answers the question. Students then presented to the Solar Youth, Inc. Neighborhood Steward Team Educators and Interns so that they could bring the game with them to their programs and play it with their participants.

### **Demographics:**

**Youth Registered:** 7

**Youth that attended four or more days:** 5

**Gender:** 4 male 3 Female **Race/Ethnicity:** Caucasian: 1 African American: 5 Latino:1

### **Week Narrative:**

We met 8:30am-3:00pm Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and 8:30am-12:00pm on Aug. 20<sup>th</sup>

#### **Monday, Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>**

As the program began inclement weather prevented the group even getting the canoes off of the trailer. Instead, the group returned to the Solar Youth office and participated in an activity lead by the Schooner Sound Learning staff illustrating the properties of a watershed as well as impacts that humans can have on a river and each other.

### **From the Youth:**

“We was about to learn how to canoe but it started to rain so we had to go back to the school. When we was at the school we played a game about if we were to decorate our own town where would we put the stuff at. Near the river or far away from the river.”

### **Tuesday, Aug. 17<sup>th</sup>**

Because of the extreme novice level of most of the program participants the location of Lake Wintergreen was selected as a safe location to learn the basics of canoeing. The group learned basic strokes and practiced capsizing drills lead by the Schooner staff.

#### **From the Youth:**

“[W]ent canoeing and we learn[ed] some strokes for canoeing.”

“We learned the different strokes and techniques about canoeing. We actually got into the canoe. We also learned how to capsize. It was fun. We canoed all day.”

### **Wednesday, Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>**

This day the group traveled to the Banton St. canoe launch in North Haven and canoed the river to another launch site on Sackett Point Rd. behind Tilcon in North Haven. Along the way changes in industrialization, amount of pollution, and usability of land were pointed out. Also attention was drawn to plant and animal life signs as they occurred along the river.

#### **From the Youth:**

“We went to the [Q]uinnipiac River and we canoe[ed] for a long time. We saw lots of things. Some of us fell in the water.”

“We was canoeing for hours. [W]e couldn’t go to the bathroom...It was a long river.”

### **Thursday, Aug. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Again, due to inclement weather this day we journeyed a portion of the West River as an example of a similar system. We canoed from the West River Memorial Park to a point in Edgewood Park where we took riffle samples using a D-net. As part of the second portion of the day we returned to the Schooner Office and identified the creatures we collected using dissecting microscopes. Participants also learned how the organisms they found were an indication of the quality of the river water.

#### **From the Youth:**

“[W]ent canoeing on another river. [W]hile we was canoeing we saw a water that stink and that bubbles that comes up.”

“We couldn’t get up the river because the wind was pulling us back. It was fun but it was very very, hard.”

### **Friday, Aug. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Since the group was unable to canoe the lower portion of the Quinnipiac due to water constraints we took a van to the Quinnipiac River Park to observe the differences in land use and the water itself closer to the harbor. We then traveled to the Criscoulo Park where at the confluence of the Mill and Quinnipiac Rivers. We did a clean-up of the area around the overlook portion of the park. We then returned to the Solar Youth office and began reviewing our journey and the students drafted a poster that described the impact of their clean-up.

#### **Fall Meetings**

The Q River Journey group had 3 subsequent meetings this Fall. On September 17<sup>th</sup> participants designed the two Kids Teach! projects—1. the poster; and 2. A game of “River Bingo” that uses knowledge questions as a twist on the game of Bingo. The group was unable to attend West Rock Park Day (October 2<sup>nd</sup>) due to roadblocks for an unannounced road race hosted by Southern CT State University. The blocks prevented both the youth and staff from being able to set up their initially

planned table at the event. The group was able to reconvene on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Participating youth practiced for their presentation for the team educators and interns of the Solar Youth Neighborhood Steward Teams enabling them to play the game with their teams and pass out the posters. The journey, game and poster to the Solar Youth staff on October 22<sup>nd</sup> with great success. Over the next two seasons the game will be played with potentially 150 New Haven youth participating in Solar Youth programs. Additionally, the game will be used over the next year and beyond at events that Solar Youth is able to host a table. Furthermore, the posters will be distributed to over 2,000 youth over the next year via Solar Youth's programming, schools and other youth organizations that have access to the River.

## **Challenges**

During this program there were two major challenges—participation and weather. The original plan was to have 10 participants. Recruitment took place during the final week of the Solar Youth Summer Program. Due to the inability to find transportation and scheduling conflicts only 7 youth were officially registered for the program. Six youth actually attended. One attended only one day, unable to overcome her fear of the water. This gave us a core group of five youth participating the majority of the week. If the program were to run in the future, recruiting must happen further in advance.

The original grant also indicated each day of the week would have the group at a new point along the Quinnipiac River. However, because of the ability level of the group it was determined that Wintergreen Lake would be a better training location. Unfortunately, thunderstorms made it impossible to begin training on Monday. The group instead participated in an activity lead by the Schooner staff explaining watersheds and training began on Tuesday. The remainder of the week was plagued by harsh remnants of hurricanes preventing the group from spending most days on the Quinnipiac River safely. Instead, it led to the exploration of more of the West River watershed.

## **Review of the Journey Youth Responses**

### **For our C-SAP we decided to:**

“Clean up around the river and we did a poster.”

“Clean up near a river and pick up all the trash.”

### **My favorite part of the week was when:**

“We [capsized] ***FOR FUN*** and it was on purpose.”

“We [capsized] on [T]uesday[‘s] trip...I got wet a lot and it was fun.”

### **My least favorite part of the week was:**

“On the Q River because I also fell in the water and it was cold.”

“When we [capsized] and it ***wasn't fun*** it wasn't on purpose.”

### **Some things that I liked that we saw on the river were:**

“I like the fishes, the birds and the stuff living in the river.”

“[T]he turtle, rocks and little fishes”

### **Some things that I saw on the river that I didn't like were:**

“I didn't like all the trash.”