

Hudson Highlands Regional River of Words Program

PRESENTED BY:
HUDSON HIGHLANDS LAND TRUST

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LAND TRUST

**Connecting Local Kids to
the Hudson River
Watershed, their
Imaginations & the World
through Poetry & Art . . .**



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ABOUT HUDSON HIGHLANDS LAND TRUST

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) seeks to protect the natural resources, rural character, and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands through land conservation, advocacy, environmental analysis, public education, and the promotion of sound, long-term planning. HHLT has preserved more than 1,300 acres in its twenty-year history. As a vital part of our mission, we seek to work in partnership with local public schools to find ways to better connect children with nature.

ABOUT THE RIVER OF WORDS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

River of Words (ROW) (www.riverofwords.org) is an international poetry and art program created to promote literacy and environmental stewardship. Affiliated with the Library of Congress Center for the Book and co-founded by US Poet Laureate Robert Hass, ROW sponsors a free annual environmental poetry and art contest on the theme of watersheds, open to children ages 5 to 19. Since 1995, River of Words has trained teachers, park naturalists, grassroots groups, state resource agencies, librarians and others to incorporate observation-based nature exploration and the arts into their work with young people. In addition to helping improve children's literacy—and cognitive skills like investigation and critical thinking—River of Words' multidisciplinary,

hands-on approach to education nurtures students' creative voices as well, through instruction and practice in art and poetry.

THE HHLT REGIONAL ROW PROGRAM

HHLT sponsors and administers a regional version of the River of Words program for the schools in the Hudson Highlands region using the resources and materials of the national program to focus on our own watershed -- the Hudson River. The program consists of the following components:

- Annual regional program workshop(s) and in-district training sessions for educators, providing a foundation for incorporating this program seamlessly into existing curriculum.
- A variety of in-class student workshops and outdoor field study experiences conducted by our program team in collaboration with class teachers that educate on environmental science, poetry writing and local history and inspire students to participate by creating a body of work inspired by the Hudson River watershed.
- Culminating events including poetry readings and displays in community settings, the publication of a Hudson Highlands Regional River of Words anthology and a conduit for students to participate in ROW's international contest.

The HHLT Hudson Highlands River of Words Program

Connecting Local Kids to the Hudson River Watershed, their Imaginations & the World through Poetry & Art . . .

GOALS & ELIGIBILITY

By developing and managing a regional River of Words program, HHLT hopes to bring this extraordinary program to the Hudson Highlands region, creating a collaborative connection between area school districts focusing on local environmental study. This program can provide a forum for students to connect with each other thoughtfully and creatively through a common theme: the Hudson River.

Launched as a pilot program beginning in the '08-09 school year, the HHLT Regional ROW program will expand to a full scale program in the '09-10 school year. Fourth and fifth grades in the following school districts are eligible to participate:

Haldane — Garrison — Putnam Valley — Cornwall — Highland Falls/Fort Montgomery

The aim of the HHLT Hudson Highlands Regional River of Words Program's is to educate, collaborate, and celebrate the natural resources and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands with children throughout the region and instill a sense of the importance of stewardship in our youngest residents.

HHLT HUDSON HIGHLANDS REGIONAL RIVER OF WORDS PROGRAM TEAM

LISA MECHALEY, HHLT Program Manager & Interpretive Naturalist — Lisa Mechaley has a quarter century of experience in education, including 18 years teaching science to 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders at Eagle Hill, Greenwich Country Day and Rippowam Cisca School. She also spent 6 years as an environmental educator working with children and adults at Teatown Lake Reservation, Eliot Pratt Education Center, Greenwich Audubon, and College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor Maine. Lisa was also a staff developer for Bank Street College, where she ran workshops for elementary-school teachers at Tiorati, Bank Street's environmental outreach station in Harriman State Park and also helped run a graduate course in science education there.

RICHARD PARISIO, River of Words NYS Coordinator — Rich Parisio has worked as an interpretive naturalist for over thirty years. He presented a paper, "The First Cut From the Log," about John Burroughs' art of finding things in nature, at the 1995 Slabsides Centennial

conference. He regularly leads tours of Slabsides and nature walks at the John Burroughs Sanctuary for school classes and other groups. His own poetry has been published in *Hard Row to Hoe*, the *Woodstock Journal*, and two regional anthologies.

IRENE O'GARDEN, Poetry-Writing Instructor — Irene O'Garden's children's book **The Scrubbly Bubbly Car Wash** (Harper) won the 2004 Gold Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Best Book Award. Harper also printed her first children's book, **Maybe My Baby**, which has sold over 86,000 copies. National magazines and literary journals publish Irene's poetry, which has also been dramatized on the Off-Broadway stage. Irene has extensive experience teaching poetry to children, from New York City to the Hudson Valley. She has also presented at Children's Literature Conferences at NYU and Vassar College. In addition to publishing books and plays for adults, she has been awarded several grants for poetry performance.

CATHY BAKKER, Interpretive Naturalist — Having recently completed a dual Masters in Elementary Education/

Special Education from Fordham University and an internship at Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, Cathy is presently an interpretive naturalist and "Eco Mom" at the Garrison School for which she is building the sustainable living curriculum. She is an outdoor enthusiast and views her involvement in the HHLT ROW program as a wonderful vehicle through which she can pursue her love of the outdoors and lifelong interest in environmental education.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

NANCY BERNER, HHLT Board Member

JEAN MARZOLLO, Award-winning Poet & Children's Author

MJ MARTIN, HHLT Director of Outreach & Development

For more information on implementing the HHLT ROW program in your school, please contact Lisa Mechaley, Program Manager, or MJ Martin, HHLT Outreach Director, at 845-424-3358.