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# NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River and the Watershed

Fall/Winter 2010

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## Celebrating Four Decades 40th NRPA Annual Meeting Highlights

The Narrow River Preservation Association held its 40th Annual Meeting on September 28th, 2010 at the Coastal Institute on the URI Bay Campus. The meeting offered a reminiscent stroll through NRPA's four decades of challenges and accomplishments in preserving the Narrow River. This was followed by a description of NRPA's recent activities—which shows how strong NRPA continues to be! The evening included a special presentation about the River.

The meeting kicked off with a brief business meeting, introduction of the NRPA Board of Directors, and presentation of the Youth Environmental Achievement Award. This year's Award was presented to Omar Zaki, a freshman at South Kingstown High School. Earlier this year while at Curtis Corner Middle School, Omar participated in his school's science fair and was awarded the NRPA Science Fair Award for his environmental project. After learning more about NRPA and our River Watch program, Omar decided to

become a volunteer monitor. He took the training course and monitored this season at Gilbert Stuart Stream. In addition to these activities, Omar volunteers his time as a Junior Docent at Gilbert Stuart Museum. NRPA recognizes Omar for his environmental awareness, dedicated service to the River Watch program and for his community volunteer contributions overall.

Next, Board Member Annette DeSilva highlighted the 19th year of River Watch. The program welcomed 9 new and 23 returning volunteers. Annette thanked all of the 2010 volunteers for their time and dedication.

The Annual Meeting included presentations by three NRPA Presidents. Dr. Ted Smayda, one of the founding members of NRPA and the first president, related the origins of the organization. His stories were about the impetus for starting the Association in 1970 and the ardor of the cause. Forty years ago, pressures to develop the pristine lands in the northern

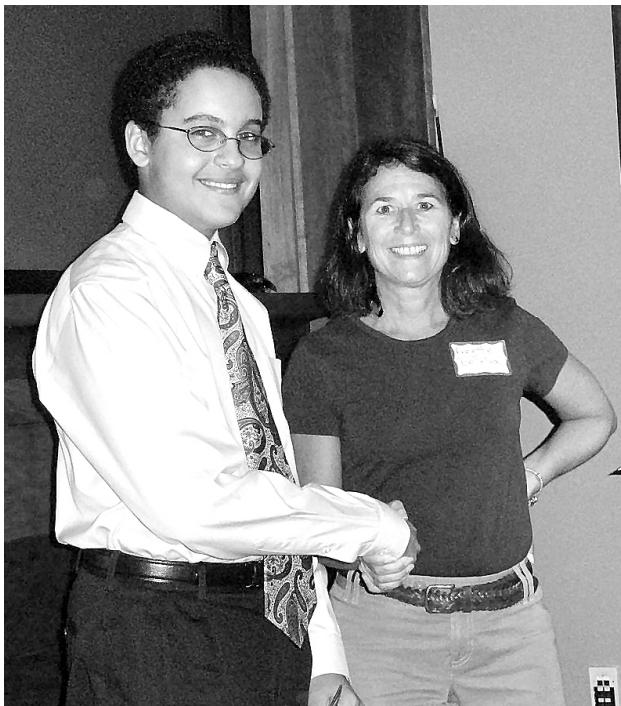
parts of the Narrow River Watershed were high and NRPA members had their work cut out for them. The successes of the founding members can be enjoyed today with large expanses of undeveloped spaces still bordering the River in North Kingstown, Narragansett, and South Kingstown. Ted stated that he was

proud to be a part of a cause that has perpetuated for four decades. In closing Ted donated all of his records of the early years to NRPA.

Next on the program was Ms. Sherrie Blott, who covered the "middle years" of NRPA's past. Sherrie was the first NRPA Coordinator and then moved on to become a Board member and eventually the President of NRPA. She related her heart-felt feelings for the Narrow River. During Sherrie's association with NRPA the challenges were daunting, with proposed development projects on the horizon. NRPA's advice to the towns on these development projects and proposed management plans was significant. Sewer installation was expanded in the Watershed and land developers were required to incorporate environmentally friendly features such as shoreline buffer zones into their projects. Sherrie's talk reminded many of the new members that NRPA's past activities have been numerous and constructive.

Richard Grant, the current NRPA President, spoke about the more recent years with an emphasis on the strength of the Board of Directors and the water, land, and education programs. He mentioned the volunteer River Watch program that is in its 19th year. He thanked North Kingstown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett for their contributions in supporting River Watch. Town, state, and federal officials have used the River data often in various

*(continued on page 3)*



*NRPA Board member Annette DeSilva presenting the 2010 NRPA Youth Environmental Achievement Award to Omar Zaki.*

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

President's Cove	pg. 2
Scholarship Announcement	pg. 4
Writers Wanted	pg. 4

# The President's Cove

NRPA's year begins on September 1st and runs through August 31st, mostly because that is the way it has been done for the last 40 years. This year I wanted to first let you know that we had a fine response to our August membership mailing. At this time we have close to 400 members. It is my goal to drive that number up to 600, which would be a significant percentage of the 3000 or so residents in the Watershed. Secondly—I wanted to let you know that the Board of Directors, while having a few empty spots, has all the bases covered and our programs are stronger than ever.

In our Water program, River Watch functions with a volunteer force of approximately 30 people. The data from this program assist or motivate civic operations such as the storm-water management improvement work that is currently being done for the Edgewater and Pettaquamscutt Terrace neighborhoods. This is the third of the proposed 11 projects to control the direct flow of storm-water run-off and the pollution it can carry to the River. We have been trying to get our arms wrapped around issues regarding land use and protection along the River's edge, such as the Canonchet Farm planning process, River access and kayak launching near Sprague Bridge, and the always contentious no-wake zone/salt marsh protection issue.

Our Education Program is in high gear. The cooperative effort with the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association concerning the AWESome teacher-training course saves money for NRPA, and at the same time expands the offering of the course

All in all NRPA is at the top of its game, and I am looking forward to a productive year. Of course—in order to make it work, we will have to finance the programs. Fund-raising efforts such as the membership drive, year-end giving program, and endowment program will continue. Further support will come from 24th Narrow River Road Race, which is scheduled for May 21st. This will be followed by the 6th Narrow River Turnaround Swim in June. And of course the Kayak Raffle will be off and running again this year.

Thank you for participating and supporting NRPA.

—Richard B. Grant  
President, NRPA



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) works to preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment and the quality of life of all communities with the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed.

[www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

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# 40th Annual Meeting Highlights

*(continued from page 1)*

studies and planning efforts. Richard highlighted NRPA's support for land protection via advocacy for best environmental management practices in all planned and existing developments. NRPA has played an active role in providing feedback on the stormwater management systems that have been installed and those that are planned in Narragansett along the River. The organization routinely keeps abreast of proposed zoning changes and land development programs. Sound ecological plans to protect the River and its Watershed lands are a high priority for NRPA.

Richard went on to say that we have expanded in our education program. The AWEome (Active Watershed Education)

program, which has been designed to teach teachers how to teach students about watersheds, is now offered as a college-level credited course at URI. In recent years NRPA has been supporting and presenting the course in conjunction with the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association. The NRPA Science Fair Awards program, in its 21st year, has recognized students for projects that demonstrate environmental awareness. The NRPA Lesa Meng Scholarship program is in its 19th year and has increased the scholarship for local high school seniors to \$1000.00. The third edition of the Narrow River Handbook was recently published and reflects the contributions of many of NRPA's board members. The Handbook is distributed to every resident in the Watershed. The Board members all contribute to the NRPA Newsletter that is published three times annually. The Education Committee is an active group and we can expect their programs to continue to grow into the future.

Richard praised the NRPA membership for their generous support of the Association. Special recognition was given to the late John Elder Dick and to the family of the late Carl Otto for remembering NRPA with bequests that were used to set up endowments. In 2009 NRPA held a special celebration of an endowment fund established in honor of past Board member, Rob Leeson, for his many contributions to

NRPA. It is the membership of NRPA that has made the organization a success.

A highlight of the evening was a presentation by a special guest, Dr. Arthur Gaines. In the late 1960's and early 1970's Dr. Gaines undertook the first in-depth, landmark study of the Narrow River for his doctoral work at the University of Rhode Island. Because he understood the high ecological value of the River, he also volunteered to serve on the first Board of Directors of NRPA. In his talk, entitled "Why the Narrow River is a Special Place and Deserves to be Protected," Dr. Gaines presented data that opened a window into our River's history. The sediment core samples that were recovered from the River's floor depict the major events, such as the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954. Chemical samples show evidence of the United Nuclear accident nearby in Wood River Junction in 1964 and, from much farther away, the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster in Ukraine in 1986. Dr. Gaines' slides also included historic photographs of the River shoreline and the folks like Bill Lacey who made their livings from the River.

One of the cherished moments of the evening was when Arthur Gaines spoke of one of his favorite River vistas, which is a view of the marsh as you look south from Bridgetown Bridge. Many years ago a friend gave Arthur a painting of this River view by Ed Coman, and Arthur showed a slide of the painting. As fate would have it, immediately following Dr. Gaines' talk, NRPA presented the annual W.E.R. LaFarge Friend of the River Award. This year's award, a photo of the same exact scene in Arthur's painting, was presented to Arthur Gaines for his genuine interest in and studies of the Narrow River.

The evening concluded with a word of thanks to the entire NRPA membership from the president of NRPA, Richard Grant.

—Annette DeSilva



*NRPA Board member Veronica Berounsky presenting the 2010 W.E.R. LaFarge Friend of the River Award to Dr. Arthur Gaines. Projected on the screen behind them is a painting of the River by Ed Coman. The same view of the River is in photograph on the Award. (photo by Annette DeSilva)*

## NRPA Scholarships Available

Since 1993 NRPA has awarded scholarships to seniors graduating from high schools in the Watershed as part of our Youth Environmental Education Program. In 2007, the scholarship was renamed the Lesa Meng/Narrow River Preservation Association Scholarship in honor of a former Board member who passed away in 2006. Ms. Meng was a Board member for six years and chair of the Narrow River Road Race committee during that time. Her husband, Rick Moffitt, and friends provided additional funding for the scholarship, enabling NRPA to increase the scholarship awards to \$1000 beginning in 2008. Mr. Moffitt has continued making donations to support the scholarship fund, and we would more than welcome additional contributions to the fund.

The scholarship applications are judged on: the student's environmentally oriented activities in and out of high school, the quality of an original essay on the theme—"Choose one environmental problem/issue relevant to the Narrow River and discuss what you as an individual could do to mitigate the problem," a science teacher's recommendation, and academic achievement in math and science courses. Applications are generally available after the February school break from the Guidance Departments at Narragansett High School, North Kingstown High School, South Kingstown High School, and the Prout School, and also from the NRPA web site.

Completed applications will be due April 4th, 2011.



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## WRITERS WANTED

Help me to make *Narrow River Notes* your newsletter. Do you have a short poem with a river or environmental theme you'd like us to print? How about an article on local history, like the John Elder Dick pieces that we've re-printed? Have you taken a good photograph in the Watershed? Do you have a question about anything in the Watershed that one of our Board members might answer? Or do you just have an opinion you'd like to express? I promise to consider any and all submissions. We publish three issues per year—spring, summer, and fall/winter—with the respective deadlines at the beginning of March, July, and November. Send submissions or questions to me at [NRPA.Notes@verizon.net](mailto:NRPA.Notes@verizon.net).

—Robert D. Kenney, editor

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