



# Save the Pine Bush

## May/June Newsletter

May/June 13 No. 116 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 462-0891 • fax 434-6659 • web http://www.savethepinebush.org • Circ. 1000

### Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday May 15, 6:00 p.m.

**Beverly Bardequez**

*will give an short update on the challenges to*

### The Historic Rapp Road Community

*Then, we will show the film*

### The Throwaways

The Throwaways is the story of homeless filmmaker and activist Ira McKinley as he captures the stories of people living on the margins. The Throwaways channels Ira's experience of living on the streets through the lens of a video camera. By using his unique perspective, Ira aims to pull the curtain back for a devastating effect on those who are in greatest need. A gritty, firsthand look at the reality most would rather turn away from, The Throwaways challenges viewers to bear witness and confront the daily struggles and hopes of those living on the fringes of a society that has rejected and forgotten them.

**New Location:** At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

### *Save the Pine Bush May Walk*

## Bird Watching Walk

Saturday, May 18, 2013 8:00 AM

**Meet at:** Pine Bush Discovery Center Parking Lot, East side of New Karner Rd. (Route 155) opposite "T" with Old State Rd., Albany, NY;

**Leader:** Neal Reilly • **For More Information:** John Wolcott -465-8930

Neal is a very expert birder and can spot most any bird around, tell a lot about it, and can draw most any bird to a closer view. Bird fanciers will enjoy meeting Neal and exchanging bird lore with him. We invite you one and all to this enjoyable and informative event.

**The Walk is free and open to the public!**

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

### Historic Rapp Road Community— An Update

*by Beverly Bardequez and Residents of the Historical Rapp Road Community*

We continually remember before  
Our GOD and Father Your Work  
produced by Faith  
Your Labor prompted by Love, and  
Your Endurance Inspired by Hope in  
Our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

*1 Thessalonians 1:3*

Our ancestors lived by this scripture and put it to use in daily life. They believed that Hope and ultimately Faith produced Endurance and Perseverance. They left oppression, poverty and racism behind in the South with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. The meager earnings they were able to salvage for the trip north would tell you or I "we cannot make it on these funds." Yet their Hope and Faith in GOD

*continued on page 2*

### Earth Day SPB Dinner

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY: As is usual, the April SPB dinner featured a variety of speakers and an Earth Day theme. Each spoke 5-10 minutes. Lynne Jackson introduced them and said the people who began Save the Pine Bush met at SUNYA (now the University at Albany) in the 1970s.

Saima Anjam of Environmental Advocates (EA) discussed the legislative agenda for the April 23rd statewide Earth Day Lobby Day. One bill is the Child Safe Products Act that would allow for the banning of whole classes of dangerous chemicals; this would be an improvement over the current paradigm where chemicals are banned one-by-one, with new ones being introduced far quicker than deadly ones are forbidden. She said there are now 83,000 chemicals in circulation.

Mark Platt said he was president of the Protect Your Environment (PYE) club at SUNYA prior to his 1972 graduation. After graduation, he obtained an advanced degree at RPI, worked at the Washington Park Spirit newspaper, directed

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**Historic Rapp Road, continued from page 1**  
told them “They could make it.”

Upon arriving North in the 1930’s, they found that conditions in the South End of Albany did not align itself with the life they were accustomed to for themselves and their children. There were bars, gambling & prostitution. These individuals believed in prayer and worship. Not easily discouraged, they sought whatever opportunities they could find in the way of work (which was very scarce). Led by their pastor, Louis W. Parson (a visionary) and William Toliver, they eventually came to settle in a 28 acre tract of land purchased by the two men. It was known as “the Holy Land” on Rapp Road in the Pine Bush area. They were a part of the Great Migration of Blacks during the 1930’s and 40’s.

Through prayer, fasting and faith they believed GOD had provided them with land nobody else was interested in. They toiled and sacrificed, creating something out of nothing. They developed and cultivated this “Holy Land” into a community. They grew gardens, raised livestock for sustenance and built modest homes as they could afford them. To outsiders there was nothing unique about these homes, in fact, it was the community itself that was unique. They did not have a “Blue Print” on how to develop a community, yet they thrived and prospered quietly until the early 1970’s. In 1971, New York State built the Washington Avenue Extension displacing some of the homes within the community. Developers saw the new highway as a means of opportunity and our community suddenly became viable property “for their own blue prints.” The State University of New York at Albany, Pyramid Corporation’s Crossgate Mall, Crossgate Commons, Theresian House and Daughters of Sarah were just the beginning.

Slowly and strategically developers have sought to obtain pieces of our community bit by bit for their own personal gain. More recently the NanoScale College of Science and Technology on Washington Avenue Extension has had an even bigger impact on our community along with new Medical Office Buildings and a Marriott Residential Inn along the frontage road which parallel Rapp Road. Over the past year, two developers have sought to dismantle original homes within the immediate community. The Toliver House located at 8 Rapp Road was one of the first homes built in the community. It was dismantled by Bernacki Property Management Inc. last year (2012) with the intent of replacing it with an office building and parking lot space for ten cars. However, the community was able to convince the City of Albany’s Zoning Board of Appeals to deny a permit for commercial use in the neighborhood. The William Wilborn House located at 59

Rapp Road was purchased by the Daughters of Sarah Retirement Community in March of 2012 and was also slated to be dismantled this year. Mark Koblenz, CEO for the Daughters of Sarah Retirement Community stated “There is nothing unique about the house.” What Mr. Koblenz fails to recognize is that the Wilborn House is an important piece of Rapp Road history. It was the residence of the late Bishop William Wilborn and his wife Frances. They were instrumental in parceling land to members of their church community after Parson’s death in 1940 and played a vital role in leadership and the development of the community. Again, residents of the community went before the Zoning Board of Appeals in January, 2013 and asked that a request to dismantle the home be denied. The residents would like to buy the property back for use as a museum. Talks between residents of Rapp Road and Daughters of Sarah are currently underway, no decision has been reached as yet.

The Historic Rapp Road Community was purchased on May 2, 1930. Today, second, third, fourth and fifth generation residents still reside in the community. “Eighty-three years later..... we are still here by the grace of GOD and with His help we will remain an intact community.” It was placed on the New York State and National Historic Registry in 2002 and 2003 as a historic African American Community within the City of Albany. Our community is a key player in the development of Albany’s Pine Bush area during the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s. We are not opposed to change, we simply want the remnant that remains here to have their rightful place in Albany’s rich history. Developers must not assume they can muscle their way into our community, disregard and disrespect our presence. The Historic Rapp Road Community is our heritage and legacy, left to us by our ancestors. We intend to honor and protect our legacy.

*Residents of the Historical Rapp Road Community*

**Earth Day Dinner, continued from page 1**

the weatherization program at Albany County Opportunity Inc., and a ski instructor at Jiminy Peak for 25 years.

He said, “It all started with Lou Ismay.” One day he wandered into Lou’s Environmental Forum office and he has been an environmental activist ever since. Mark said: “Behold the turtle; it only makes progress when it sticks its neck out.” He said one strength of the environmental movement is its diversity, another is the vast number of issues we work on.

Aime “Trent” Millet spoke passionately about how global climate change is affecting the world’s water supply. He began saying, “Every

living thing must have water.” Big corporations are buying up water supplies all over the world and this privatization is a huge problem. Pennsylvania is losing its water to fracking; Florida is “like a huge Swiss cheese” with sink holes, dropping water tables, and undrinkable surface waters. He said humans are 78 percent water. “Each of us is the light of possibility, like a candle in a dark room.”

Lynne introduced Lou saying when she met Lou in January 1973, it was “a life-transforming experience.” The Environmental Forum office was appropriately located in the Art Department.

Lou discussed the 1897 federal Rivers and Harbors Act. “Had it been enforced,” he said, “there would be no water pollution in New York State or the United States because this law prohibited polluting any waters that flowed into any harbors.”

One of the elder-statesmen of the capital region’s environmental community, Lou said “those responsible for regulation need the authority to do their job correctly and this should not be political.” Lou said the fore-runner of Environmental Advocates began in the SUNYA arts building. The original concern with protecting the Pine Bush was the aquifers. He said even during the first years the Rapp Road dump was open (in the 1970s), dump leach-ate was damaging the upper aquifer. Students discovered the university was dumping sewage into the Patroon Creek.

Lynne introduced George Keleshian, whom she said was president of PYE the year before she was. George said, “Lou Ismay was one of the biggest influences on my life.” He said Earth Day was a week-long series of events at SUNYA in 1973. with Ralph Nader a featured participant. George discussed the heating and cooling of buildings and numerous technologies he has developed to do this; he designs zero-energy buildings. He said there are well over 100 renewable energy sources in existence but humans use only about a dozen on a large scale. Many of these technologies have been around since the 1960s. During the last two decades of the 20th century, the US did little with renewables. Photovoltaics are so cheap today they have achieved parity with fossil fuels. He said he hopes to host a zero-energy conference by year’s end.

**Next Dinner Date**

**Wednesday, June 19**

**6:00 PM at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany**

## Horizontality and Consensus: Group Decision Making for a True Democracy at the

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY: A small group heard 24-year-old Dan Platt discuss Horizontality and Consensus: Group Decision Making for a True Democracy at the March 21 SPB dinner at the Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Dan, a veteran of the Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Albany groups, compared and contrasted top-down and consensus decision making processes. He defined horizontality as a “flat structure for the equitable distribution of management ... participation and exchange between individuals for a larger group outcome.”

During the economic meltdown in Argentina of 2001, he said many workers experimented with this non-hierarchical decision making process. Horizontality allows for “personal autonomy within a framework of social equality” and is a form of direct democracy.

In a traditional or vertical decision making structure, the boss(es) control the process, limit the options, and decisions are top-down, often with little or no input percolating up from those impacted by the decisions.

In a horizontal decision making structure, everyone is on the same level. A strong facilitator often guides the process without controlling it, keeps the process functioning efficiently, includes everyone, and avoids wasting time.

Dan used a common example of cooperative decision: a group deciding on which restaurant to eat at. In some cases, all will agree and every one’s needs are met. A second option is the group may follow the suggestion of one person - perhaps a strong leader, an easy process. Another alternative is to vote with the majority deciding, a process that leaves many unsatisfied. Dan said consensus and voting have nothing in common. A fourth option is the group may take the time necessary to select a restaurant that meets every one’s needs.

Dan mentioned three benefits of reaching consensus decisions: the decisions are better, it is non-violent, and this process gets us to true democracy. He explained that consensus based societies are and were common among rural peoples who live(d) outside the industrialized world [such as indigenous peoples].

In the United States, consensus based

groups have a long history including the Quakers. During the 1960s and 1970s the New Left and feminist movements utilized it. The direct action groups organized in the late 1990s to oppose the World Trade Organization, are a third example. Most recently, the New York City General Assembly that initiated the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) utilized horizontal decision making.

Dan said consensus works best in groups of ten or less and becomes very difficult with large groups, especially groups of 100 or more. An example of it not working occurred on the day after the NYC police department expelled OWS from Zuccotti Park. Forty OWS people spent six hours discussing a visions and goals document, never getting beyond the first paragraph, and leaving all involved angry and frustrated.

He said consensus is a process that can be learned via practicing it. He concluded saying that with horizontality, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. He ended his lecture with two graphics: the first with good governance as the hub of a wheel and accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable and inclusive, efficient and effective, follows the rule of law, participatory, and consensus oriented the eight spokes. The second graphic was a circle with arrows leading from justice to democracy to fairness to justice, etc.

During the discussion, Tom Heckman said OWS came in response to a realization that politicians were (are) not dealing with the important issues and that their victims could challenge them and change the national conversation. He said this is an ongoing project.

Lou Ismay urged people to cease using words such as socialism and anarchy that can be easily confused and misused by our adversaries.

Dan said OWS mismanaged its money in a big way by allowing people who were not trustworthy to handle the funds, although OWS did not know they were untrustworthy in part because OWS did not know each other well; OWS formed very quickly and the organizers never envisioned such quick success or the vast quantities of monies that would suddenly flow in.

## SPB Tours Historic Power Station in Karner

by Andy Arthur

For the March 2013 SPB Hike, we took a tour of the 1830 Central Avenue in Karner. The Central Avenue Power Station was a 1890s-era rotary converter station that took 11,000 volt three-phase alternating current power from the power grid and converted it to 600-volt direct current for streetcars, by using a series of massive devices that resembled electric motors.

Rotary converters were used to convert AC to DC prior to the invention of mercury-arc rectifiers in the 1920s, and later electronic rectifiers in 1970s. They were complicated machines that had to be synchronized daily to the grid frequency, and required a full-time technician to constantly adjust them to ensure direct current power flowed smoothly to streetcars.

By 1930s, the rotary converters in this building were worn-out and an obsolete technology. United Traction ended the Albany-Schenectady Interurban in 1932, and abandoned the station. The rotary converters were likely removed and scrapped during World War II, and the building went on to become the station headquarters for WPTR radio station in 1950s. Today, the building is owned by John Knighton, who uses it to store and show classic cars.

80 years later, inside of the building shows little of its original purpose, but its massive walls and heavy second floor, designed to support the weight and vibration of the rotary converters, remain. A portion of the original crane used to service the rotary converters can be seen from the mid-century added third floor.

Save the Pine Bush thanks John Knighton for allowing us to tour this historic building.

### Letter to the Editor

Dear SPB,

I was concerned when I read “How to get guests to recycle”

I thought we were supposed to wash washable recyclables before putting them in the recycling bin.

Entertaining is limited for me at 87 years plus, but, I recall how exasperating party guests can be, especially when a guest has had too much booze and cigarettes. But, we cleaned up afterwards if it took till dawn. Most parties were Friday or Saturday. That left Sunday to “Wash and be clean.”

It makes sense to me to wash the washables because the unwashed is food for insects and if the lid isn’t on tight for: mice, cats, dogs, raccoons, skunks and black birds, etc.

Please keep up the good work. I no longer have the stamina to help. Sincerely Yours,

Carolyn Dissoway



Editor's note: we all love turtles at Save the Pine Bush and Rezsín thought others would enjoy this success story

## Puerto Rico protects premier turtle nesting site

By DANICA COTO, Associated Press, Updated 3:32 pm, Saturday, April 13, 2013

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico's governor on Saturday signed a law to protect a swath of land along the island's northeast coast that is a top U.S. nesting site for the world's largest turtle species.

The law ends a 15-year fight that environmentalists and celebrities including actor Benicio Del Toro had waged against developers eager to build hotels, golf courses and luxury homes in an area fringed by palm trees and turquoise waters.

"This is so exciting," said Angie Colon, an official with a nonprofit activist group that fought to preserve the land. "I'm still coming to terms with the fact that this is real."

The area, known as the Northeast Ecological Corridor, covers more than 1,200 hectares (2,900 acres) of lush vegetation and pristine beaches that are a nesting site for the federally endangered leatherback turtle. It is also the site of a popular bioluminescent bay featuring microorganisms that emit a blue glow in the dark when agitated.

The 13-mile-long area also features all ecosystems found in Puerto Rico, ranging from a subtropical dry forest to El Yunque tropical rain forest, the only one that forms part of the U.S. forest system. The protected region has more than 861 types of flora and fauna, including 50 rare, endemic or threatened species. Scientists recently spotted a large brown bird known as a limpkin for its unusual walk that was last seen in the late 1950s.

The region has long been a point of contention among developers, government officials and environmentalists.

Former governor Anibal Acevedo Vila

sought to protect the area by law several years ago, but some senators rejected the project. As a result, Acevedo issued an executive order in 2007 to protect the land, declaring it off-limits to all development except for small, eco-friendly projects.

Acevedo was later defeated by former governor Luis Fortuno, who issued a new order to allow large-scale development on land just north of El Yunque rain forest. Fortuno acted with support from officials including local mayors who sought to open the region to development to generate jobs and boost the local economy.

Developers in recent years have submitted plans to build two large hotels, four golf courses and 4,000 luxury homes. However, none of those projects obtained permits.

"Today, with the signing of this law, we honor and acknowledge the respect that this natural reserve deserves," said Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla.

Environmental groups now plan to develop the area for ecotourism.

Camilla Feibelman, coordinator of the local Sierra Club, said she envisions the land as a complementary destination to El Yunque. The group would promote hiking, rent bikes to visitors and offer tours to see hatching turtles.

In the high season, female leatherback turtles lay eggs in more than 400 nests they carve out on the Northeast Ecological Corridor's protected beaches, where waves help push the 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) animals out of the water, she said.

The government still has to buy private land to complete the designated corridor, Colon said.

About 35 percent of the land that was designated as a protected area is private, she said.

Upon approving the bill last month, legislators said they aim to protect at least 16 percent of land in Puerto Rico in upcoming years.

Currently, only about 8 percent of the island's territory is designated for preservation and conservation, compared to 54 percent in the U.S. Virgin Islands and 42 percent in the Dominican Republic.

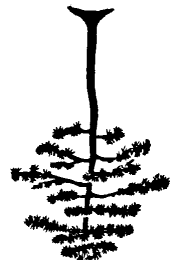
## Save The Pine Bush is in need of more hike leaders.

For the last few years ; the Save the Pine Bush outing leaders have been Andy Arthur, Claire Nolan and John Wolcott. Our outing events are once a month, always on a Saturday and usually the third or fourth Saturday. We three, however, are not always readily available and we've come close to having no hike at all for a given month as happened for the first time ever last month. To prevent this from happening again, we are appealing for more volunteer leaders.

With more leaders we can hopefully have hikes lead by persons with more time and less competing obligations for any given hike date. I and Andy are generally available for going over data about various Pine Bush area and routes. Please e-mail the Newsletter at pinebush@mac.com or call John Wolcott at 465-8930 if you are interested in volunteering for this. Hope to see you out on the trail!

Return Service Requested

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