



MILL RIVER WETLAND COMMITTEE, INC.

50

Anniversary

Celebrating Fifty Years! river-lab.org

2016

Annual Report

Celebrating 50 Years Of Our Mission

To educate the community about the value of watersheds, to advocate for their continued protection, and to engage all people in the fight to protect our environment

2016

Highlights

Mill River Day: October 17, 2016

The Mill River Wetland Committee held a ceremony celebrating fifty years of service and continuing commitment to the community on Mill River Day. After words from the current Board President Lynn Shavinsky, and remarks from our founder Joy Shaw, there was a proclamation by Michael Tetreau, Fairfield's First Selectman. There was a Grade 4 ground water model activity for everyone to participate in, lead by River-Lab Advisor, Christina Rescanski. The event attracted town officials, educators, past and present volunteers as well as private citizens and was televised on the HAN Network.

- A total of 3302 of students and 626 volunteer guides participated in River-Lab.
- Establishment of a new scholarship in honor of our 50th year: The scholarship will be awarded to two Fairfield high school students starting in 2017.
- Collaboration with Fairfield History Museum's Rising Tides exhibition: MRWC Curriculum Director staffed a booth at the museum and led walks at the estuary and the river and participated in a Family Fun Day.
- Hosted Community walks for the public: Participants joined the founder at the river and the estuary.
- Hosted volunteer picnic: Spring event held to recognize all our wonderful dedicated volunteers.

• Successful expansion of fundraising efforts:

- Awarded a grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation for \$5000 to develop an updated, interactive website. Thank you to grant writer Alison Genovese!
 - Awarded Estuary workshop grant to use for water monitoring.
 - Started hosting a popular Trivia Night that provided the opportunity for fun and fundraising while getting our message out to the general public.
 - Participated in Fairfield County Giving Day and raised close to \$2000!
- ## • Welcomed two new members to the Board:
- Sheila Marmion and Julie Gottlieb, both who are active members of the Fairfield community and helped shape our 2016 focus.



*Selectman Mike Tetreau, Joy Shaw,
and Stephen Tracy Interim Fairfield
Superintendent – Mill River Day*



2016 *president's Report*

We are proud to celebrate 50 years of the Mill River Wetland Committee, Inc. this year. In looking back at our history, we realize what we need to keep our organization strong for another 50 years. In the community, we renewed our commitment to engaging the public to advocate for a healthy river and wetland system by expanding the educational experiences we offer. Our River-Lab program was enhanced to provide the most effective hands-on educational opportunities for the students. We refocused on the opportunity to train adults effectively through updated guide training. We also began to offer components of the program in conjunction with other organizations such as the Great Beginnings Montessori estuary trip, the Fairfield Historical Museum's Rising Tides exhibition, and Non-Profit day at the Beardsley Zoo. We will continue to reach out to partner with other organizations and participate in community events to widen our influence.

In addition to our external growth, we recognized that we also needed to develop within the organization. The board committed to using a non-profit assistance group to develop marketing and branding strategies to increase recognition of the organization. Trivia Night, Fairfield County Giving Day and social media have added new avenues for fundraising to a larger audience. A grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation is providing an interactive, updated website to better communicate our mission and activities beyond our current audience.

The proclamation of Mill River Day by First Selectman, Mike Tetreau was the perfect way to model what MRWC represents. The combination of individuals, such as Joy Shaw, who have spent years devoting time and effort to the program alongside parent guides at their first training reinforced the unique structure of our organization. Representatives of the community participated with Fairfield residents from varied backgrounds to share in the excitement of using the grade 4 model of the groundwater system. In 2016, we celebrated the strong foundation of environmental education that MRWC has provided for 50 years and designed the building process that will shape the next 50.

Lynn Shavinsky
President
Lynn Shavinsky



2016 *Board of Directors*

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- Vice President
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- Treasurer
Megan Hogan
- Recording Secretary
Deborah Garskof

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- Julie Gottlieb
- Donna Gallo
- Mary Hogue
- Reini Knorr
- Shelia Marmion
- Christine Rescsanski

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- L. Bradley Sherman

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- Brain Fagan, Education
- MRWC and River-Lab Program
Founder/Author/Illustrator
Jocelyn T. (Joy) Shaw
- Director of Curriculum
Alison Genovese
- Office Manager
Roberta Clark



Mill River Wetland Study Group Report

2016

Officers & Staff

Program Advisor

Christina Rescsanski

Co-Directors

Carol Barrios—RL3 & RL4

Sara Jannott—RL5

Nicole Nuttall—RL6

Gear Managers

Heidi Gassel

Tyler Waddell

Guide and Classroom Trainers

Steve Baker

Carol Barrios

Charlene Brauns-Schindler

Allison Genovese

Sara Jannott

Juli Karacsonyi

Reini Knorr

David McKinnis

Michele Meehan

Nicole Nuttall

Maggie Nyiri

Kathryn O'Mahony

Christina Rescsanski

Lynn Shavinsky

Subha Sunder

Mill River Wetland Study Group Awards and Recognitions

At the year-end Volunteer Recognition Picnic held in June at the home of our founder Joy Shaw, twenty volunteer guides were recognized for their commitment to the River-Lab Program.

The following ten volunteers earned their **Kingfisher Badge** for being trained at all Grade levels (3,4,5,and 6)and have guided at least one trip at each of those levels and a career total of 10 study-trips.

Courtney Bradley

Alicia Bratton

Susan Buck

Heidi Gassel

Kerri Devine

Amy Hios

Megan Hogan

Stephanie Kelly

Jennifer LaFalce

Vinny Matregrano

Claudine Mears

Mayra Otalora

Christy Ottaviano

Laura Shea

Subha Sunder

The following five volunteers earned their **Silver Kingfisher Pin** for guiding a minimum of 5 years (which need not be consecutive), received their Kingfisher Badge and have a career total of 25 study-trips. Or alternatively, have guided a minimum of 5 years (which need not be consecutive) and have a career total of 50 study-trips insert after minimum of 5 years.

Sara Jannott

Nicole Nuttall

Magda Nyiri

Michelle Stearns

Subha Sunder

We truly appreciate their dedication to bringing environmental science to life for the students of Fairfield



*Volunteer Recognition Picnic
at home of Joy Shaw*

Overview of the River-Lab Program

We educate over **3,000** students each year about local river basin systems. In addition, **600** adult volunteers are trained to serve as guides for outdoor study-trips that help Fairfield public and parochial elementary and middle school students learn about environmental science.



River-Lab Program

2016

Highlights

Grade 3 students "raining" on their model river

- ✓ Over 600 parents volunteered as guides this year! High levels of involvement by the community in our organization thanks to proactive recruiting.
- ✓ Revised guide trainer scripts for all grade levels: Ensuring all guide trainers are up to date with science standards from the Common Core.
- ✓ New specialized training meeting for Grade 6 guides –Training reflected the unique needs of Grade 6 trainers

Grade 4 | A Basin in Balance

- Experienced and new model leaders and guides ran fun, successful trips with students.
- Students participated in "raining" on groundwater models and observing absorbent and non-absorbent surfaces.
- Grade 4 goes Green by using emails containing information about the trip for parents to review with their students instead of using paper handouts.

Grade

Specific Reports

Grade 3 | The Living River Basin System

- Beautiful weather made for great student trips which ran and concluded on schedule.
- Students observed various habitats that the river has made and organisms that live in those habitats.
- Grade 3 goes Green by using emails containing information about the trip for parents to review with their students instead of using paper handouts.
- Grade 3 plans to invest in new fish and frog models in the upcoming year.



Grade 4 students "raining" on the developed surface of the groundwater model



Grade 5 students putting their plankton sample in the pan to bring back to the classroom and “catching” and observing plankton in their water sample

Grade 5 | Productivity of a River Basin System in Spring

- Guide and student safety improved by the Conservation Department through removal of exposed roots and trail leveling.
- Students enjoyed trips to the Mill River floodplain, with only a few weather-related trip changes.
- Students observed emerging plant and animal life and collected water samples containing plankton for analysis in the classroom microscope lab.
- Snakes wrapped up together in a shrub were observed. Turns out they were mating!
- Co-director, Sara Jannott, saved the day with quick-thinking when severe weather made it impossible to take students outdoors on a scheduled trip. Two parent guides brought the trip to the students. Using water samples and a Smart Board, the students enjoyed a lively lesson about wetland organisms and applied that in a microscope plankton Lab afterwards.

Grade 6 | River as a Link to the Sea

Basin Management and Estuarine Dynamics:

- Great numbers of parent volunteers and Environmental Science Advanced Placement high school student participation.
- AP students received study-trip training in the classroom instead of coming to the estuary. They then applied this training on the study-trips and were able to help the Grade 6 students at the lab stations.
- At the estuary, students measured various estuarine factors and observed plants and animals at 10 activity stations.
- One reworked activity station now includes measuring ph of water, learning about salinity, dissolved oxygen and how changing conditions and climate change affects these values.

5.3:1

Excellent Student to Guide Ratio
5.3 students to 1 volunteer guide

3302

Students participating in 2016 study-trips

626

Volunteer Guides

↑426

Volunteer participation growth up from 200 in 2006

2016

River-Lab Study-Trip Summary

	Students	Guides			Student/Guide Ratio
		Experienced	New	Total Guides	
RL3	830	55	111	166	5.0
RL4	808	41	115	156	5.2
RL5	837	55	117	172	4.9
RL6	827	34	98	132	6.3
Total	3302	185	441	626	5.3

River-Lab Program Grade Levels Key

RL3: Grade 3 / RL4: Grade 4 / RL5: Grade 5 / RL6: Grade 6

RL6 total includes 44 AP Environmental Science and Alternative High School Students



Grade 6 students at the Ash Creek Estuary making observations and collecting data

2016

*Volunteer
of the Year*

Subha Sunder

- Subha started guiding in 2009 and has been involved at all levels since. After serving as captain from 2010-2013, she was then Co-Director for three years. Subha greatly improved our program with her dedication, efficiency, enthusiasm and professionalism.
- When she accepted the award, she spoke movingly about the significance of River-Lab and what it means to the students and people of Fairfield.
- Her favorite saying explains her love of River-Lab: "Tell me I'll forget, show me I'll remember, involve me I will understand."

The 2016 Volunteer of the Year Award was presented by Charlene Brauns-Schindler to Subha Sunder.

Subha Sunder, 2016 Volunteer of the Year center with Board President Charlene Brauns-Schindler, left, and incoming President Lynn Shavinsky, right



**"Tell me I'll forget. Show me,
I'll remember. Involve me;
I will understand."**

Subha Sunder's favorite saying





Looking forward to 2017

We plan to continue to celebrate MRWCs 50th year and River-Lab's 50th (2017-2018) with fun and fundraising activities. We are expanding our role within the community by partnering with other organizations. Our Gala celebration is in the planning stages for Fall of 2017. We look forward to seeing you at some of these upcoming events.

(continued Looking forward to 2017)

It's difficult to say how the new science standards will affect River-Lab Program operations. Fairfield Public Schools new science curriculum will be approved by May 2017, but until then we have only a few guidelines to follow. MRWC will continue to work with the Fairfield Public Schools to update and improve the services provided to the District as they adjust their curriculum. As of now, the Fairfield BOE has told us to continue with RL 3, 4 and 5 for 2017-2018 but RL6 may need to move to Grade 7. Our best approach is to stay flexible, adapt quickly and advocate strongly for our program so we can continue to make science come to life for our students to learn and enjoy.

MRWC supports its programs through fundraising events, grants, memberships, donations, and fees generated from the implementation of the River-Lab Program. The program fees received by MRWC account for less than one-third of the actual cost needed to provide the River-Lab Program to students. In recent years, we have worked diligently to reduce regular expenses of the program. We anticipate a significant expense going forward to fund revisions to the curriculum of the River-Lab Program in order to align with Common Core. Therefore, our focus is to expand our fundraising initiatives for the next year.

2016

Volunteer Guides

Roxanne Abder	Mireille Bovine	Veronica Ciccarone	Kimberly Donohue	Jen Geaney
Callie Acker	Dabney Bowen	Chrysty Cichella	Patrick Donovan	Amy Geckeler
Kristen Adams	Amy Bowley	Frank Ciminiello	Madelen Drew	Alison Genovese
Jillian Adelsburg	Keara Brady	Ann Cimino	Barbara Duggan	Karen Genovese
Todd Agee	Charlene Brauns-	Susan Cipollaro	Kyra Dwyer	Stephanie Gervasi
Krista Alecia	Schindler	Logan Ciuci	Melissa Edwards	Dawn Gitman
Janine Alianiello	Vivienne Brennan	Kara Clegg	Fumino Elbrish	Jessica Goldberg
Chasey Allen	Matthew Brewster	Paula Coccozza	Melvin Encarnacion	Sheli Goldstein
Maureen Anderson	Nora Briechle	Danielle Mennin	Lisa English	Danielle Gontowski
Samantha Anderson	Will Brisman	Cohen	Linda Erickson	Adam Goodman
Carin Andreski	Kyle Brivett	Dana Colangelo	Cheryl Eustace	Heather Goodson
Rob Andujar	Lynne Brocklesby	Serene Compare	Erol Eyikan	Catharina Goosen
Courtney Arico	Carley Brown	Claire Conde	Nicole Fasold	Kathleen Gouley
Rachel Aroeste	Claudia P. Brown	Sally Connolly	Josh Feay	Suzanne Graceffa
Faith Aronson	Jamie Brown	Patrick Costanzo	Brian Feely	Kim Grant
Anne Asher	Liz Brown	Brenda Coyne	Daphne Fernandes	Anna Green
Sadacie Auer	Maura Brum	Bridget Coyne	Heather Ferrone	Alisa Grignano
Brianna Auray	Susan Buck	Julie Crager	Michael Ferrone	Cathy Grosshart
Marybeth Auszura	Betsy Buhrendorf	Caroline Crawford	Jacqueline Fiedler	Alex Grutkowsky
Dianne Bae	Martina Burin	MaryAnne	Andy Fieweger	Karen Guastelle
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Pamela Holden	Tom Malone	Priya Narang	Diana Reed	Merry Thact
Molli Hourihan	Karen Mannello	Dan Neafsey	Christina	Kristen Tharrington
Matt Hutzelmann	Sarah Marshall	Sarah Neafsey	Rescsanski	Valerie Theissen
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Pam Iannazzo	Laura Martino	Helena Nichols	Michelle Richerson	Anne Thidemann
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2016

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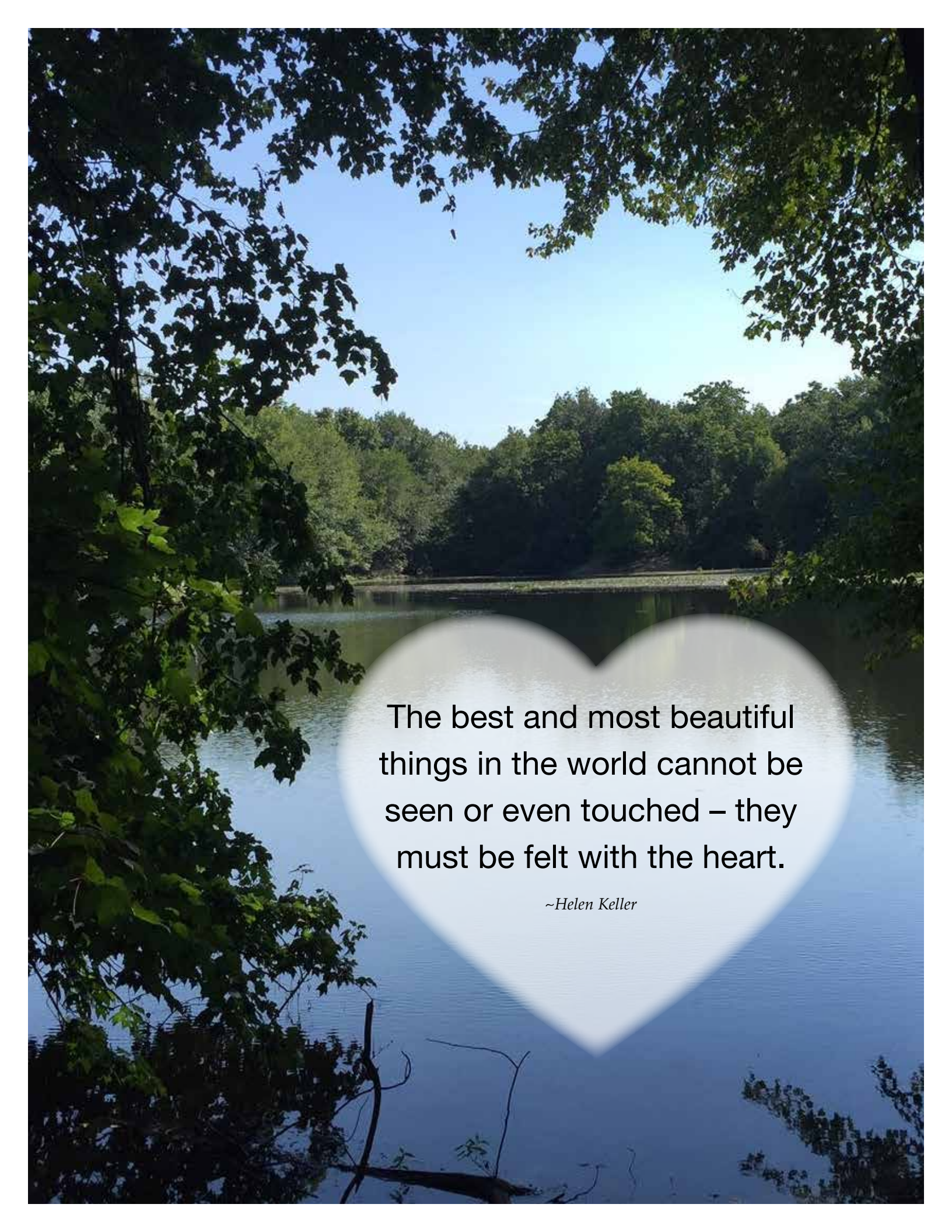
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 Sarah Neafsey
 Paul Nuttall
 Nicole Nuttall
 Magda Nyiri
 Mary O'Dell
 Kathryn O'Mahony
 Danielle Panagiotidis
 Rena Paris
 Terri Pisseri
 Christina Rescsanski
 Deirdre Ronan
 Richard Rossiter
 Ed Schindler
 Lynn Shavinsky
 Joy Shaw
 Annie Shepherd
 Nikole St. Peter
 Laurie Strazza
 Katherine Sullivan
 Subha Sunder
 Nikki Vinoski
 Tyler Waddell
 Andrea Ward
 Bob Weber
 Anne K. Weinrod
 World Water Monitoring Challenge



MILL RIVER WETLAND COMMITTEE, INC. FINANCIAL REPORT
January 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>Year to Date Dec. 2016</u>	<u>Year to Date Dec. 2015</u>
Membership & Donations		
General Membership	6,970.00	9,680.00
Donations	7,873.02	8,368.36
Annual appeal	285.00	1,930.00
Memorials	760.00	50.00
Board Match - FC Giving Day	0.00	1,800.00
PTA donations	8,200.00	7,400.00
Subtotal Membership/Donations	<u>24,088.02</u>	<u>29,228.36</u>
River-Lab Program Income		
Study Trips	16,240.00	16,730.00
Reimburse Classroom Materials	0.00	375.00
Subtotal River-Lab Program	<u>16,240.00</u>	<u>17,105.00</u>
Fundraising Income		
Fairfield County Giving Day	2,418.18	985.76
Trivia Night	1,395.00	1,865.00
Earth Day	150.00	0.00
Giving Tuesday	320.00	0.00
Amazon Smile	63.03	47.14
Merchandise/Other	79.00	70.00
Subtotal Fundraising	<u>4,425.21</u>	<u>2,967.90</u>
Grants	6,250.00	3,350.00
Aquarion Award	0.00	2,500.00
Dividend/Interest Income	2,033.17	1,768.48
TOTAL INCOME	<u>53,036.40</u>	<u>56,919.74</u>
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
MRWC Expenses		
Insurance	10,312.00	10,718.00
Copying	1,840.95	2,568.87
Office Storage	2,591.12	1,958.83
Office/Business Expenses	9,550.78	2,729.59
Subtotal MRWC Expenses	<u>24,294.85</u>	<u>17,975.29</u>
River-Lab Program Expenses		
Guide & Teacher Materials	106.75	369.10
Study Trip Expenses	9,605.89	5,116.75
Subtotal River-Lab Program	<u>9,712.64</u>	<u>5,485.85</u>
Payroll Expenses		
Staff Payroll	20,881.48	21,175.00
Employment Taxes	1,986.64	1,905.03
Payroll Service Fee	2,037.67	1,998.19
Subtotal Payroll	<u>24,905.79</u>	<u>25,078.22</u>
Fundraising Expenses	121.77	0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>59,035.05</u>	<u>48,539.36</u>
NET CASH FLOW	<u>(5,998.65)</u>	<u>8,380.38</u>
Checking Account Balance as of 12/31	13,293.83	20,925.65
INVESTMENTS		
Vanguard Inter-Term Treasury Funds	38,847.84	38,392.30
Vanguard Inter-Term Treasury Funds*	26,107.76	25,801.60
Vanguard Short-Term Treasury Funds*	22,633.14	22,391.01
Total Investments	<u>87,588.74</u>	<u>86,584.91</u>

*These restricted investments are funds from HUD for the dam restoration



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched – they must be felt with the heart.

~Helen Keller

Mill River Wetland Committee, Inc.
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476 Old Mill Road
Fairfield, CT 06824