

The Environmental Advocate



www.conservorsociety.ca

2010 AGM Notice—Friday April 16th, 7pm

The Conservor Society is holding its annual general meeting in conjunction with Hamilton's 3rd Annual Environmental Film and Arts Festival.

In lieu of a speaker, all renewing members and new members will receive a ticket to the screening of *Crude*.

Over a 30-year period, the US oil industry contaminated one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth, poisoning the water, air and land. Pollution has created a "death zone" of more than 1000 square miles, resulting in increased rates of cancer, leukemia, birth defects, and numerous other health ailments.

AGM Details

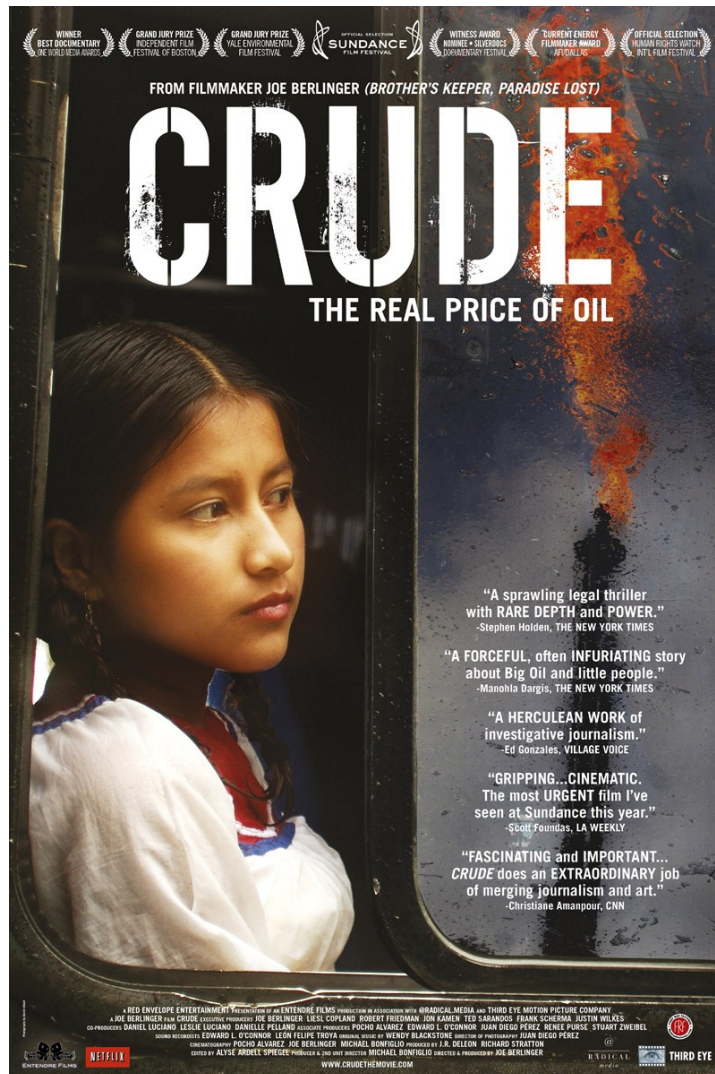
Friday April 16th
Westdale Secondary School (700 Main St West)
AGM begins at 6:00pm
Film begins at 7:30pm

For more information on the festival, visit:
www.ecofilmartsfestival.com

Crude

The inside story of the infamous "Amazon Chernobyl" case, Crude is a real-life high stakes legal drama, set against a backdrop of the environmental movement, global politics, celebrity activism, human rights advocacy, the media, multinational corporate power, and rapidly-disappearing indigenous cultures.

The landmark case takes place in the Amazon jungle of Ecuador, pitting 30,000 indigenous and colonial rainforest dwellers against the US oil giant Chevron.



March 2010

Conservor Society of Hamilton and District

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And much, much more!

Conservers Facilitate Capacity Building in Area Enviro Groups

In 2009, the Conserver Society facilitated funding through the Hamilton Community Foundation to assist two area environmental groups with internal capacity building.

Environment Hamilton and Green Venture were both awarded \$20,000 each to help them build their internal capacity and improve their program delivery and effectiveness in the community.

Following are reports from each of the groups detailing how this funding has facilitate positive change in their organizations.

Environment Hamilton

Thanks to a Hamilton Community Foundation 'Protecting Our Environment Together' (POET) core support grant for which the Hamilton Conservers Society is serving as charitable sponsor, Environment Hamilton has been able to pursue some previously unfunded efforts. The grant enabled EH to support a part-time staff person to run the 2009 season of the Fruit Tree project. It also allowed the group to finally have 2008 Dundas urban tree inventory data analysed. The information will be presented at a meeting hosted by the Dundas Valley TreeKeepers in April.

The grant has also provided some much-needed core support for Environment Hamilton. Some grant dollars were directed towards supporting administrative staff, and staff professional development activities. For instance, EH staff benefitted from an in-depth, hands-on session on using the organization's website, including a variety of new features that EH has had added to the site with the support of POET grant money. The grant will also support EH's move to a larger office space in the downtown core on April 1st.

Finally, the grant has also enabled EH to develop some new promotional tools including a new general brochure which the or-

ganization had professionally designed and printed, and to have matching pull-up banner displays designed and printed.
Lynda Lukasik—Executive Director

Green Venture

Green Venture is grateful to the Conserver Society and the Hamilton Community Fund for capacity building funding used to cover the costs of new technology and training for staff.

Following are testimonials from Green Venture staff on how the funding has helped them in their daily tasks.

Replacing Green Venture's aging, slower and quirky laptops with new Lenovo laptop computers has provided more capacity for volunteers and coop students working at Green Venture. The upgraded server enables staff to access Green Venture files from off-site locations. This has proved useful in providing timely information during meetings and in reducing vehicle kilometers travelled (and the associated air harming emissions) by facilitating teleworking.
Paul Barrett—Air Quality Coordinator

The new IT equipment increases productivity at Green Venture. I am able to do my job much more efficiently than before. The server, in particular, has made it very easy to share information throughout the office. I am very thankful for the new equipment.
Kathryn Gold—Water Coordinator

Getting the opportunity to attend the two NRCan training workshops this past month could not have been more closely linked to the service that Green Venture is offering the community – energy studies for commercial and institutional clients. A set of tools were offered that compliment and build on the energy study tools that I have already been given.
Will Klassen—Certified Energy Advisor

"In a way, global climate change is for the birds. On one side of the aviary, we have Chicken Little, telling us the sky is falling; on the other side, the ostrich, his head deep in the sand. Scientists have concluded that the ostrich is in denial: Significant climate change is occurring..."

— Consumer Reports [September 2003]

Success! Proposed Dundas Storage Facility Defeated at OMB

As many of you are aware, the Conserver Society was one of the Participant Status opponents to this proposed development. Attendees reported that Warren Beacham's (Treasurer) presentation was excellent. A special thanks from the Conserver Board and members alike.

Following is the CATCH article reporting on the outcome of the hearing.

[If you would like to subscribe to CATCH, please send them a message: info@hamiltoncatch.org]

CATCH News – March 14, 2010

OMB counters city planners

The Ontario Municipal Board decision blocking a Dundas self-storage development explicitly disagrees with the views of the city planning department and implicitly suggests they do not constitute good planning. Adjudicator JP Atcheson also clipped the wings of a city advisory committee in concluding that the proposed facility is not compatible with the environmentally significant surroundings and would have a “destabilizing effect on the planned function for this part of Dundas.”

In the fall of 2008, city planners endorsed construction of over 600 self-storage units on 5.2 acres (2.1 hectares) of privately-owned land at the corner of King Street and Olympic Drive, but the proposal was subsequently turned down by council in the face of strong public opposition. First Dundas Leasing appealed the council decision to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) which rejected it on March 8 after four weeks of hearings.

Given its planning staff position, city council was forced to hire an outside planner – Joe Berridge of Urban Strategies – whose arguments appear to have been crucial in the OMB outcome. The self-storage facility was

also opposed by a citizen's group – Protect Our Dundas – and by 16 of the 23 individuals who obtained participant status at the hearing.

The city's planner, Edward John, was called as a witness by First Dundas Leasing. In his decision, Atcheson says “the fundamental issue the Board must decide whether the official plan amendment being proposed represents good planning within the planning policy framework for the Town of Dundas.” He concludes that it doesn't, and makes several critical observations on Mr John's testimony.

Atcheson points repeatedly to the Dundas official plan which ordered that “the primary permitted uses on the lands consisting of an area of approximately 2.1ha (5.2acres) situated on the northwest corner of King Street West and Olympic Drive will be for active and passive parks, community centres, public or private recreation uses, conservation uses and other uses which are ancillary and support the primary uses where these uses will not destroy the essential ‘open space’ nature of the land.” That part of the plan was not quoted in John's report to council, although he did indicate that section number must be repealed in order to approve the self-storage facility. Atcheson, however, decided the section was critical.

“It was also clear from the evidence of Mr. John that he no longer saw any merit in maintaining the open space character of the area, and wanted to make it abundantly clear that this was a site available for new development,” writes Atcheson. “His opinion was not in the Board's findings supported by the overwhelming evidence that this site and surrounding area are an ‘Environmentally Significant Area’, and a Core Natural Area within the Hamilton area adjacent to the Parkway Belt West Plan Area.”

"Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."
– Kenneth Boulding

Dundas Storage Facility OMB continued...

"The evidence of Mr. John was quite clear that he sees the proposed Official Plan Amendment as a fundamental shift way from concept of limited development on the site that does not destroy the essential 'open space' nature of the land," notes the OMB officer. "If the amendments were approved, it would as Mr. John stated, make it clear that this was not an open space site but instead should be construed as a site to be fully developed. This in the Board's finding would alter the delicate balance established by current Official Plan policy for the sensitive development of the property."

Atcheson concludes such a change would contradict numerous decisions of both Dundas and Hamilton. "The municipalities over the years have made conscious and deliberate planning decisions to maintain the open space character of this site due to its proximity to Cootes Paradise Wetland Complex, an Environmentally Sensitive Area. The municipality has put policies in place to ensure that even limited development of the site is undertaken in a manner that respects the unique character of the

area."

John's original report to council cited approval of the change by the city's Environmentally Significant Areas Impact Evaluation Group (ESAIG), but Atcheson makes clear that group only has an advisory role. "The Board notes that the (ESAIEG) committee is an advisory body set up by the municipality and is not a decision-making body nor has city council delegated any of its determinative or approval functions to this body," states the OMB decision. City planning reports often cite ESAIEG approval as a factor in acceptance of development proposals – including the controversial St Joseph Villa condo towers application expected to be decided on March 23.

CATCH (Citizens at City Hall) updates use transcripts and/or public documents to highlight information about Hamilton civic affairs that is not generally available in the mass media. Detailed reports of City Hall meetings can be reviewed at www.hamiltoncatch.org. You can receive all CATCH free updates by sending an email to

"That's the thing
about Mother
Nature, she
really doesn't
care what
economic
bracket you're
in."

- Whoopi
Goldberg

A New Model of Human Settlement (Part 2 of a 3 Part Series)

PART 2 The Transition Initiative—*Jack Santa Barbara*

This is the second in a 3 part series that looks at the unsustainability of modern human settlements.

The Transition Town initiative began a few years ago in a small Irish community and has spread to 100's of communities around the world (www.transitiontowns.org). It evolved out of concern for the impacts of climate change and energy descent on where people live and work. It is a grass roots initiative that recognizes the challenges ahead, and takes responsibility for preparing one's community. There is also recognition that

governments are missing the boat addressing these challenges and that people have to take the initiative to provide security for their families' future.

Part of the Transition Initiative involves public education about climate change and energy descent. But the most personal energy and enthusiasm is generated by people taking on projects to actually begin the transition to a low carbon, energy conserving future in their community. Despite the serious challenges being addressed most Transition Initiatives have a very positive, upbeat flair about them. The taking action in doable bites moves beyond the gloom and doom of many climate and peak oil groups, and makes for an engaged community. In many ways, the initiative is

about building community links as part of creating the local resilience needed to make the transition. Building a positive vision for the future is an integral and energizing part of this process.

In addition to the website mentioned above the Transition Initiative provides a variety of resources to assist local groups to get going. An excellent handbook is available online, various videos of other groups, and start up training is available if desired. The handbook provides a well thought out approach to starting a group, and has many practical suggestions and examples. Recognizing the uniqueness of each community there is considerable encouragement to use the suggested approach in any way that suits a particular group. Since the movement is all about relocalization of essential goods and services, it is only appropriate that site specific approaches are adapted.

When groups come together to create their vision of a low carbon, low energy future, they typically focus on a variety of areas, with the emphasis on those the group feels are most important. Three basic questions are asked of one's community: 1. What are the

most important local impacts of climate change and energy descent likely to be? 2. What is already in place to prepare for the changes that are coming? And 3. What do we need to do to ensure we have a resilient community to deal with any unmet needs?

Typical areas that people become engaged in include: local food production; local renewable energy projects; transportation; relocalization of basic industries; local currencies; education; health care; learning from the elders (who generally have a lot more knowledge about frugal living); and housing. The idea is to come up with an "Energy Descent Plan" for your community, and then get to it.

Jack Santa Barbara has been a member of the Conserver Society for a number of years before moving to NZ to become involved in designing and developing a sustainable village – the project described in Part 3 of this three part series. He and his wife, Joanna, are also involved in the Transition Towns Initiative described in Part 2 of this series.

Call for Nominations

The Conserver Society Board is seeking nominations for the 2010-2011 Board of Directors.

If you are interested and able to contribute, please contact Alison Healing, Nomination Committee at contact@conserversociety.ca.

Being a board member involves spending between 5-6 hours a month to prepare for and attend meetings in the Hamilton area and contribute to projects that the Society plans and implements.



2009-2010

Board of Directors

Chair

Pete Wobschall

Vice-Chair

Vacant

Treasurer

Warren Beacham

Secretary

Christine Brown

Membership

Director

Dave Robinson

Newsletter Editor

Pete Wobschall

Member-at-Large

Don McLean

Laurel Harrison

Moving is NOT an Option—Program Update—Part 1 of 2

Program update from Environment Hamilton's Brenda Johnson—Part 1 of 2.

Grant [facilitated through a sponsorship with the Conservers Society] is \$50,000 from the Hamilton Community Foundation started July '09 to June '10.

This project is divided into 2 parts. One part of this project is to help community hubs address their environmental issues and other part of this project is to help schools address their environmental goals.

Residents - This component of the project is to assist residents with their environmental issues. I am lucky to have Juby Lee as my assistant with Passport to Hamilton and some of her time is overlapped with mine to help with community gardens in this project. The McQueston community is currently supporting a community garden with an addition of a glass dome being built by teenagers. Juby is a member of this group as a representative of EH. The Keith neighbourhood also has a community garden that EH is helping to upgrade and expand that garden with the help of the area councillor Bernie Morelli.

In the summer of 2006 EH performed a transit survey with the goal of reinstating the Wentworth 12 bus route. We needed to prove that there was once again a need for the bus route. EH along with residents presented the results of the survey that showed that the bus route was needed to the City of Hamilton council.

In 2007 the Wentworth 12 was reinstated but due to budget restrictions, the bus route was limited to 8 hours per day. The schedule was determined to accommodate the shifts at the General Hospital as well as the area schools opening and closing times; therefore the bus runs Monday to Friday for 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the late afternoon. This sporadic schedule and lack of marketing has not made this route very popular and the HSR has hinted that this bus route maybe cancelled again. So EH is working on a campaign to market the Wentworth 12. This marketing campaign needs to include co-ordinating the 3 churches, over 12 social service providers, the Robert Land Community Association and the General Hospital staff to educate the residents, patients and clients the value of taking the Wentworth 12 and transit in general.

EH is once again in negotiation with Union Gas to continue their winterization program in Hamilton. In 2008 Union Gas requested 25 names of those who were low income (no proof needed), owned their own home, Union Gas customers and the homes must be 25 years or older. Due to the timing of the 2008 project (3 weeks prior to Christmas) only 14 homes were completed. Union Gas is prepared to spend up to \$5,000 per home insulating and weather stripping homes to ensure lower utility bills for the home owners.

Part 2 next newsletter...

**"It's a job that's
never started
that takes the
longest to
finish."**

- J.R.R. Tolkien



**The Conservers Society is a
again supporting
the Hamilton
ECO Film & Arts
Festival in 2010.**

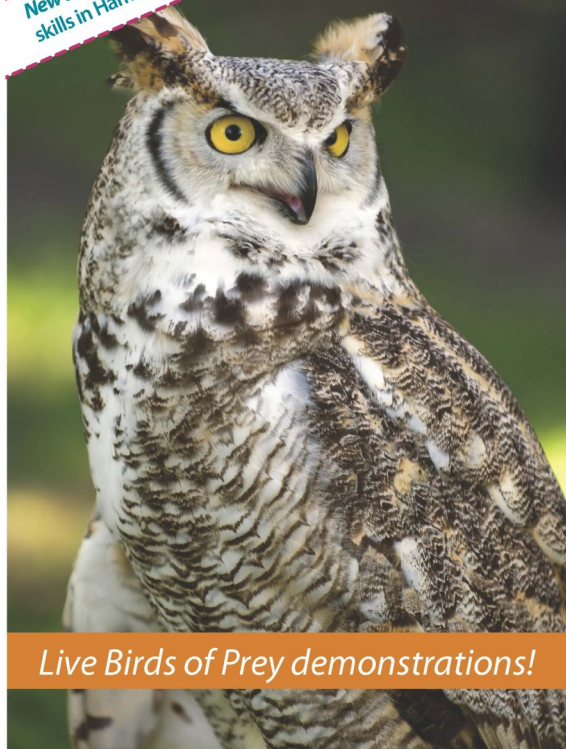
Walk for Nature

Saturday, May 8, 2010
(Rain or Shine)

Royal Botanical Garden's Nature Centre & Arboretum



New this year! Practise your sleuthing skills in Hamilton's first "Nature Quest" adventure.



Live Birds of Prey demonstrations!

Join us on a 5 or 10km walk to raise funds and celebrate nature, the healthy outdoors and each other!

Bring your Mom! Bring your boss! Walk for Nature and take a hike to a waterfall, go Nature Questing, and enjoy fun family activities. At the same time you will be helping to support local groups that work to protect nature in the Hamilton area. Talk to your family, friends and colleagues, and ask them to sponsor you on the Walk for Nature. Ask your colleagues to walk as a team and raise money for Nature together. Let's make this the largest annual walkathon for the environment!

Registration 8:00am to 10:00am

Free refreshments for everyone!

Top fundraisers and Nature Questers will be eligible for special prizes, and everyone who raises \$110 or more will receive a thank you gift.

For sponsor forms and more information, visit www.hamiltonnature.org or give us a call at (905) 524-3339.

Partners

Hamilton Naturalists' Club • Green Venture • Conserver Society of Hamilton & District
Royal Botanical Gardens • Hamilton Conservation Foundation

Special Thanks to our Supporters!



"The superior man seeks what is right; the inferior one, what is profitable."

— Confucius

Schools Share Green Experiences

Hamilton schools are adopting a community approach to environmental education – thanks in large part to on-going educational work by Environment Hamilton in collaboration with the Conserver Society. Last month that resulted in a gathering of over 100 educators and school staff to learn from the collaborative work of the Halton public and Catholic school boards – work that has put them in the forefront of environmental education in the province.

The February 24 meeting was titled “A Tale of Two Boards: A Community Approach to Environmental Education” and was held at in the Education Centre auditorium at Main and Bay Streets in Hamilton. Presentors Sue Paradiso and Ron Ballentine explained how their two Halton boards work collaboratively on multiple initiatives and partner with community agencies to achieve more effective environmental education programs.

Other speakers included John Malloy and Pat Amos, the respective directors of education for the public and Catholic boards in

Hamilton, as well as Pat Daly and Jessica Brennan, the respective chairs of the two boards of trustees.

The attendees heard that the two Halton boards have a shared recycling contract with their local government. In Hamilton, that’s also true of the Catholic Board, but not the public board which contracts with a private company that limits what can be recycled. That puts students in the latter board in the awkward position of having two different sets of recycling rules – one at school and a different one at home – and has left some of their staff asking ‘why can’t we do the same thing at school as we do at home’.

The joint meeting hopefully will be a step towards more collaborative environmental education work in Hamilton. The event was organized by “Schools Going Green”, a grassroots initiative that includes Environment Hamilton, Green Venture, Earth Day Hamilton and staff from both local school boards. *Don McLean*

"Farming looks
mighty easy
when your plow
is a pencil, and
you're a
thousand miles
from the corn
field."

– Dwight D.
Eisenhower

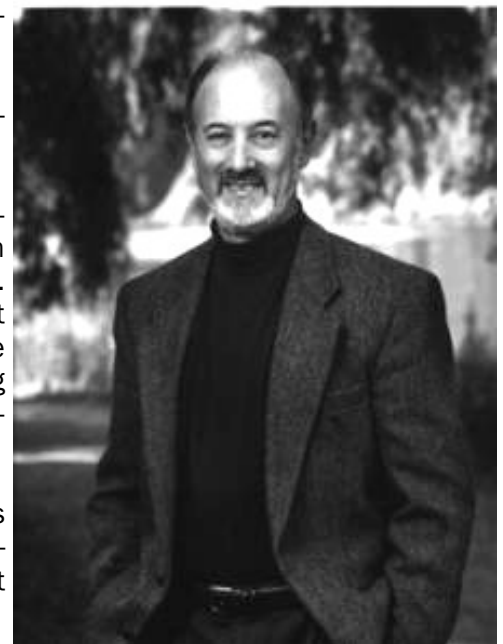
Environment Hamilton AGM—April 8th

Join Environment Hamilton for their Annual General Meeting on **Thursday, April 8th, 2010** at 7pm.

Where: Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Education Centre Auditorium (100 Main Street West)

The keynote speaker this year is Dr. Peter Victor. Dr. Victor is an economist by training and a faculty member in the Environmental Studies Department at York University. He recently published a book entitled 'Managing Without Growth - Slower By Design, Not Disaster'. Dr. Victor is one of a growing number of economists who are challenging the logic of infinite economic growth on a planet with finite resources.

Come out to learn more about Environment Hamilton's activities over the last year, to connect with other eco-minded Hamiltonians, and to find out how you can get involved!



Transit Users Group Update

In late October last year, the TUG presented its first report on the electronic survey of Hamiltonians on a renewed vision for transit to City Council. Its overwhelming message that service was not adequate to attract substantial new riders initially seemed to have little effect. But the effort, supported financially by the Hamilton Community Foundation, and administered by Conservers, seems to have slowly giving renewed energy to efforts by the HSR and by some council members to think creatively about service improvements.

The survey, our final report to the Foundation, and other presentations made to Council at that time, will be available soon on the organization's web site at hamiltontug.net. You can still fill in the survey if you haven't already. Our experience says that we need to continue to build on the ideas already submitted.

Many will be disappointed that Council chose to raise fares without raising service. However, the debate did spark one member of Council, to renew his efforts to convince his colleagues to use some of the Federal Gas Tax revenue for service enhancement. HSR staff will be reporting in May with a response to Brian McHattie's resolution as well as the Operational Review report.

The TUG continues to monitor the situation and there will be meetings to discuss strategy before the end of March. Details will be

available on the website and you can also sign up for a direct contact list there.

One of our immediate concerns is the non-release of the HSR Operational Review which we believe bolsters our case. It is simply unacceptable that we know the information is there, that HSR management is working on proposals based on it's contents, and there will be no process of public engagement for nearly a year. That's if the reports we have been told about go forward this May. We will be working with allies like the Amalgamated Transit Union, and local environmental and anti-[poverty groups to open this process to the general public.

Discussion of transportation in Hamilton seems to have been dominated by discussions of LRT for the last two years. Supporters of the Transit Users Group understand that this is only one piece of the transportation puzzle. We will continue to work to convince this council and the one to be elected to succeed them this fall that the economic, social and environmental strategies of the community require a demonstrated commitment to a comprehensive transportation strategy that includes, transit, cycling and safe pedestrian policies in addition to building roads and large capital projects. *Peter Hutton*

"Fall is my favorite season in Los Angeles, watching the birds change color and fall from the trees."

— David Letterman

Join the Conserver Society Today!

The Conservers plays an important role in our community. As one of only a few registered charities Hamilton, many other groups rely on our sponsorship to access funding for their beneficial programming and activities.

We need your membership more than ever—please consider joining the Conserver Society today.

Please use the membership form at the end of this document.



Conserver Society of Hamilton and District

P.O. Box 89002,
991 King St. W.
Hamilton, ON L8S 4R5

Phone: 905.540.8787 ext 17.
E-mail: contact@conserverssociety.ca
Website: www.conserverssociety.ca

Conserving the environment for over 22 years in Hamilton.

The Environmental Advocate is published 2 or more times a year by the **Conserver Society of Hamilton and District Inc**, a non-profit, non-partisan citizen organization concerned with the environment in the region at the western end of Lake Ontario.

Editor: Pete Wobschall

Submissions for the Newsletter are invited and should be sent to the mailing address or to the editor at contact@conserverssociety.ca (Email submissions preferred, please)

The **Conserver Society of Hamilton & District Inc** is a registered Charitable Organization. Tax receipts are available.

Basic membership fees are \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, (half price for low-income) and \$40 for an organization.

We welcome donations in addition to the basic membership fee.

EARTH Day Hamilton-Burlington Report

The Conservers were instrumental in assisting with funding the TIM HORTONS EARTH Day Hamilton-Burlington Eco-festival 2009. Following is a report from the event coordinator:

The 13th annual Earth Day Eco-Festival was the largest and most popular to date. The event was filled beyond capacity within 36 hours of opening online registration.

5,500 grade 4, 5 and 6 students from across Hamilton and Halton attended over 4 days. From arrival at 9:30am until they departed at 2pm, they took part in 30-minute sessions consisting of hands-on workshops, interactive exhibits, live wildlife presentations, and guided nature hikes (ranging from 30 – 75 minutes long). At lunchtime students gathered and were wowed by the Mother Earth Native Youth Drummers.

Both of the Royal Botanical Gardens Centres (Main Centre and Nature Interpretive Centre) were used simultaneously to deliver this program to as many students as possible.

Admission and transportation were free allowing over 700 students to come from our most disadvantaged areas.

The highlights of the day:

- Guided nature hikes.
- Live raptor presentations - getting close to hawks, owls, vultures, and falcons and learning about their needs.

- Live reptile presentation on endangered species thrilled the students who were actually able to touch some of the creatures.
- Inside students experience flora, fauna, and discovery in indoor ponds, the Mediterranean and Bulb Gardens, and the Children's Discovery Garden.
- Outdoors, the children hike through trails, meadows, wetlands, ponds, and forests with naturalist hike leaders providing information.
- The Green Roof Building workshop with a local engineering firm who assisted students in building an actual green roof.
- The Who Wants to Be an Earth Day Millionaire workshop where students answering eco-questions can win money for greening projects at their school - a perennial favourite.
- The Adopt-A-Pond workshop by Toronto Zoo.
- The amazing youth volunteers from high schools, college, and university who present workshops or act as volunteer guides.
- The children's excitement

Earth Day Hamilton-Burlington is appreciative of the support from the Conserver Society, who helped make the Eco-Festival possible. *Laurel Harrison.*

Conserver Society of Hamilton & District 2010 Membership Application or Renewal Form

Your membership fee enables us to be an effective voice for a healthy, sustainable environment in Hamilton and the surrounding area. As a member in good standing, you will be entitled to receive the Environmental Advocate (our newsletter), participate in projects and activities of the Society and its chapters and vote at our Annual General Meeting.

The Conserver Society is a non-partisan, registered charitable organization. We gratefully accept donations above the basic membership fee. You will receive a tax receipt for the amount of your membership fee and any donations you choose to make.

Please print this form, fill it out and return it with your cheque to:

Membership Director

Conserver Society of Hamilton & District

Box 89002, 991 King St. West

Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4R5

Yearly (2010) Membership Fee Individual _____ \$20 Family _____ \$30 Organization _____ \$40

(Individuals or families on low incomes are entitled to request a 50% reduction in fees.)

I would like to make an additional tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

.

I am submitting a total of: \$ _____

Cheques should be made payable to Conserver Society of Hamilton & District.

Member Information

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Check here if this is a membership renewal: _____

Please direct the chapter portion of my membership fee to the following chapter:

_____ Ancaster _____ Dundas _____ Hamilton

If you do not specify a chapter, your entire fee will be directed to the parent body and allocated to Conserver Society activities as needed.

Thank you!