

The Bard Eco Reader

The official blog of the Bard Center for Environmental Policy

Climate Carnivals and UNEP Conferences

Posted on **December 5, 2012** by **LeAnne Harvey**
by LeAnne Harvey

The Human Impacts Institute is a non-profit organization that uses creative approaches to bring environmental issues to the surface in communities. They motivate individuals, organizations, and communities to take action to mitigate climate change and promote sustainable lifestyles. Through experiential education, creative engagement, and collaborative partnerships they bring awareness to communities not only in Brooklyn, where they are based, but to international communities as well. They provide an avenue for information across organizations, allowing successful ideas and actions to be shared. Their variety of programs, from the Ecopreneurs project to classes on environmental justice at the HEAF school, allow individuals to take a hands-on approach to the issues that matter to them.

I began working at the Human Impacts Institute as the Environmental Leadership Intern in September. When I first joined the HII crew, they were planning “10 Days of Climate,” a yearly contest where 10 artists create climate inspired pieces that are judged on their effectiveness at engaging people in climate action. My job was to assist the artists in engaging with the public. I was there to explain the pieces and answer any questions about climate. On the 9th day, HII put on a “Climate Carnival” at the East River State Park to draw in a crowd and teach people about climate change and the vulnerability of NYC.



Aside from being a bearded lady, my job has been to strengthen and build the NYC Climate Coalition and MobilizeUS!, two projects of HII. MobilizeUS! was a coalition created to engage and excite individuals and organizations about the Rio+20 conference that was held this past June. My job was to figure out what was in store for the future of the coalition. After reading the outcome document from the conference, “The Future We Want”, this statement resonated with me.

“We note the valuable contributions that non-governmental organizations could do and make in promoting sustainable development through their well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity, especially in the area of analysis, the sharing of information and knowledge, promotion of dialogue and support of implementation of sustainable development” (pg. 10).

Thus, we decided to organize a set of webinars and tutorials to share knowledge on how to effectively communicate sustainable development. We have organized a webinar on “Sustainability and Ethics” and will be holding another one soon on “Movement Building”. The series will continue for year, in an attempt to build capacity for our members. Working on this coalition has introduced me to some amazing people doing great things for climate and sustainability such as the Associate Sustainable Development Officer at the UN and the head of the Earth Charter Initiative in Rio.

The second project, the NYC Climate Coalition, had been gathering dust before I came to the organization. My job was to re-launch this coalition and start a brand new campaign for the year. If you read Taylor Evans’ blog post, you would see that the majority of emission in NYC come from the building sector alone. Therefore, we decided to focus our efforts on reducing those emissions, specifically by increasing the energy efficiency of small businesses. We held our first meeting, one that I organized and co-lead, a few weeks ago, where we shared information on NYSERDA, ConEd, and National Grid’s energy efficiency programs and sent our members out to recruit small businesses in their neighborhoods. I am currently developing the itinerary of the coalition for the next few months and a guide for the next intern so they can take it over.

In addition to the work I’ve been doing on the two coalitions, I have helped with many of the other projects going on at HII. A few weeks ago, I co-organized a press conference for HII with the director, Tara DePorte. The event was to announce our receipt of a solar generator from Green Mountain Energy. I successfully recruited the district Assemblyman and Councilmember to speak at the event. The press we received from the event resulted in a call from Daniel Squadron’s office. I am excited to be meeting with the New York State’s Senator’s Office Director next week to discuss HII’s future plans for the East River State Park.



Left to Right: Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol, Director of HII Tara DePorte, Councilmember Steven Levin, Green Mountain Energy's Casey Schepp with the new solar generator

My work at the Human Impacts Institute thus far has been a wonderful learning experience due to the many opportunities I have been given. While my office hours have been full of researching energy efficiency programs and policies and sustainable development negotiations, my time outside the office has strengthened my education at HII. I have been to fundraising courses at the Foundation Center, tabled at the Environmental Education Expo at NYU, planted flowers on Green Planting Day, lead a class at the HEAF school, attended meetings with the Columbia University's Coalition for Sustainable Development, and now I'm looking forward to attending UNEP's North American Major Groups and Stakeholders consultation in DC. The people I've met and conversations shared provide some of the best information for a student of climate science and policy.

<http://www.bard.edu/cep/blog/?p=3232>