

'The land is sick... the bay is but a symptom'

Bay Shore helps save the Great South Bay

BY GRACE MERCURIO

"Pollution doesn't come from the water. It starts on the land. That's why we defend our creeks," said James

Bertsch, the Sayville Creek Defender of Save the Great South Bay. "The land is sick... the bay is but a symptom."

Thus is the philosophy of Save the Great South Bay's Creek Defender model, in which designated local Creek Defenders organize and guide their communities in cleanups and habitat resto-

ration projects to help the bay prosper.

On Sunday, April 13, about 30 volunteers from the Bay Shore community worked to rid Penataquit Creek of debris at a scheduled cleanup. The creek, located in the woods northwest of South Shore Hospital, is one of 50-plus creeks along the South Shore that feed

into the Great South Bay. A fish ladder in Penataquit Creek enables fish in the bay to swim upstream to spawn. Yet, a shocking amount of litter proliferated in the area.

Volunteers quickly got to work to clear the woods and creek. A highlight of the

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CLEAN UP: Volunteers pick up debris from Penataquit Creek

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Bay Shore citizens of all ages volunteered their time on April 13 to clean up the Penataquit Creek with Save the Great South Bay.

All photos courtesy of Save the Great South Bay



Young volunteers like Garrett Kain were best equipped to remove heavy hazards from the creek, such as fallen rotted trees.

cleanup was the removal of a downed tree that had rotted in the middle of the creek. Some of the chunks were estimated to weigh 200 to 300 pounds. With determination and grit, younger volunteers were able to successfully remove it.

"I am always appreciative of those that show up to help in any capacity," shared Bay Shore Creek Defender, Tom Kain. "I was especially happy that my youngest son Garrett showed up with his friends, Rowan and Zachary. Us elders need that kind of help!"

The cleanup was promoted not only by Kain, but also Angela Capone and Heather Hooper Rosario of Northwell Health, and Edward "Eddie" Faser, president of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Bay Shore. With so many cleanup events still to come, Save the Great South Bay is looking for more volunteers to help them succeed in the mission.

"Last year we got 750 volunteers. This year we are shooting for 1,000," said Bertsch. "People have had a great time at all of the cleanups so far—and it is raining on most of them! People are good sports, and they come even though it is cold and they get dirty because it feels good to do something positive."

As the world seems to become more divisive by the day, volunteers can unite under a common goal: doing your part to make your community a sight to be proud of.

"The one issue that everyone on Long Island agrees on is that everyone is pro-environment," noted Bertsch. "In other parts of our country, there is a dichotomy between business and the environment. That is not the case here. I think with the natural beauty of Long Island, it is a non-issue."

To sign up for future cleanups, visit <https://savethegreatsouthbay.org/volunteer/>. ■



Teamwork makes the dream work; a piece of debris with the embroidered word "teamwork" reminded volunteers that their efforts are contributing to a greater purpose.

Support the bay on an oyster-filled night

Join Save the Great South Bay at their Oyster Shindig from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at Coastal Kitchen in Bay Shore. Fresh oysters, delicious passed hors d'oeuvres, ice-cold beer, and sparkling wine will be served. Bobby Digital will grace the shindig to perform live music. You can also learn how to grow oysters for the GSB Oyster project. To purchase your \$50 ticket, visit www.givebutter.com/s5ODYH.