

# Organization Highlight: Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.



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In 1966, legendary folk singer and environmentalist Pete Seeger wanted to preserve a wonderful resource — the Hudson River. He announced he was going to “build a boat to save the river.” Seeger thought if he built a sloop, a single-mast sailing boat that was reminiscent of the ones that sailed on the Hudson River in the 18th and 19th centuries, it would bring people to the river. They would be reminded of its beauty and inspired to clean it up and preserve it. In 1969, the sloop *Clearwater*, a 106-foot vessel, was launched.

Over 50 years later, the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater* continues to inspire students and young adults in New York’s Hudson Valley with hands-on learning experiences aboard the ship. While on the boat, students do a variety of activities, such as examining river life and performing water-quality tests. Plus, they help to raise the sails (after instruction) and navigate the boat.

These unique learning experiences “bring things to life,” said Diane Oktay, interim director of development at the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater*.

Instead of reading about the Hudson River, students are immersing themselves in it, empowering them to become environmental experts of their own.

“Being on the boat on the river makes it abundantly clear how important the Hudson River is to the environment and the economy,” Oktay said. “You can’t avoid seeing it. It’s right there in front of you.”

Not only does the Hudson River provide people with a scenic place to enjoy and relax, but it also is the source of drinking water for the city of Poughkeepsie and several other towns along the river.

Each year, over 15,000 people take part in the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater*’s programs. More than half a million people have experienced their first real look at the Hudson River estuary’s ecosystem aboard the *Clearwater*. The *Clearwater* was named the Tall Ships America Sea Education Program of the Year in 2016.

In addition to educational programs aboard the *Clearwater*, the organization hosts an annual music festival along the Hudson River (June 16-17, 2017, [clearwaterfestival.org](http://clearwaterfestival.org)). The group also has a Green Cities initiative and works with communities along the Hudson River to help incorporate more sustainable practices in their communities.

Oktay suggests that people can help the Hudson River and all rivers by picking up garbage and plastic in their community parks. Plastic can break down into smaller pieces, and this can be dangerous to wildlife.

Seeger’s vision to keep the Hudson River and the communities along it healthy, green and thriving is being fulfilled by the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater*. One sail at a time.



*Clearwater in Action* — A local school group learns how to sail a replica 19th century sloop and about the importance of the Hudson River ecosystem.



Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater* volunteers clean up a river-side park to keep pollutants out of the Hudson River.

## Become an Environmental Leader!

Do you love learning about the environment? Get excited thinking about new ways to care for our natural resources? You might become our next great leader working in an environmental field.

The best way to learn about the environment is to get involved. Many environmental organizations have educational programs designed specifically for students like you who want to learn more and make a big impact.

Take **Envirothon**, for example. It’s an event organized by the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, a group that ShopRite helps fund.

Envirothon is a hands-on environmental competition for New Jersey high school students. Students participate in a day-long outdoor event in which they are tested on their knowledge of all kinds of environmental concepts. You can meet other people who have the same interests as you at events like this.

“Envirothon opens up a wide array of opportunities to students by exposing them to diverse environmental careers from aquatic, forestry, soil and wildlife management,” said Richard Belcher, an education coordinator with the conservation group. “Envirothon also gives students the ability to interact with professionals in each of these environmental fields, which gives them real career exposure.”



*Envirothon* team members are tested on their field identification skills.

The New Jersey Clean Communities Environmental Student Exchange is another event that brings students together. The event sends New Jersey students out to participate in cleanups, nature walks and other environmental activities.

Volunteering with an organization is another great way for you to get more involved with environmental endeavors. You can learn a lot from working closely with environmental professionals who are experts in their fields. And they might inspire you to follow in their footsteps.

Being active and engaged is what matters most. Whether you are



2016 New Jersey Envirothon Participants



13th Annual Clean Communities Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey

participating in an event or picking up trash at a local park, you are showing you are interested in keeping the

environment healthy. This interest just might lead to a rewarding career caring for our planet.