



Friends of Bellport Bay



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Overview and 2023 Initiatives



- FoBB's mission is to improve the water quality and restore habitat in Bellport Bay (and the Great South Bay) through shellfish/oyster restoration, marine habitat support and environmental education.
- Since our founding in 2015, FoBB has planted over **three million shellfish** in Bellport Bay.
- In 2023 alone, we planted one million oysters. As part of our **Operation Ecosystem Restoration**, FoBB planted approximately 500,000 oysters in the Town of Brookhaven's protected 2 acre sanctuary (managed by FoBB), as well as **FoBB's SOS initiative** – which planted 500,000 additional spat (juvenile oysters) on shell.
- We host community educational seminars throughout the year about:
 - Shellfish restoration for ecosystem health
 - Impacts of nitrogen pollution
- FoBB's initiatives bring the community together and benefit all of Suffolk County:
 - The Bay is a free/public recreational, educational and economic resource utilized by thousands.
- FoBB intends to raise \$100,000 in 2023 to complete our planned initiatives.



Our 2024 Initiatives



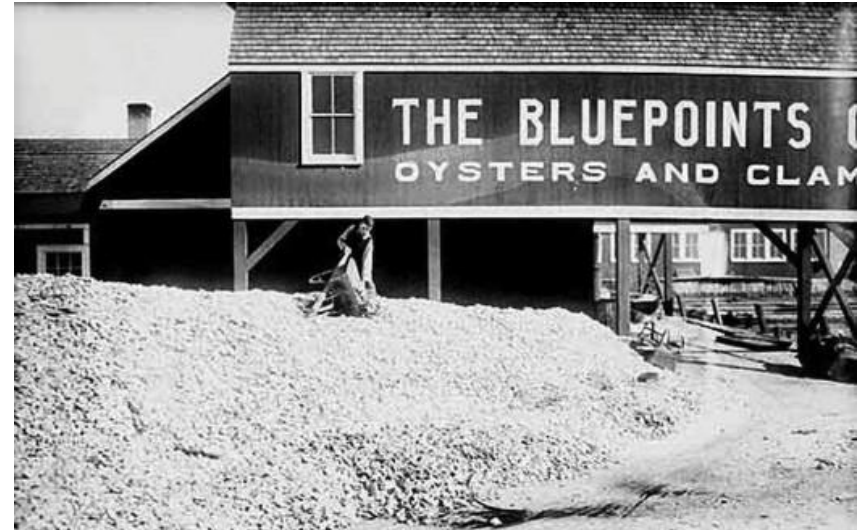
FoBB's goal is to plant an additional 1.5 million oysters in 2024.

- FoBB plans to grow approximately 385,000 oysters to maturity in our Floating Upwelling System (FLUPSY).
- We will continue to partner with the Town of Brookhaven, managing and planting within their 2 acre management area sanctuary.
- Following our success in 2023, we will plant an additional 1 million SOS.
- We will collaborate with local shellfish farmers to plant their over market sized oysters in our protected management area sanctuary.
- FoBB's \$100,000 fundraising activities will pay for:
 - SOS
 - Oyster and marine equipment
 - Restoration and planting efforts out on the water
 - Scientific evaluation and monitoring



Why Oysters

- The Bay ecosystem has collapsed as a result of the decimation of its' one-time abundant shellfish populations, due to rising pollution levels and decades of over-harvesting.
- The Gobler Laboratory at Stony Brook University found that, ""In over a decade, we have now hit an all-time low in water quality on Long Island,"(July, 2023)
- However, by restoring shellfish populations, this downward-spiraling trend is being reversed.
- A healthy, robust Bay ecosystem begins with a viable and sustainable shellfish population.



Heaps of discarded Blue Point Oysters shells (LI) — Early 20th C



Young oysters growing in FoBB's nursery — 2023

Why Oysters — “Ecosystem Engineers”

A single mature oyster can filter up to fifty (50) gallons of water per day, removing excess nitrogen, reducing harmful algal blooms and improving water quality.



- Oysters have an extremely efficient method of filtering water.
- Oysters are a “keystone” species, as oyster reefs provide habitat for other marine species, and strengthen and protect shorelines with substrate.
- “*Ecosystem Engineers*” - Professor Christopher Gobler of Stony Brook University’s School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, referring to bivalves (including oysters and other shellfish).

Volunteers and Interns



- FoBB is an organization with activities supported by volunteers, students, and interns.
- Experienced local professionals volunteer their time to carry out FoBB's initiatives.



- FoBB provides 6-8 high school students with paid internship positions annually, as part of a collaboration with the local Title 1 public high school, and the areas' Boys and Girls Club.
- Our internship program provides students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience, working alongside scientists and experts in the field of environmental conservation.

Sustainability and Outcomes - CCESC & DEC

- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County (CCESC) reviews and monitors FoBB's operations with annual sanctuary SCUBA dive visits:
 - Oyster growth and survival rates are recorded, analyzed and filed with CCESC and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).
- CCESC has determined that FoBB's oyster survival rate is an impressive 75% (above average) and they have found evidence of recruitment in our Town dedicated FoBB management area.



- Since FoBB's founding in 2015, and the fact that we have planted three (3) million oysters, we have achieved a filtering (cleaning) level of approximately 90-100 million gallons of Bay water per day as of 2023.
- Based on abundance and diversity of species recorded around FoBB planting sites, we see substantial improvements in the overall health and biodiversity of the Bay ecosystem.

Our Partners



The Anderson-Rogers Foundation to help restore shellfish populations in the Great South Bay.

Bellport Environment Committee on educating the public on native plantings to mitigate nitrogen runoff into the bay

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County (CCESC) conducts research for FoBB on oyster growth rates, population stability and ecosystem health.

The Gardener Foundation to help restore shellfish populations in the Great South Bay.

The Gino Macchio Foundation donated tens of thousands of oysters from Great South Bay farmers, and donated them to FoBB for planting.

The Iroquois Foundation awarded FoBB a grant to aid in our mission efforts.

The Island Outreach Foundation awarded FoBB a grant toward Operation Restoration.

J.M. Kaplan Fund to help restore shellfish populations in the Great South Bay.

The Long Island Community Foundation (LICF) awarded FoBB a grant for oyster aquaculture.

The Nature Conservancy, Pew Charitable Trusts and U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as part of the Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) initiative.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for permitting and monitoring our plantings.

PSEGLI PSEGNJ awarded FoBB grants for shellfish restoration in 2022.

The Town of Brookhaven donated thousands of oysters, and awarded FoBB 2 acres for a shellfish restoration/management site.



ANDERSON-ROGERS FOUNDATION



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The FoBB Team



Thomas Schultz

Co-Founder & Director of Shellfish Restoration Program

Thomas resides in Bellport Village where he and his wife Mary are raising three young daughters. After holding a position as a Legislative Assistant for the NY State Assembly, he decided to open Gallery 125, a fine arts gallery in Bellport, which produces several art exhibitions each year. In 2015, he produced an exhibition spotlighting sculptures created by Katia Read. Katia's pieces capture the natural shapes and forms found on the Bay bottom including that of shellfish. They decided to donate a percentage of proceeds from art sales to efforts related to shellfish restoration in the Great South Bay. This early collaboration led to the creation of FoBB in 2015.



Katia Read

Co-Founder & Board Chair

Katia is an environmentalist and artist. She earned a BFA in sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work has been exhibited at The Drawing Center, Rose Burlingham Gallery, NYC, Gallery 125, and the Marquis Gallery in Bellport. In 2015, with Thomas Schultz, Katia co-founded Friends of Bellport Bay on an environmental and planting mission aimed at recreating lost habitat and improving water quality in the Bay. Katia and her husband Howard raised their two daughters in Bellport and NYC.



The FoBB Team

Maria Slavnova

Co-Director

Maria has volunteered with FoBB since 2020. She is currently a student at Stony Brook University, working towards earning her Degree in Psychology. She obtained her NYS boating license through BoatEd in 2021. Through her time at FoBB, she has cultivated a passion for preserving the environment, in which she hopes to spread to Bellport youth.



Ellis Kocay

Co-Director

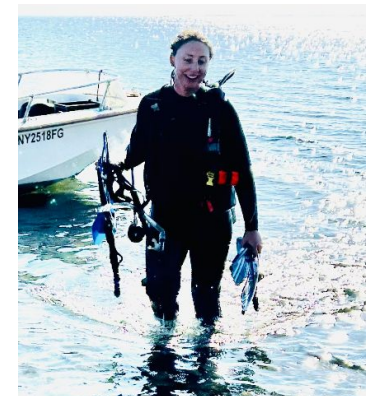
Ellis has been working with FoBB since 2022, and their other experiences include co-founding Four Girls For Families, interning at Alliance for Clean Energy New York, and conducting original social science research with Dr. Lisa Anderson. Ellis' passion for climate justice drives their commitment to the betterment of Bellport Bay, as well as their intended career in advancing green and equitable urban planning. Ellis is a 2023 graduate from Tufts University where they studied Sociology, Political Science, and Urban Studies.



Christina Woodard

Co-Director

Christina is a Stony Brook University undergraduate, working toward a degree in Marine Vertebrate Biology. Currently also working as an intern in the Gobler lab, she has 3 years of experience with shellfish planting as well as water quality monitoring. With concern about the environment she enjoys helping create ecosystems that are more resilient to climate change and other stressors.



The FoBB Team (cont.)



FoBB Board Members:

Rae Specht - Rae is a Junior at Cornell University studying Environmental Sustainability Science and English. She is the co-founder of Four Girls for Families, a nonprofit that specializes in clean drinking water access in Cambodia. Rae is also a writer and contributing editor for Earth.org, an environmental news organization based in Hong Kong, and a writer for the Cornell Daily Sun. She grew up in Bellport, NY, spending her summers exploring the Bay and combing the shoreline for shells to make into jewelry (a hobby that she still enjoys today). She formally joined the FoBB Team in 2020.



Amanda Burden - Principal at Bloomberg Associates, an international philanthropic consultancy advising mayors around the world to help improve the quality of life of their citizens; previously, she was the New York City Planning Commissioner during the Bloomberg Administration from 2002-2013.



Tara Kavanagh - Practicing lawyer in Bellport for over 25 years. Tara is a graduate of Fordham University and Fordham Law. Her practice is focused on the areas of real estate, estate planning, and estate administration. Previously, she was a member of the Town of Brookhaven Planning Board from 2005-2019. She currently serves on the Village of Bellport Golf Commission. Tara lives in Bellport with her husband, Tom Ford, where they raised their four daughters.



The FoBB Team (cont.)

FoBB Board Members (cont.):

Howard Read - Co-Founder and partner of Cheim & Read, a contemporary art gallery, located in Chelsea and the upper east side, NYC. Howard also serves on the Bellport Environment Committee, focusing on improving environmental conditions for Bellport residents. He and his wife Katia are long time residents of NYC and Bellport.



Peter Schulte - Managing Partner, CM Equity Partners; he serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations, including the Rainforest Alliance and Lasell University, and is a former member of the boards of Marymount School in New York City, Deerfield Academy, Center for Business and the Environment at Yale University and the New York League of Conservation Voters.



Habibatu Yanni - Habiba holds a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from SUNY Farmingdale. She is the Lead Program Instructor for Sciences and Arts at Morrison Mentors. Her hobbies include equine therapy leading and swimming. She has been working with FoBB throughout 2022 and is enjoying the work to benefit our ecosystem.



Oyster Sourcing

- FoBB purchased over 250,000 oysters from Aeros Cultured Oyster Company in April 2023.
- The Town of Brookhaven donated thousands of oysters, and awarded FoBB 2 acres for a Shellfish Management Area.
 - FoBB purchases thousands of large, overstock oysters, treats them for pathogens, and plants them in our protected 2 acre shellfish sanctuary— a collaboration that benefits both parties.

Oyster Growth

- One quarter of these oysters have been grown out from 2-3mm spat (oyster larvae) in FoBB's oyster nursery, consisting of a Floating Upwelling System (FLUPSY), a structure designed to grow spat to maturity.
- The remaining oysters have been grown from approximately 6-8mm in mesh bags inside of garden cages in Bellport Bay.
- Upon growing to approximately 50mm, all oysters have been planted on the Bay bottom via boat.

FoBB in the Press



The Long Island Advance: “Youngsters help improve Bellport Bay water quality” — August 24, 2023

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/youngsters-help-improve-bellport-bay-water-quality.93213#:~:text=Four%20youngsters%20participated%20in%20a.60%2C000%20oysters%20on%20bulkheads%20in>

The Long Island Advance: “Do your job, oyster babies” — August 3 2023

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/do-your-job-oyster-babies.93070>

The Long Island Advance: “Sending out an SOS” — July 24, 2023

<https://friendsofbellportbay.org/press-blog/2023/11/19/newsday-sending-out-an-sos>

The Long Island Advance: “The waters are coming, the heat is coming, have a plan” — July 13, 2022

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/the-waters-are-coming-the-heat-is-coming-have-a-plan.90680>

The Long Island Advance: “A Christmas gift of oysters” — December 16, 2021

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/a-christmas-gift-of-oysters.89517>

Greater Long Island: “Gino Macchio Foundation plants 20K more oysters with Friends of Bellport Bay” — October 25, 2021

<https://greaterlongisland.com/gino-macchio-foundation-plants-20k-more-oysters-with-friends-of-bellport-bay/>

The Long Island Advance: “FoBB Fridays” — August 5, 2021

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/fobb-fridays.88467>

The Long Island Advance: “One million oysters and a new executive director” — April 15, 2021

<https://www.longislandadvance.net/stories/one-million-oysters-and-a-new-executive-director.87834>

2023 Event Posters



BELLPORT-BROOKHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY & FRIENDS OF BELLPORT BAY



HABITAT RESTORATION 101 FOR KIDS SATURDAY, JULY 22, 9-11AM

TOUCH AND FEEL MARINE SPECIES CAUGHT WITH SEINE NETS
TAKE NATURE WALK TO FIND NATURAL ARTIFACTS
MAKE NOTES FOR JOURNAL (PROVIDED TO TAKE HOME)

FOR CHILDREN 5-8 YEARS OLD

FREE, BUT SPACE LIMITED,
REGISTRATION NECESSARY FOR
PARKING PASS AT MOTHERS BEACH

RSVP: DIRECTOR@BBHSMUSEUM.COM

BELLPORT-BROOKHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BELLPORT-BROOKHAVEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAM THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Bellport and Brookhaven Hamlet have a long history of environmental activists and naturalists from Birdsall Otis Edey to Dennis Puleston, and from Maurice Wertheim and Post-Morrow to Isabella Rossellini

PLEASE JOIN US
FOR THE OPENING OF OUR NEW EXHIBITION,
GALLERY TALK AND RECEPTION
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2023
5-7 PM
THE BROWN BUILDING
12 BELL STREET

RSVP HERE

Photo of Carmans River grasses by Michael Skott



The Long Island Advance – August 24, 2023

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Youngsters help improve Bellport Bay water quality

CEED and FOBB provide three-day program

BY GARY HABER

Last week, a group of youngsters from the Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area got to be part of the effort to help improve water quality in Bellport Bay. Four youngsters participated in a five-



Four youngsters from the Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area joined interns from Friends of Bellport Bay to plant 60,000 oysters on bulkheads in the bay as part of an environmental education program funded by the David M. Duffy Jr. Foundation. Courtesy photos

day marine environment education program organized by Friends of Bellport Bay and the Center for Environmental Education and Discovery, that included three days of being out on the water and working with Friends of Bellport Bay interns to plant 60,000 oysters on bulkheads in Bellport Bay.

Oysters are an important source for improving water quality in the bay. Once mature, each oyster can filter as many as 50 gallons of water per day.

The program also included a fishing

trip on the Long Island Sound and an arts-and-crafts workshop at CEED's Washington Lodge headquarters, where students made living seawalls, which will be attached to the bulkheads.

The week was funded through a grant from the David M. Duffy Jr. Foundation, which was started in 2021 in memory of Duffy Jr., a Bellport resident.

Duffy, who died in 2021 at age 39, was an avid boater and passionate about Bellport Bay. That made partnering with Friends of Bellport Bay and CEED a

natural union.

"This would be true to David's vision of life because he loved the bay so much," said Ryan Kelly, a friend, board member, and co-founder of the foundation, which has also funded scholarships for graduating seniors at Bellport High School.

Katia Read, co-founder and chair of Friends of Bellport Bay, said she hopes the youngsters participating in the program come away with an appreciation of Bellport Bay and its ecosystem.

"The bay needs help," she said. ■



L-R: Sally Wellinger, executive director of the Center for Environmental Education and Discovery, and Katia Read, co-founder and chair of Friends of Bellport Bay, helped organize a five-day marine environmental education program for youngsters from the Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area.

Adv/Haber





longislandadvance.net

Do your job, oyster babies

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County delivered and released, with Friends of Bellport Bay, about 500,000 oyster spat on shell, hatched in Southold, at the end of the Bellport Village dock last Thursday morning. The FoBB's Spat on Shell initiative was planted into the bay bottom in sustainable areas in Bellport waters.

"Lorne Brousseau, marine program director from Cornell Extension in Southold; Gregg Rivara, Cornell aqua-

culture specialist; and Jessie Hopkins, shellfish restoration field tech, transported the SOS by truck from Cornell in Southold to Bellport," said Katia Read, FoBB co-chair, in an email. "The Cornell team worked with six FoBB volunteers and carried crates of SOS, each weighing about 40 pounds, out to plant on the bay's shoreline. Cornell will be monitoring the SOS planting."

The planting took a little under two hours. Brookhaven supervisor Ed Romaine met the group at the dock and has been supportive of FoBB's program.

Spat start out as tiny larvae, a result of oyster reproduction. The larvae navigate the water column seeking an appropriate habitat with a structure to latch onto. Once they are permanently attached, they're known as spat. Spat then evolve into juvenile oysters. The Aquaculture Program at Cornell hatchery and nursery grow the spat in a controlled laboratory environment until they are large enough to be planted in the bay, Read explained.

-Linda Leuzzi



Friends of Bellport Bay co-founder and director of restoration program Thomas Schultz, with co-director Maria Slavnova and co-director Ellis Kocay.



Placing oyster spat in Bellport Bay so they can grow and filter water.

Courtesy photos

The Long Island Advance – July 24, 2023

OUR TOWNS

BELLPORT

SENDING OUT AN 'SOS'

Nonprofit group restoring bay's shellfish habitat, one baby oyster at a time

BY CARL MACGOWAN
carl.macgowan@newsday.com

Someday, Bellport Bay may be Long Island's second oyster bay.

That's the dream of a Bellport nonprofit that plans to plant 1 million oysters this year — and 30 million over the next decade — in waters off the South Shore village.

Amid heat advisories and blustery breezes that kicked up whitecapped waves, a half-dozen volunteers waded a few feet offshore July 27 and planted the first of 500,000 baby bivalves that will be deposited at the end of Bellport's South Howells Point Road.

The effort was a low-tech attempt to address one of Long Island's most vexing problems — the loss of oysters and clams and the once-thriving industry they spawned more than a century ago.

"It's our job to take care of the place we live, or the place we play," said Thomas Schultz, 57, director of water operations for the nonprofit Friends of Bellport Bay. The group's volunteers are among many Long Islanders involved in efforts to save local waters and restore shellfish habitat.

"Bellport Bay is a place where I've always had much pleasure from," Schultz said, "so I feel it's my duty to protect this place that has given me so much, so that my children and their children can have the benefit of a healthy and viable ecosystem."

Officials describe such seeding programs as vital to the health of bays, noting oysters serve as prodigious natural filters that remove harmful nitrogen from the water.

Long Island's once-thriving oyster industry — which stretched from Oyster Bay in Nassau County to the East End and Great South Bay — declined

four decades ago, largely due to pollution and overfishing.

Friends of Bellport Bay, which is overseeing the spat on shell (SOS) program, purchased \$20,000 worth of oyster larvae from Cornell Cooperative Extension in Southold, Schultz said. Funds were raised from donations, he said.

When larvae attach themselves to rocks or other hard objects, the infants are known as "spat." Shells donated by restaurants were placed in the bay — lining the remains of an old bulkhead — to provide hard surfaces for the spat.

Gregg Rivara, a Cornell Cooperative Extension aquaculture specialist, said it takes about 18 months for spat to mature, adding they spawn once a year. It will be years before enough oysters survive to rebuild the population, he said.

"It could be a decade [or] decades," he said. "It depends on a lot of factors."

Studies have found oysters in New York typically live only four to five years amid threats from parasites, pollution and warming waters. The survival rate of oysters in Bellport Bay is 74.9%, compared with 66% in Oyster Bay, according to one recent study.

Using the remains of the bulkhead — lost in some long-ago storm — was part of the group's philosophy of reusing available resources whenever possible, Schultz said.

He and Rivara said the oysters, as they grow, will "knit" themselves into a reef that will help protect the shoreline.

"Spat on shell will eventually mature, creating little oyster reefs, which not only filters the water but also creates habitat for other bay bottom species, such as crabs and flounder and fluke," Schultz said. "Any other species that live in our bay will benefit from a spat on shell program."



Gregg Rivara of Cornell Cooperative Extension helps plant oyster larvae in Bellport Bay last week.

Oyster program

■ Friends of Bellport Bay's "SOS," or spat on shell, program aims to add 1 million oysters to the bay this year.

Here's how:

■ Baby oyster larvae are grown in Cornell Cooperative Extension's Southold hatchery.

■ Restaurants across Long Island donate used clam and oyster shells to Cornell.

■ Shells are deposited along the Bellport Bay shoreline.

■ Larvae are deposited separately, usually about a day after the shells.

■ Larvae are called "spat" when they attach to the shells — or any hard object they can find, such as rocks, bulkheads and even soft drink bottles.

■ Oysters take about a year to mature and spawn new larvae.

SOURCES: FRIENDS OF BELLPORT BAY; CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The Long Island Advance — July 13, 2022



The Long Island ADVANCE

🏠 News ▾ School News ▾ Entertainment ▾ Hometown Heroes Sports Crime Living

‘The waters are coming, the heat is coming, have a plan’

SCAPE founder Kate Orff presents



Kate Orff, founding principal of SCAPE, gave a presentation about ecological architecture. (Left to right) Amelia Kocay, Eloise Kocay, (back) FoBB co-director Maria Slavnova, (back) Kate Orff, Nikkol Slavnova, co-director Larissa Chraim.

Linda Leuzzi

It speaks volumes when a landscape architect who is passionate about green infrastructure attracts nearly 150 residents into Bellport’s Community Center on an early Saturday night, including several village trustees and members of the village’s newly formed Environmental Committee. But that’s what happened this past weekend when Kate Orff, founding principal of the design firm SCAPE and the first landscape architect to be awarded a MacArthur “genius” grant, took the mic after being introduced by Thomas Schultz, Friends of Bellport Bay co-founder. FoBB sponsored the event, “Undersea on the Edge.”

Orff talked extensively about her Oyster-Tecture initiative.

Orff’s philosophy is simple: “We can’t stop our thinking at the water’s edge,” she told the crowd. “There’s a vibrant landscape beneath the surface. I see this landscape as messy, muddy, and working.”

That includes utilizing reefs, wetlands, dunes, mangrove forests, and trees in creative ways as hedges and quite literally sopper-upper shields against nature’s disastrous flooding events.

What FoBB co-founders Katia Read and Schultz, director of their Restoration Program, have implemented by planting almost 2 million shellfish—mostly oysters—in the Bellport Bay Sanctuary, is right in line with Orff’s philosophy.

(Schultz got a couple of “woo-woos!” when he mentioned their efforts since 2015.)

Orff’s SCAPE takes on master plans for the Mississippi Delta to city plazas and small parks.

One of her early projects in the early 2000s, which she volunteered for with the National Audubon Society while conducting graduate work, was the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The refuge encompasses 12,000 acres of wetlands, dunes, salt marshes, forests and beaches. Her approach included planting oysters, marsh grass, and other natural methods.

But how to do that?

“Jamaica Bay used to be called Grassy Bay,” she said. “But it had changed.”

A big fishing area at one time, European settlers recognized its alluring beaches, but also began utilizing them as a dumping ground for all kinds of waste.

“You have to work within the watershed, the sewershed, also federal, state, municipal entities,” Orff said of that project. She conferred with ecologists and environmentalists and eventually got everyone, including the government agencies, on the same page. The Army Corps of Engineers did a dredge project. A local group with young people planted grasses.

“I wrote about all of this and hit the reset for what I wanted to do,” she said. “How do you build regenerative landscapes?” In 2005, she started SCAPE.

The Long Island **ADVANCE**

A Christmas gift of oysters

Linda Leuzzi

Looking for the perfect gift to make your environmental friend, child, or parent light up?

Want to broaden your philanthropic scope?

Look no more. Friends of Bellport Bay are offering symbolic adoptions of... oysters!

One reason: These gnarly shelled creatures like company. They commonly group or clump together to reproduce and protect themselves from predators and large waves. Another reason: those already planted in FoBB's sanctuary are thriving as they do their natural job, filtering nitrogen. They filter 50 gallons of water daily and live on average for 20 years.

Ah, nature's solution to cleaner waters.

"It took us five years to plant a million shellfish," said Thomas Schultz, co-founder and director of their restoration program. "And last year, the board tasked us to plant 500,000 more for 2021."

In actuality, they planted more.

"We planted 770,000," added Katia Read, co-founder and chair.

"The Gino Macchio Foundation came to the table with us and raised money to purchase overstock oysters from farmers," Schultz said of the extra oysters. "And they were transported to us."

Schultz lauded the Gino Macchio Foundation for their partnering, as well as Brookhaven supervisor Ed Romaine for his oyster-seeding and planting initiatives. "He was instrumental in getting our 2-acre sanctuary," said Schultz.

Schultz pointed out that the nonprofit researches their progress. "We have proof they're creating babies [recreational] oysters," he said.

Former FoBB Maria Slavnova, who's spent hours pitching in, has moved up from student intern to assistant director. "And they're sustaining. We're also about habitat restoration," she said. The oyster sanctuary is just that. A place for the crustaceans to thrive.

"They're not allowed to be taken out of the sanctuary," she added. "It's illegal."

So what would especially entice a person to adopt oysters?


Well, for starters, at \$50 you can adopt 50 oysters and get a printed and digital certificate of "adoption," as well as their updated progress digitally emailed to you and the recipient.

“Friends of Bellport Bay are offering symbolic adoptions of... oysters!”





Gino Macchio Foundation plants 20K more oysters with Friends of Bellport Bay

 NICHOLAS GRASSO

The Friends of Bellport Bay played doctor Saturday morning.

Their patients: 38 oysters.

The nonprofit dedicated to improving the water quality of Bellport Bay since 2015 performed a checkup on a sack full of oysters from a natural reef that's about 1.5 million oysters strong off Bellport Village.

The oysters were picked from the eastern end of the reef, where more than 200,000 oysters donated by the [Gino Macchio Foundation](#) had been planted in the past year.



Workers and volunteers from both nonprofit groups gathered at the dock that warm autumn morning to assess the health and wellness of their collaborative efforts, perform an autopsy on oysters that had died — and breath new life into the bay with an additional 20,000 newly planted oysters.

“The goal is to pull up a sample to demonstrate the survival rate,” said Thomas Schultz, the president and chief of water operations for FOBB. “Traditionally in this field it's been very high. It's been 75%, 80%.”

To retrieve Saturday's sample, FOBB called in Gregg Rivara, a short slender man with 40 years of scuba diving experience and an affinity for marine life since childhood, from the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

“I grew up on Jamaica Bay, working on the water with my father, he was a dock builder,” Rivara said. “I'm gonna be cool as a cucumber down there.”

The Long Island Advance — August 5, 2021

The Long Island **ADVANCE**

FOBB Fridays

Encouraging oysters and environmentalists

Linda Leuzzi

Friends of Bellport Bay executive director Rae Specht sat in the marina gazebo, keeping an eye on the interns and youngsters who arrived early at the FOBB Fridays program last week.

"I wanted to make an oyster-specific camp," said Specht, who added that the interactive inspiration came from programs with CEED. "It's a mix of education [and] also volunteerism for teens 13 to 18. We put them to work in a fun way."

Thirty-two kids have been participants in the FOBB Fridays program in July: three-hour sessions in the morning for 9-to-12-year-olds, three hours in the afternoon for 13-to-15-year-olds.

Before kids started lugging sand and bay water into two tanks positioned at the shoreline, Specht provided a description of the various sessions.

"For the first program, we were rained out, so we went to the Community Center and did gyotaku, Japanese fish painting," she said.

What's that?

In 19th-century Japan, fishermen found a way to record their prize catches, Specht explained. Gyotaku, or fish rubbing, was a way for the fishermen to print inked fish onto paper, creating a permanent record of their size. Nontoxic sumi-e ink was used, a black ink used in writing and painting that could easily be washed off. After the print was made, the fish were released or sold at the marketplace.

"We used local fish (they were already dead) from Mastic Seafood," Specht said of the activity. "Then we brought oysters to the Community Center and did random samplings of juvenile oysters and facts about them."

At another session, "we had Cornell Cooperative Extension talk to us about the importance of eelgrass," Specht added. Burlap discs were made by the youngsters. Cornell would then seed the burlap discs with eelgrass and drop them into nearby areas like Fishers Island and John Boyle Island in the fall.

“Thirty-two kids have been participants in the FOBB Fridays program in July.”



The Long Island **ADVANCE**

One million oysters and a new executive director

Friends of Bellport Bay reach two milestones

Linda Leuzzi

Ten oysters clustered in a circle could be seen at the bottom by a post in front of the Bellport Bay Yacht Club.

Talk about a serendipitous photo op!

"This is a very rewarding moment," said Thomas Schultz, a Friends of Bellport Bay co-founder with Katia Read as they leaned over. "I received emails from people, that they've seen oysters along the shoreline. It means they're settling in."

"People watch out for them," added Read, vice president and chair for the not-for-profit FoBB. (Read started an oyster garden under her backyard dock in 2016 after getting a DEC permit.)

FoBB has planted 1 million oysters since its forming in 2015.

"Our goal is to plant 500,000 to a million oysters in 2021," said Schultz, who is also president. But they've actually hit two milestones; their new executive director is 21-year-old Rae Specht.

"I started working with them last summer when I came home from college early and helped with the growing and cleaning a few times a week," said Specht, who is studying environmental science and English Literature at Cornell University. "I was so inspired and helped whenever I could. Then, all my classes went online."

More young people are coming on board, she said. "We partnered with Bellport High School's Women in Science & Engineering program for students interested in the science field, and also the Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area," Specht said. "There weren't a lot of job opportunities during Covid, so it was a good experience for them."

Friends of Bellport Bay now has two high school interns; Schultz's children 13-year-old Lila, 11-year-old Rowan and 10-year-old Anna have been involved over the last five years along with some others.

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