

Enthusiastic CTK students host unique biodiversity event

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Staff Writer



World-renowned marine animal rights crusader Ric O'Barry was in Georgetown recently to speak to Christ the King students about what they can do to stop the slaughter of a number of species. Co-organizers of the Sonar2Voice concert were students (from left) Jessica Tarka, Jaclyn Artuso and Courtney Quinn.

Photo by Natasha Van Ryn

other schools to follow.

"Think globally and act locally," O'Barry implored the audience.

"Concentrate your energy on what you can do to stop the largest slaughter of marine animals on the planet. And it doesn't take place in Japan, it takes place in Canada. There are about 500,000 seals that will be killed this year and it's not needed because they've increased the (hunters') quotas, even though the European Union has banned all of these skins from Canada. You can do more about that than I can."

O'Barry, who trained the first whale in captivity, said afterward he wished he could bottle up the optimism and energy from the Georgetown concert and "ship it out to the rest of the world."

Another guest speaker, Leah Lemieux, noted that approximately 100 whales are killed yearly in this country, but unlike the U.S., Canada has no marine mammal protection laws.

"There is a worldwide movement to bring about sudden change with respect to these captive dolphins and whales," O'Barry continued.

"Do not count on any government to fix that problem. The solution to that problem is with us, the consumers. We the consumers have all the power. Governments protect corporations, not people or animals. Do not buy tickets for a trained dolphin show."

Knowlton said that the harp seal hunt in the Maritimes will likely be the theme for the second Sonar2Voice concert next spring.

"When we start talking less about the economy and more about the environment— which I hope will happen sooner rather than later— they're going to have to listen to these students and these kids are going to have really informed positions on a variety of things.

"This is a great way to enhance student voices, with young people being made aware. It lets them say something in a very powerful but peaceful way and I think it inspires them. Hopefully we'll get a Japanese school involved next year."

What started with a cancelled class trip to Marineland a year and a half ago resulted in a unique multi-media concert and educational experience for hundreds of students at Christ the King Secondary School recently.

The two-hour Sonar2Voice event for marine biodiversity featured keynote speaker Ric O'Barry, a leading activist against dolphin captivity, along with musical performances that included CTK students.

And through an online Skype connection, about 150 students at the prestigious MAST marine academy in Miami were able to watch the concert on a large-screen TV and participate in the discussion with O'Barry, who trained the five dolphins used in the popular 1960s TV show *Flipper*— only to turn against the "captivity industry" soon after.

O'Barry was the star of the 2009 Academy Award-winning documentary film *The Cove*, which investigated Japan's dolphin hunting culture.

The idea for the concert came somewhat by accident to CTK teacher Mark Knowlton, who had booked a trip to Niagara Falls in the fall of 2009 for his social sciences class to study the conditioning of mammals.

But a few days later, while sitting in on a geography class as a substitute for an absent colleague, Knowlton watched part of *The Cove* and quickly nixed the Marineland excursion.

"I thought that the trip might not be that ethical after seeing the movie. It just blew me away," he said.

Three of his students, Jessica Tarka, Jaclyn Artuso and Courtney Quinn, were also inspired by *The Cove* to do something, and so the wheels for Sonar2Voice were set in motion.

"The hope is that although the dolphins can only communicate their cries in sonar, we can respond to their cries with our human voices— so let's raise them and help get this senseless slaughter to end," Knowlton added.

"All we want to do is inform the people of Japan with our voices so that their own collective conscience can decide. If we can improve our own attitude towards the ocean's wildlife, then maybe that can cause further change, even those few people who kill dolphins in Japan."

O'Barry agreed to fly from Miami for the speaking engagement, despite just having returned from Indonesia after several months of combating dolphin hunters. Knowlton hired Hamilton-based production company Absolute Leadership Development to coordinate the multi-media presentation.

Invitations were sent out to several schools throughout southern Ontario to participate in Sonar2Voice, yet only the MAST Academy expressed any interest.

Knowlton is confident, however, that once the concert and discussion is viewed on YouTube, it will be used as a template for

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Halton Regional Council invites you to consider becoming part of a Citizens' Committee to help provide input into the decision-making process. Appointed until November 30, 2014, members of these groups review and discuss many important issues. These appointments give Halton residents from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to contribute their skills and perspective to enhance the quality of life in our community.

Regional Council wishes to ensure that its boards and committees reflect the diverse nature of its community and invites all residents of Halton to consider these opportunities. An Interview Committee of Regional Council will recommend qualified candidates for these positions to Regional Council.

To apply: Application forms are available on our website www.halton.ca/AdvisoryCommittees, by e-mail to regionalclerk@halton.ca, or from the Office of the Regional Clerk, Halton Region, 1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, during business hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Completed applications must be received at the Office of the Regional Clerk **no later than Friday, May 20, 2011 at 4:30 p.m.** Completed forms may be submitted on-line, by mail or by fax to 905-825-8838.

Susan Lathan
Regional Clerk

Halton Waste Management Site Advisory Committee

Purpose: To advise and assist the Region with respect to off-site impacts due to operations at the Halton Waste Management Site and the monitoring of waste haulage practices in the Region.

Members Needed: 5 citizens, preferably local to the Waste Management Site located at 5400 Regional Road 25, Milton.

Meetings: Twice annually, on the third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. or at the call of the Chair.

Contact: Art Mercer, Supervisor, Landfill Operations, 905-825-6000, ext. 8207.



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