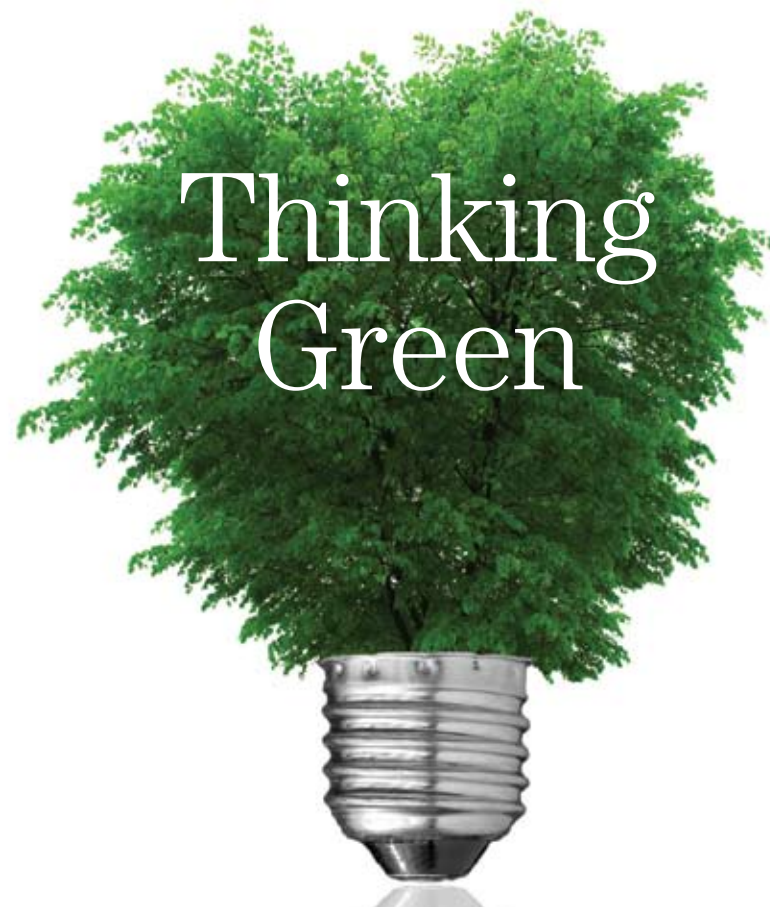




Audubon at Home

JOHN HANNON



Thinking Green

Jeanine Behr Getz shares some of her thoughts on the changing face of Green in Fairfield County

More than thirty five years ago Earth Day propelled the environmental movement into the mainstream of our society. That said, all too often environmentalist get stereotyped as tree-huggers, or people who want to save the whales at the expense of the humans. Here in Fairfield County I am lucky to work with a multitude of people who are the absolute

antithesis of these, or any, stereotypes. They are people who simply have studied the issues, care about the health of their families and their communities, and are making personal and professional decisions to steer their lives in a more environmentally sound manner.

Jeanine Behr Getz is one of those people who defy stereotypical definition. I consider Jeanine an environmental leader here in Greenwich yet she

tells me she does not want any such title. Jeanine sees herself as a working mom, civic volunteer, and engaged community member trying to help her family and community make the best life choices for their health and future.

I recently sat down with Jeanine and asked her how she began this journey and where she sees it taking her.

FCH Jeanine, you have taken on so many environmentally based projects; writing a children's book, starting an environmentally conscious company, working on a Greenwich Town Advisory Committee, to name just a few. I want to ask you what started you down this path, for instance what was the spark that got you to write *Think Green!*?

JBG I have always loved nature but my environmental path started after we moved to Greenwich. While training for a triathlon that included a swim in the Sound I started to study the Sound and the challenges we faced to restore it. I found Audubon and my garden club (Hortulus) to be two of my most valuable resources. From them, I learned about the economic and environmental importance of the Sound.

Later I learned about the easy steps an individual can take to minimize environmental impacts on our community such as choosing native & organic gardening, energy conservation, and simply being more environmentally sensitive. I was inspired to write *Think Green!* by my daughter and by my involvement with Audubon & Hortulus where I found so many inspirational women and men solving tough environmental issues,

educating our communities, and making great strides to improve the health of our children and our environment.

FCH And out of the book came your company **Kids Think Big LLC**, where do you see this business going? Are there other products and/or books in the making?

JBG I am keeping Kids Think Big a grassroots business, making a difference from the youngest on up! Although we are not a 501 (c3) we operate like one. We just started a reading club for older children to share the message of *Think Green!* (and future books) with younger children and win eco-friendly prizes. We added a new reusable shopping bag to our product line,



just for kids, so if mom or dad forgets theirs, the kids won't. I am traveling to schools, libraries, nature centers and

parent groups, reading and educating young children (and adults) on simple ways they can think green everyday and make a difference. We have a new book in process, a couple of very fun new eco-friendly products that will continue to encourage kids to make greener and healthier decisions and a new initiative to encourage kids, parents, schools and neighborhoods to reengage with nature.

We believe "never underestimate the power of children, their will to help, their desire to learn or their need to understand" and hope to continue to bring big ideas to children, via eco-friendly print and electronic media, empowering them at every age.

FCH Moving onto another topic, you were recently selected to test drive the

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Audubon at Home

General Motors prototype version of the Chevrolet Equinox. This is GM's hydrogen Fuel Cell car. Can you tell our readers about the car and how you would rate it and the technology under the hood?

JBG First off, I am not a techy or a car fanatic; I am a working mom on many missions a day. I drove an Equinox Hydrogen Fuel Cell car for 90 days, through rain, snow, and heat waves and I was proud to be the only Mom allowed to idle my car in the pickup line! Zero emissions, only water vapor comes out of the tail pipe. I found the pick up was good (0-60 in 10 seconds), it drove well on the highway and in town; it looked like any other crossover vehicle minus all the GM & hydrogen stickers.

"I drove a Hydrogen Fuel Cell car and I was proud to be the only Mom allowed to idle my car in the pickup line!"



It is electric technology but fueled by hydrogen gas, not regular gas (fossil fuel). The technology is amazing, the body of the car would fit the needs of most families today but the only drawback is infrastructure, nowhere to fuel up right now. The closest fueling stations are in Westchester, NY. If we are going to wean ourselves off of oil dependency we need to build the infrastructure for these alternative fuels. But I loved the car so much I personally didn't mind driving to Ardsley to fill up!

FCH Switching to a cause near and dear to my heart, you have Co-Chaired a very special Audubon luncheon in New York City for several years, our Women in Conservation Luncheon. What got you involved in Audubon and in this event?

JBG I am a strong advocate of celebrating women, their achievements, and encouraging younger women to invest their talents in environmental disciplines. A friend introduced me to Audubon's Women in Conservation Committee. It is an amazing group of women leaders, teaching about and honoring other women who have made and are making environmental differences in all walks of life and at every level from the most local to global in scope. As our Committee grows we hope to establish a mentoring platform for the young scientists, environmentalists and business women of our future. Our Rachel Carson Award is given annually and the monies raised from this event are spent on preserving the Long Island Sound and its surrounding habitats.

FCH Bringing it even closer to home, this May 14th you are Co-Chairing Audubon Connecticut's Environmental Leadership Dinner with Anne Ogilvy right here in Greenwich honoring Fairfield's former Congressman, Chris Shays. Out of all the

events you are asked to participate in, what was the motivation in choosing this one?

JBG: There are many reasons! First, the honoree, Chris Shays; personally I admire all that he accomplished in the 21 years he served the people of our state. He is an environmental leader who has been dedicated to protecting our Long Island Sound and our oceans, addressing conservation of natural resources, and an advocate for diversifying energy resources and reducing greenhouse gases. Secondly, the monies raised from this event are used to continue preservation efforts of the Sound and environmental education programs for our children and communities. And last but not least my co-chair and our committee. Anne Ogilvy is a wonderful friend and environmental advocate and we have the most impressive group of women and men working together to celebrate Chris Shays, Audubon and raise awareness and monies for the Sound.

FCH You are one of those people who is always on the go, volunteering for civic and governmental roles, running a business, taking care of your family, so what is next on the horizon, where will we next see your name being mentioned?

JBG Whenever or wherever you see me or my name mentioned next it will most definitely be related to environmental education and empowerment for our children, advocacy for the Sound and include my ever so supportive husband, daughter, and family.

FCH As I said at the beginning of this article, you do not want to be labeled as an environmentalist as you do not believe in "labels" or stereotypes, so what do you want people to know about you, and what would you ask people to do in their lives to make our community, and world, a better place?

JBG I am a Mom who wants to make a difference and am always inspired and awed by others who do so much already to make our environment safer and cleaner for our children. I enjoy exploring and learning more everyday about the world around me. I would encourage families to go birding with their children, go camping with their children, plant a flower or just sit under a tree and read, enjoy and protect the habitats that sustain us. ■

To learn more about Jeanine Behr Getz's book and projects, visit her website at www.kidsthinkbig.com. Visit Audubon's website at www.greenwich.audubon.org. For more information on our Awards Dinner or anything else environmental, contact me, John Hannan, at jhannan@audubon.org



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