

5-1-2015

Grad student to produce film featuring Sylvia Earle

Sarah Gardner

Dominican University of California, sarah.gardner@dominican.edu

Dave Albee

Dominican University of California, david.albee@dominican.edu

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Gardner, Sarah and Albee, Dave, "Grad student to produce film featuring Sylvia Earle" (2015). *Press Releases*. 313.

<https://scholar.dominican.edu/news-releases/313>

This News Release is brought to you for free and open access by the Communications and Media Relations at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Press Releases by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact michael.pujals@dominican.edu.

Grad student to produce film featuring Sylvia Earle

It was while studying the work of leaders within the environmental justice movement that Barbara McVeigh, a graduate student in the Humanities program, became inspired to address environmental injustices in her own community.

“The first class I took in [Humanities at Dominican](#) was the Eco-Justice class taught by Laura Stivers and Chase Clow, and it really set the tone for my work,” McVeigh says. “We became immersed in the world of environmental preservation and the ethics of stewardship, talking about where the state of our planet is right now and reviewing the work that so many have done.”

During those discussions, McVeigh noticed that the conversation typically focused on the land. She started to form a vision to create an environmental film that would highlight issues related to the oceans.

“As a parent and an educator myself, I see that many people still have their heads in the sand. We hear about the melting polar ice caps but continue going along our daily business as usual,” she says. “I worked on the film with a group of other parents, sailors, captains and scientists who believe this world belongs to our children, but we need to get them connected to their world.”

For the past 10 years, McVeigh had been involved with Sailing Education Adventures (SEA), a non-profit community organization dedicated to promoting sailing through affordable instruction and related on the water activities. SEA is focused on fostering conservation and care of the San Francisco Bay marine environment through active, on-the-water, and related experiences.

“Sailing is an amazing and beautiful way to get connected,” McVeigh says. “Sailing teaches you self reliance while at the same time it humbles you. You must use what you have to connect with the world while recognizing and learning to respect the forces of nature.”

Drawing on her work with SEA – as well as her own family’s background in sailing – McVeigh teamed with filmmaker Carlos Graña of Bazooka Mama Productions, Romberg Tiburon Center and the Derek M. Baylis to apply for a grant from 11th Hour Racing, a program of the Schmidt Family Foundation, to create a film documenting middle school students as they learn how to sail in order to study plankton.

During the week-long sailing course, students not only connect with the natural marine world but also become advocates for its well-being as they learn about plankton, an oxygen source, and what is perhaps the fastest animal on earth – the copepod.

“The grant manager said that ours was the most creative proposal ever received,” McVeigh recalls.

With grant in hand, McVeigh and Graña set about filming immediately with a cast and crew of 12 families, instructors, captains, camera operators, and drone operators. Dominican alumna Meghan Hartnett ’05, program director at SEA, is one of the film’s sailing instructors. Hartnett holds a B.S. degree in [Biology](#) with a minor in Environmental Science.

“We received the grant the end of July and started shooting the third week of August,” McVeigh says. “We really had to move quickly.”

And then came some very good news. National Geographic Explorer in Residence, Dr. Sylvia Earle, had agreed to an interview.

“Carlos and I reached out to Sylvia Earle and were immediately offered an interview. The children interviewed her, and it was beautiful. This was when we realized the gravity of the film with her involvement. The project became bigger and our responsibility became bigger.”

After shooting hundreds of hours of footage over the course of three months, McVeigh and Graña were able to create a 20-minute film ready for an initial screening in December 2014.

“Carlos was incredible to work with. As a brilliant artist, he has passion, compassion and dedication for his film work. He’s also a former SEA member.”

Narrated by Kimball Livingston, editor-at-large at SAIL and an international sailor, [Racing with Copepods](#) has been presented at screenings in both the United States and overseas in schools and science centers, including the California Maritime Academy.

The film was shown at Dominican on March 18 in the Creekside Room. Following the screening, Dominican students were invited to sign up for sailing lessons offered in April through SEA, the [Institute for Leadership Studies](#) in the [Barowsky School of Business](#), and [Dominican Recreational Sports](#).

“There is a great ocean movement happening right now, largely driven by Dr. Sylvia Earle,” McVeigh says. “This is the right film for schools as it will help start arguably the most important conversation of our age. The film helps all of us, including children, consider how land-based minded and human centric we are. Racing with Copepods challenges students to become explorers and to observe their place in the universe in order to rewire their relationship to the ocean and the earth.”