



"Save the Lake" event, 2007

Sally Baker had sewn these fabulously huge orange flags for a Philmont Beautification (PBInc) event called "Save the Lake." She had masterminded the whole event as part of Philmont's 2007 Community Day celebration to bring attention to the threat of invasive species of aquatic plants which were rapidly increasing in our lake. And what an event it was! On the day of, there were kids

involved everywhere, attaching the orange flags to long poles, making "Save the Lake" T-shirts and large banner-style paintings on canvas laid out on the grass. I remember lots of water scenes! Long tables covered with plastic held all kinds of paper, brushes, and paints for the children's creative pleasure. Local artist, Barbara Layman, helped me to set up the finger painting and banner painting activities by creating wonderful stencils of fish, frogs, salamanders, and all kinds of winged insects. It was a brilliant idea of hers to get the kids started painting works of art on the topic of the lake and its preservation. There were educational pamphlets, too, and a fish tank full of live lake creatures. Claudia and Conrad Vispo from the Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program were there explaining each of these creatures to wide-eyed attendees. In all, about 100 people, young and old, gathered at the Community Center for the event, mostly neighbors. Many volunteers had made it happen. A friend sold sandwiches out of a cooler on the lakefront, and hot dogs were being sold out of the old concession stand window.

In the end, PBInc member, Tim Deak, rowed out in a canoe to stand the orange flags in the water--beautiful!--and we tied the banners, still wet and muddy with blue, green and brown paint, to the metal railings at the lakefront in front of the Community Center.

What I remember most was the excitement of the event, the camaraderie of neighbors working together to create this experience, and the feeling that this was, I'd hoped, the start of a new chapter for Philmont. That's how naive I was at the time. In truth, its importance was not as a starting point, but as one of many highlights in the continuing story of hope, initiative, and renewal in Philmont. That story continues. Philmont is a diverse and interesting place to live, and while it's not always so vibrant and colorful, it was on this day, and the people who attended this event were happy and engaged as a community. I was exhilarated about what I felt we had accomplished and where I thought we might be going. Though it was just for a day, it was quite a day!

By Eileen Ordu