

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Plastic-Free Waterways Through Art

2017-2018 Program Overview



Funding provided by the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Any opinions, findings, and/or interpretations of data contained herein are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the opinions, interpretations or policy of Rochester Institute of Technology and its NYS Pollution Prevention Institute or the State.





SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

**CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS**

The Syracuse University Center for Sustainable Community Solutions (SU-CSCS) facilitates the development of sustainable and resilient communities throughout U.S. EPA Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and eight tribal nations) through technical assistance, training, and education-based programs.

<http://efc.syr.edu/>



The Community Grants Program, facilitated by the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I), provides funding for community organizations, municipal departments, and other public sector and not-for-profit entities for projects that raise awareness and understanding of pollution prevention practices and lead to implementation at the local level.

<https://www.rit.edu/affiliate/nysp2i/community-programs/community-grants>



PROBLEM: 8 MILLION METRIC TONS OF PLASTIC POLLUTION PER YEAR

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS POLLUTION

Single-use plastics – such as plastic bags, water bottles, take-out containers, cigarette filters, and microplastics – are a growing threat to New York State waterways and waterways around the world. Through accidental and purposeful releases, these non-biodegradable materials migrate to rivers, lakes, harbors, and eventually the ocean. Recent studies estimate that approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic enter the world’s ocean every year.¹ Once there, single-use plastics persist in the environment and can result in a variety of issues including watershed impediment and flooding, wildlife entanglement and mortality, pollution concentration, and economic loss through decreased tourism.²

Many concerned stakeholders are attempting to stem the flow of single-use plastics through innovative collection technologies and by organizing regular clean-up events. However, without complimentary source reduction initiatives (i.e., decreasing the production and consumption of single-use plastics through the widespread adoption of reusable alternatives), the remediation of waterways polluted by plastic is an issue that will have to be managed indefinitely.

SOLUTION: SOURCE REDUCTION VIA REUSABLE ALTERNATIVES

PLASTIC-FREE WATERWAYS THROUGH ART

Through NYSP21’s Community Grants Program, SU-CSCS developed the “Plastic-Free Waterways Through Art” program to harness the engaging and thought-provoking strengths of artistic expression to (1) raise awareness among New York State residents about water pollution caused by single-use plastics, and (2) inspire the adoption of reusable alternatives as a means of source reduction.

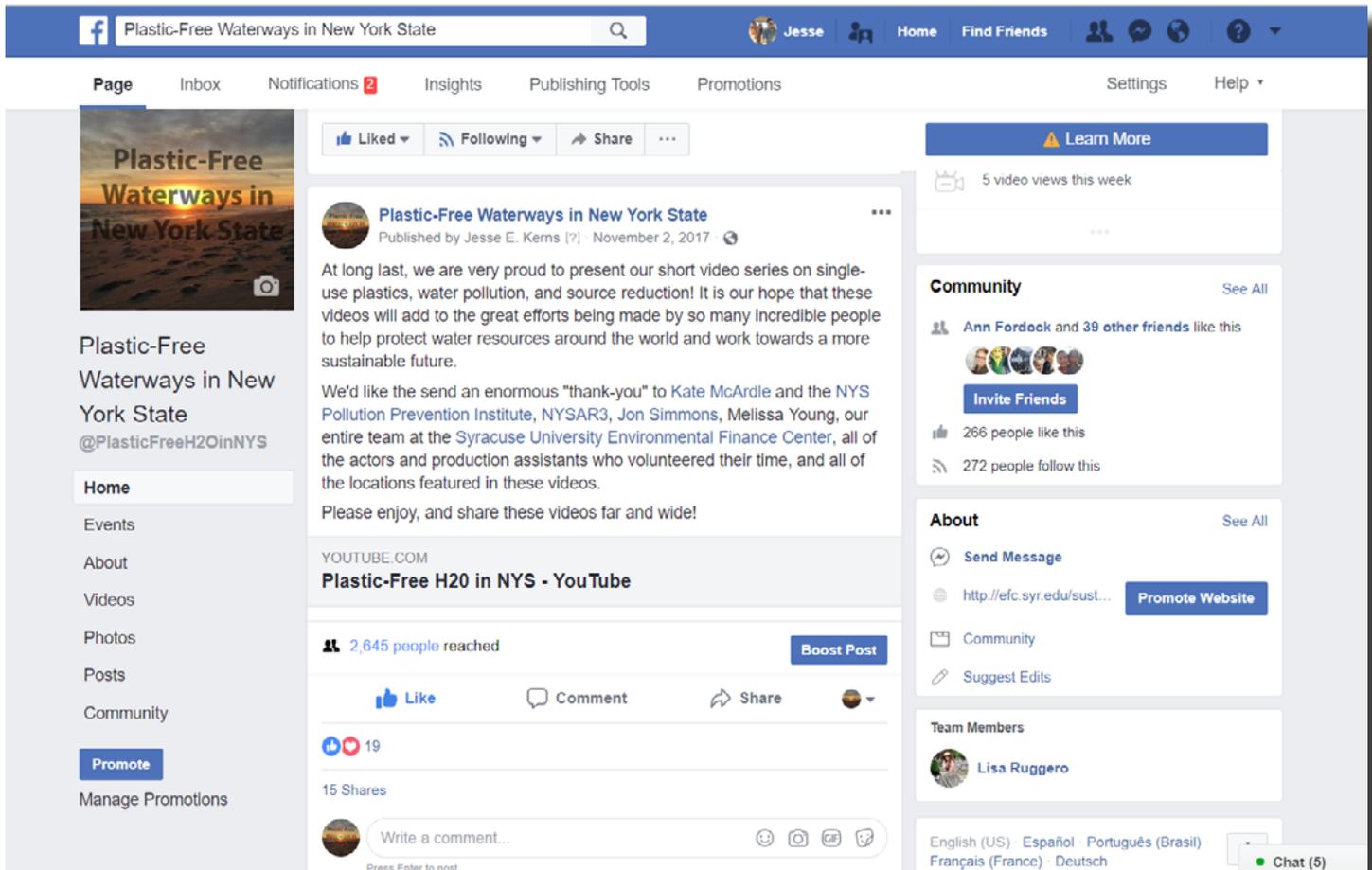
To achieve these goals, SU-CSCS planned and implemented three main program components from January 2017 through June 2018. These included a social media campaign, a public service announcement video series, and a college and university student art contest.

¹Jambeck et. al. (2015). Plastic waste input from land into the ocean. *Science*, 347(6223):768-771.

²Thompson et. al. (2009). Plastics, the environment and human health: current consensus and future trends. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 364:2153-2166.

Program Component #1

Social Media Campaign



To initiate the program, SU-CSCS established a community Facebook page titled “Plastic-Free Waterways in New York State” and encouraged promotion and participation with the page through various professional networks.

Throughout the entirety of the program, the page was used as a main outlet for sharing academic studies, news articles, informational videos, and other resources to educate users about water pollution caused by single-use plastics as well as source reduction strategies. The page was also used to inform and engage users with other program components such as the public service announcement video series and the college/university student art contest and gallery.

TOTAL PAGE ENGAGEMENT
266 LIKES

MOST POPULAR POST
2,645 REACHED

Program Component #2

Public Service Announcement Video Series

To efficiently engage large audiences and increase their awareness of the effects of single-use plastic pollution, SU-CSCS conceptualized and produced four, two-minute public service announcement videos. The videos were conceived to specifically illustrate how plastic pollution impedes valued uses of water (e.g., consumption and recreation), as well as to inspire the adoption of reusable alternatives to mitigate the problem.

Prior to this program, several videos regarding plastic pollution were already in circulation, but a majority of the videos utilized emotional appeals to engage audiences. Building upon and complimenting these efforts, SU-CSCS strategically employed a comedic lens in an attempt to communicate plastic pollution to hitherto untapped audiences.

In early November 2017, the video series was premiered at live screenings in Syracuse, NY, Cooperstown, NY, and New York, NY. The series was also released through SU-CSCS's YouTube channel, Facebook pages, and partner networks including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling (NYSAR³), and the Plastic-Free Waters Partnership (PFWP), among others.



Notably, the videos were featured on the Facebook and Twitter pages of “The Story of Stuff Project” where they received thousands of views. Additionally, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) commented on the videos, an indication of international distribution.

TOTAL SERIES ENGAGEMENT
~50,000 VIEWS



FACEBOOK VIEWS

13,000+

YOUTUBE VIEWS

480



"YOUR BUTTS ARE PLASTIC"

FACEBOOK VIEWS

13,000+

YOUTUBE VIEWS

673



"POPPING THE QUESTION"

FACEBOOK VIEWS

12,000+

YOUTUBE VIEWS

868



"IT'S ALL ON THE LINE"

FACEBOOK VIEWS

8,100+

YOUTUBE VIEWS

1,046

Program Component #3

College & University Student Art Contest

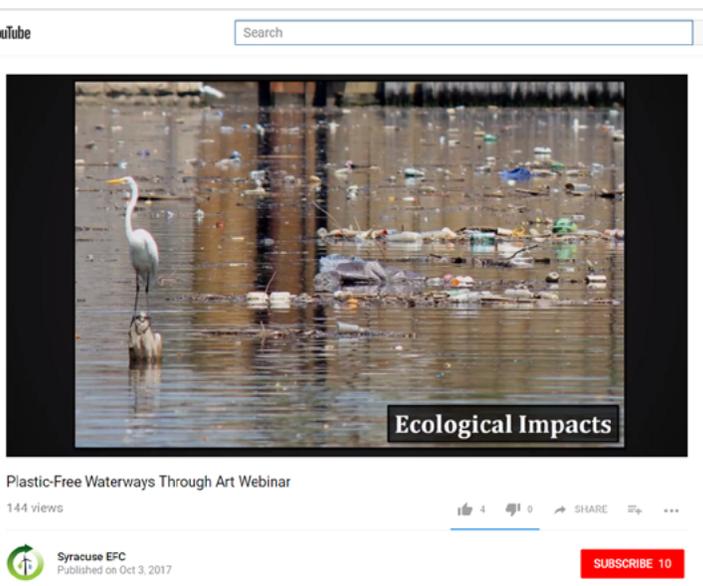
ART CONTEST

As the main component of the “Plastic-Free Waterways Through Art” program, the goals of the student art contest were (1) to educate college and university students about plastic pollution, and (2) to produce artworks that would intrigue and raise the awareness of secondary audiences. To promote this opportunity, SU-CSCS distributed an electronic flyer to approximately 90 colleges and universities throughout New York

State. As a result, 58 students from 13 different institutions expressed interest in the contest.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
38 CONTESTANTS

At the end of September 2017, SU-CSCS presented a webinar for those interested in the contest. The webinar provided introductory information about water pollution caused by single-use plastics, as well as source reduction measures that can be taken by individuals to mitigate this issue. The webinar also included detailed information about the art contest such as eligibility, accepted art formats, judging, and timelines.



Through the fall and winter of 2017, student contestants worked independently on their artworks, and SU-CSCS provided resources for those seeking further inspiration for their work. At the beginning of March 2018, 38 pieces were submitted for the contest. Submissions included paintings, sculptures, drawings, digital posters, and animations. The art works were then uploaded to Facebook and shared with the Board of NYSAR³ for judging assistance. Facebook “likes” counted for one point each, and NYSAR³ board members scored each piece based on a 40-point rubric.

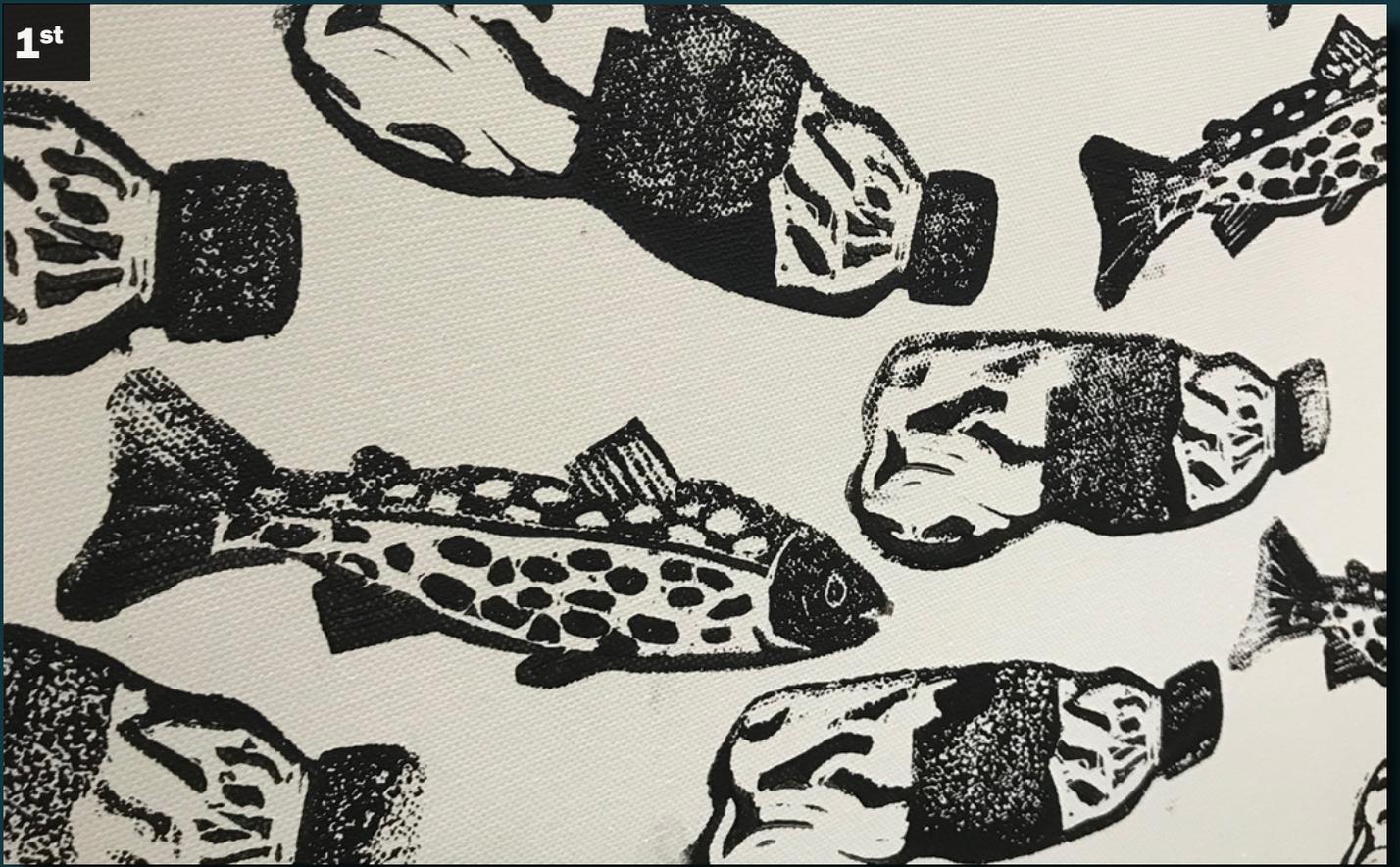
1st PLACE WINNER

Andrew Di Martino
SUNY ORANGE

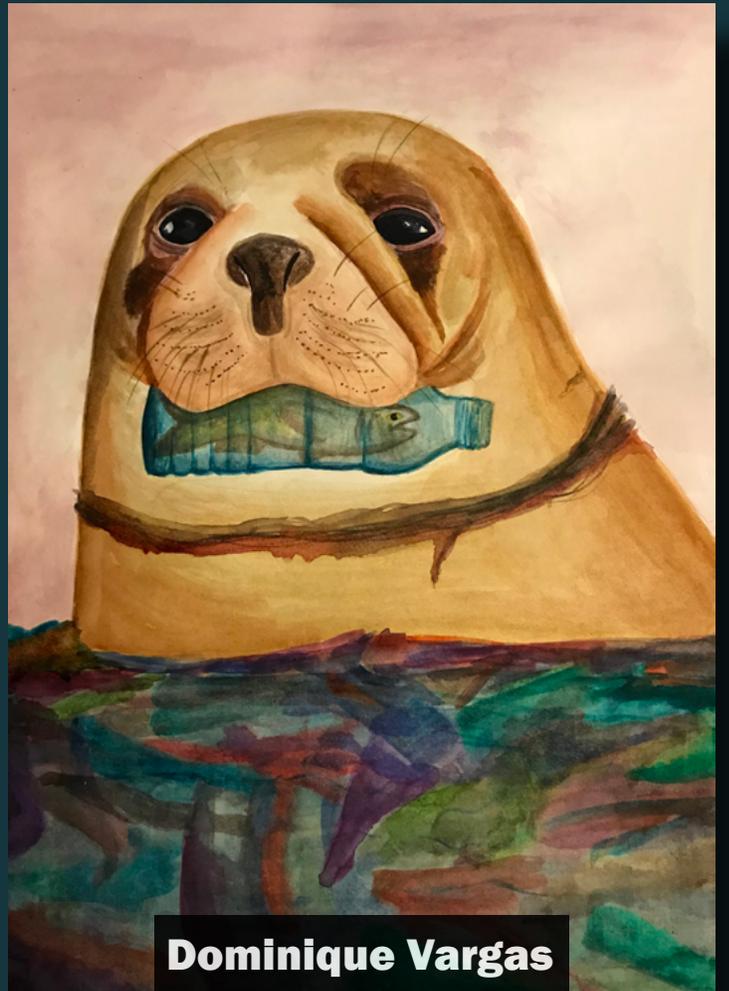
2nd PLACE WINNER

Jadine Buddingh
KUEKA COLLEGE

1st



2nd



Dominique Vargas



Abigail Lewis



Brandon Diaz



Andrea Baatz

ART GALLERY

At the beginning of May, 2018, in collaboration with Orange County Community College, SU-CSCS coordinated an art gallery for the student contestants. The event began with a talk by Asher Pacht, Director of Environmental Programs at the Beacon Institute, who provided an overview of the plastics pollution issue and encouraged attendees to take action by adopting source reduction practices and by participating in community cleanup events.

More than 30 individuals attended the event. They spent the evening viewing the artwork displays and discussing the works with the student artists. Halfway through the event, SU-CSCS announced the winners of the contest and provided those students with certificates and cash prizes. Toward the end of the event, SU-CSCS administered surveys to the attendees in order to collect self-reported information to assess the event's level of impact.

After the gallery, the artworks were sent to be displayed at the Beacon Institute's Main St. Gallery and Denning's Point facility, extending the engagement and impact of this component beyond the life of this particular program.

To view all submitted artworks, visit: <http://efc.syr.edu/sustainable-materials-management/plastic-free-waterways-through-art/>



100% of attendees

**AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT
THEY LEARNED NEW INFORMATION
ABOUT PLASTIC POLLUTION.**

88% of attendees

**AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT
THEY WILL USE LESS PLASTIC THAN
[THEY] CURRENTLY DO.**

LOOKING BEYOND THIS PROGRAM

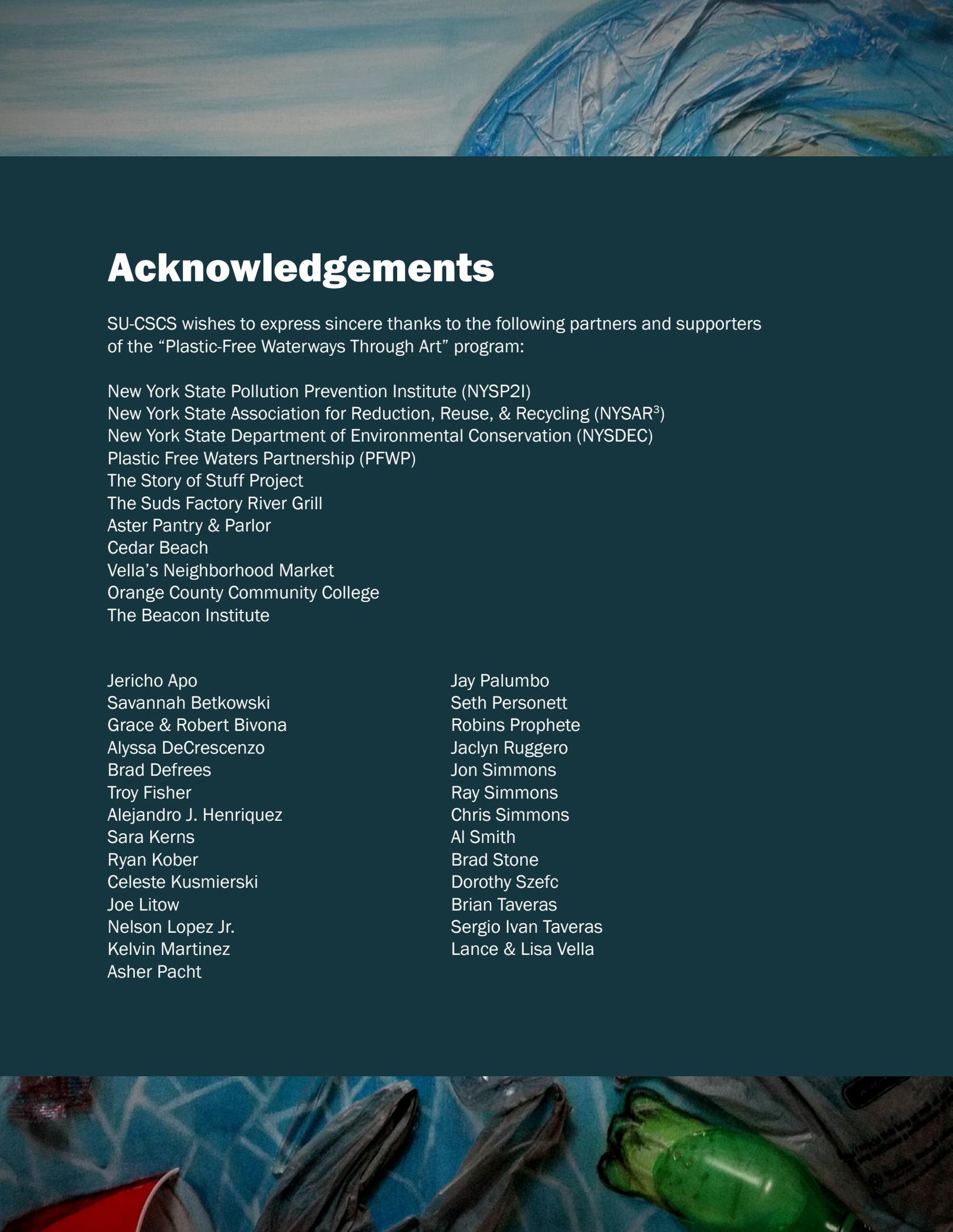
Through these three highlighted projects, SU-CSCS strived for the “Plastic-Free Waterways Through Art” program to engage New York State residents, increase their awareness about the negative environmental impacts of single-use plastics, especially in waterways, and how adopting reusable options, such as carrying a reusable beverage container, can help to solve this problem.

To build off of the successes of this program and to continue to raise awareness about plastic pollution, SU-CSCS welcomes other organizations to model and replicate parts or all of this program to use art as a means for drawing attention and promoting deep consideration of this issue.

And, lastly, SU-CSCS encourages individuals to make decisions everyday that decrease the amount of single-use plastic they consume. Whether it’s bringing a reusable bag to the store, drinking from a reusable bottle, storing food in reusable containers, or refusing plastic straws when dining out, together we can work toward a future with plastic-free waters.



*If you are interested in learning more about this program, or single-use plastics pollution and strategies for source reduction, please contact SU-CSCS Program Coordinator, Jesse Kerns, by email jekerns@syr.edu or by phone **315-448-8488**.*



Acknowledgements

SU-CSCS wishes to express sincere thanks to the following partners and supporters of the “Plastic-Free Waterways Through Art” program:

New York State Pollution Prevention Institute (NYSP2I)
New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse, & Recycling (NYSAR³)
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
Plastic Free Waters Partnership (PFWP)
The Story of Stuff Project
The Suds Factory River Grill
Aster Pantry & Parlor
Cedar Beach
Vella’s Neighborhood Market
Orange County Community College
The Beacon Institute

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