

Water Boot Camp 2011



Seb Agostino and Dave Kuzminski put a lot of energy into Water Boot Camp. (l to r) Seb makes a point as Terrell McLaurin (left) Demarte Daley (center) and Kyle Armstrong take it all in. Kyle was Seb and Dave's student intern for this summer's Water Boot Camp.

Clean, healthy drinking water is not something that most people think about on a daily basis, especially high school students. For employees of the water industry, that is not the case – it is the reason we come to work every day. With the baby boomer generation preparing for retirement, it is important to introduce today's youth to careers available in the water industry. In light of the changing workforce, Dave Kuzminski and Seb Agostino of Portland High School with help from the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Drinking Water Section, Gateway Community College and members of the CTAWWA, created the "Water and People" curriculum to introduce students to different aspects of the drinking water industry. Shortly after the creation of "Water and People," the idea for Water Boot Camp was developed as an EPA-driven initiative to introduce science-oriented high school students to the fields of drinking water science and public health. The initial Water Boot Camp was hosted by Aquarion Water Company in the summer of 2010 in the greater Bridgeport area.

This summer, the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) hosted the second consecutive summer Water Boot Camp in the greater New Haven area. The participants for Water Boot Camp 2011 were from Common Ground High School, a charter school, in New Haven. Students entering their junior or senior year who have interest in science, engineering or the environment were encouraged to participate. In cooperation with the Common Ground High School

administrators, RWA staff interviewed 18 prospective candidates and selected ten as Water Boot Camp participants.

Water Boot Camp creators Dave Kuzminski and Seb Agostino joined Lisa DiFrancesco, the RWA's Water Science Educator, to integrate their respective curriculums to provide a thorough educational experience in the field of drinking water science. This year's Water Boot Camp was comprised of a wide variety of topics involving both classroom activities and field experiences. Classroom activities were primarily held at the Authority's Whitney Water Center in Hamden. Some of the hands-on activities included microscopy, creation of acid rain, effects of soil erosion on water quality and water filtration. Each day also included a "brown bag" presentation during lunch which focused on other important aspects of the water industry. Lunch topics included site plan reviews, hydraulic modeling, accounting and physical asset management.

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Field activities complimented the indoor learning with watershed delineation activities, benthic macro-invertebrate sampling, in-stream data collection, a tour of the Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant in Hamden, a safety demonstration utilizing self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and confined space equipment as well as a conversation about the importance of personal accountability. Students also toured various departments at the RWA's New Haven headquarters. A few of

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"Hands on" is what Water Boot Camp is all about as demonstrated by Amber Penn (left) and Nastassja Colbert.



Jim Dadio (left) and John Cusack from RWA make a point as Water Boot Camp student Terrell McLaurin watches the computer.

Water Boot Camp (continued)



Students Cristina Cavallieri (foreground) and Bianca Soto find that the science surrounding the supply of clean drinking water can be pretty fascinating.

the departments the students visited included Cross Connections, GIS and Customer Service.

Throughout the week, students learned about the talents, skills and diverse disciplines utilized by today's drinking water utility through interaction with more than 25 RWA employees. While water industry-specific areas such as source protection, water quality, water treatment and cross connection control were highlighted, it was important to expose these students to all facets of the business in an effort to demonstrate the integration necessary to make a business successful.

A common message the students heard repeatedly from RWA staff was the importance of education beyond your core interest, obtaining certifications to enhance your professional experience and the importance of teamwork.

The RWA thanks the USEPA Region 1 New England and the Connecticut Department of Public Health for their financial and professional support of the 2011 Water Boot Camp. Thanks also to the Connecticut Section of the American Water Works Association (CTAWWA) and Common Ground High School for all of their assistance in making the 2011 Water Boot Camp a resounding success as well as to Seb Agostino and Dave Kuzminski for again leading the course, and Tom Barger and Regional Water Authority for their support in hosting this year's Boot Camp, as well as EPA for funding the project. Special thanks to John Herlihy at Aquarion Water Company for sharing his valuable experience from the 2010 Water Boot Camp and consistent guidance and support of the 2011 effort. A special thanks to both Aquarion Water Co. and Regional Water Authority for their commitment in ensuring a positive message is handed down to the future of the water industry. 💧

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