

John Dillow & Conal O'Keefe of Living Classrooms

Living Classroom Executive Director John Dillow, and Lead Educator Conal O'Keefe, teach 17,000 children and young adults about the environment along the Anacostia River. John said that Living Classrooms "utilizes education in a 'hands-on' manner to help lift up communities." Conal brings the students aboard the Mildred Belle and encourages interaction with aquatic life.

Operating since October 2000 out of the Diamond Teague's former federal pumphouse, John and Conal's shipboard program has hands-on activities centered on applied science and math, history, language arts, and the physical environment. Living Classrooms customizes each program so that it fits with the curriculum covered in the classroom.

John said, "Part of our effort is to get kids to understand that the river is getting better in a lot of ways." Conal added that they are seeing more wildlife, including geese, fish and Red Winged Blackbirds which are strongly associated with healthy local marshes.

Living Classrooms selected Diamond Teague as a home base in DC because the neighborhood is similar to locations they have worked in in Baltimore. They look for communities along the edge of urban rivers, and the Capitol Riverfront's work is "vital to the community as a whole, because Michael Stevens' team takes steps to build the economy of a true community built right on the water."

"We are excited to invite people to have their first experience on the Anacostia River - a hidden gem that might not be hidden for much longer," said John.

