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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Lake Hopatcong Foundation's Floating Classroom wins 2018 ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award**

LAKE HOPATCONG, N.J. (October 17, 2018) — The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) awarded the Lake Hopatcong Foundation Floating Classroom an Environmental Achievement Award “for outstanding accomplishment in local environmental protection” at its 45th Annual Environmental Congress at Mercer County College in West Windsor on October 12.

The Floating Classroom, a 40-foot pontoon boat dubbed “Study Hull,” educated more than 1,000 visitors during its first year on Lake Hopatcong, the majority of them fourth- and fifth-grade students who boarded the vessel during the Lake Hopatcong Foundation field trip program at Hopatcong State Park in the spring. Over the summer, weekly excursions also allowed visitors the opportunity to join an excursion on Lake Hopatcong. While on the boat, passengers learn about watersheds and lake ecology, geography and history, conducting hands-on experiments that test the lake’s temperature, pH level, dissolved oxygen, and clarity. Students also get to view samples of the water through microscopes to see live phytoplankton.

“The Lake Hopatcong Floating Classroom is something we have been working toward for years, and to see it finally hit the water in the spring was so exciting,” said Lake Hopatcong Foundation president Jessica K. Murphy. “Watching so many children get the opportunity to learn about the lake in a hands-on way was rewarding in itself. But to receive this recognition as well is so appreciated. We are grateful to Jule Girman and the Hopatcong Environmental Commission for nominating us for this award, and we are thrilled to continue to use the Floating Classroom to educate students of all ages in the years ahead.”

The purchase of the floating classroom was made possible thanks to financial support from the Gannett Foundation/USA TODAY Network's "A Community Thrives" program, the James P. Verhalen Family Foundation, and the Szigethy Family. The trips themselves were made possible through the work of LHF staff, U.S. Coast Guard certified captains, and a contingent of volunteers—the majority of them retired teachers. To help shape the plan for the boat, as well as the structure of the lessons, LHF staff and volunteers visited the Lake George Association Floating Classroom in New York State, the Hackensack Riverkeeper Eco-Cruise, and the SPLASH Steamboat Floating Classroom on the Delaware River.

Study Hull will be launched back onto Lake Hopatcong in the spring of 2019 for a new round of field trips and excursions.

*The Lake Hopatcong Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to protecting the lake environment and enhancing the lake experience by bringing together public and private resources to encourage a culture of sustainability and stewardship on and around New Jersey's largest lake, for this and future generations. To learn more, visit [lakehopatcongfoundation.org](http://lakehopatcongfoundation.org).*

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Photos: Lake Hopatcong Floating Classroom in action during the 2018 season.