



# Your Environment

*A collaborative information resource for the Muskegon County Community*

**December 2013**

Joel Darling of Darling Cetaceans was the presenter at the December 2013 MCECC meeting, and he told a whale of a tale about a small non-profit that is making a big splash in West Michigan. You'll never "sea" another organization like this one; yes, there are whales in Michigan... Fossilized whales, found in the Great Lakes region, from pre-historic times. The mission of Darling Cetaceans is to promote understanding of ocean marine life, and to support aquatic education in Michigan, and globally. This is done in a vast variety of ways.

They have 3 Girl Scout patches that can be earned: the cetacean patch, for whale, dolphin, and porpoise education accomplishment; the pinniped patch for education of seals; and the sirenians patch, for learning about manatees. They also have a K-12 school curriculum program; and Joel is a Field Coordinator with the place based education program of the West Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, which matches classrooms with community projects. Also, as part of the Adopt-a-Beach and Marsh Monitoring programs, they take care of a strip of Muskegon Lake frontage, as well as conduct water quality sampling.

Aquatic debris is an important focus, and public displays are set-up at various events to educate the public. Fishing line recycling bins should be placed at any location where the general public goes fishing, because fish line debris is an entanglement danger to aquatic life. Darling Cetaceans help build and install these bins, and they are working to over-see the program, and coordinate the correct disposal of the fishing line debris. From taking small actions, like the collection and re-use of miscellaneous recyclable items, to the lofty goal to create a local museum, Joel and the volunteers keep busy!

Darling Cetaceans started the Muskegon Area Water Festival; and work with various festivals to assist with recycling, as well as promote education in outreach efforts. Tips for restaurant recycling was carried out at the Taste of Muskegon festival, and they helped to reduce festival trash by half! Additionally, they help facilitate the Muskegon Area Earth Week festival, and the Sustainability Awards. This is done in partnership with the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition, and yours truly, MCECC. We are happy to help with your good work, Joel, it is all fun for a porpoise!

## Good Websites Good Information

EPA CARE Program  
[www.epa.gov/care](http://www.epa.gov/care)

EPA Lead Safety  
[www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead)

E-Waste Recycling  
[www.reconnectpartnership.com](http://www.reconnectpartnership.com)

County-wide Health Concerns  
[www.muskegonhealth.net](http://www.muskegonhealth.net)

Link from National Wildlife  
Federation  
GARDENER'S GUIDE TO  
GLOBAL WARMING  
Challenges and Solutions:  
[www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/  
Gardeners\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/Gardeners_Guide.pdf)