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## **The Women of PCCS: The Critical Role Women Have Played at the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies**

by Karin Delaney

This year the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (PCCS) is celebrating its 35th anniversary.

This mighty little marine science institute, situated at the tip of Cape Cod, was founded in 1976 by three young PhD scientists. Although they had very limited financial resources, they possessed unbounded curiosity and an unwavering commitment to researching the local marine and coastal environment and educating the public about their findings.

Marine biologist Dr. Charles "Stormy" Mayo's field of interest was studying the colonies of microscopic phytoplankton which provide the major food source for large marine mammals. Stormy's wife, the late Dr. Barbara Mayo, also a marine biologist, had a research passion of her own: studying the benthic zone, commonly known as the ocean floor. Coastal geologist, Dr. Graham Giese, rounded out the trio's complimentary talent pool with his interest in studying the dynamic interactions in the intertidal zone, where the ocean waves meet the shoreline.

These three initial marine science perspectives – focused on the phytoplankton food source, the ocean floor and shoreline and sea inter-dynamics as they all related to our local Cape Cod waters – have since evolved into a multi-disciplined approach to marine ecosystems research that extends throughout the Gulf of Maine and to many parts of the globe.

Over the course of its 35-year history, PCCS's scope of research and influence has expanded exponentially. Their achievements include:

- policy recommendations that led to the establishment of Stellwagon Bank National Marine Sanctuary
- pioneering marine mammal rescue techniques and establishing marine mammal rescue training programs throughout the world
- water quality monitoring of Cape Cod Bay, and
- ongoing research focused on historical and current shoreline changes in relationship to global warming.

Not only is the scope of the Center's work impressive, but the contributions that women have made are equally impressive. PCCS suffered an irreparable loss in 1988 when Dr. Barbara Mayo died. Barbara was an environmental activist in the truest and best sense of the term. In addition to co-founding the Center, she was a member of the National Seashore Advisory Committee and Director of the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod.



**Barbara Mayo, Courtesy of PCCS**

Barbara's influence on the direction and survival of PCCS was enormous. Stormy has described her as "the driving force" and a "visionary" who kept the momentum of the Center's research going and who helped shape its expanding scope of influence.

Barbara's legacy is two-fold: she was not only a key proponent for the work of the Center, she was also instrumental in championing a greater role for women.

As a direct result of her dedication to supporting and promoting her fellow female colleagues, PCCS continues to honor her vision through its Barbara Mayo Educational Endowment.

Another important female who played a critical role in the survival and evolution of PCCS was local Provincetown resident, Ruth Hiebert.



**Ruth Hiebert, Courtesy of PCCS**

During the nascent phase of the Center's history, there was no state-of-the-art marine science lab or administration headquarters, as there is today. Instead, the growing staff of scientists operated out of a modest waterfront house on the west end of town, conveniently located adjacent to the town boat ramp.

Ruth was ever present during those very lean years – promoting the Center throughout the town, volunteering at every event, generously stepping in with donations when the budget was tight and famously hosting board meetings and other PCCS events at her home.

She also took a special interest in assisting young women's advancement in the field of science, and her support continues today in the annual awarding of the Ruth Hiebert Women in Science scholarships.

As a result of Barbara's mission to enlist and promote more female colleagues, and Ruth's generous financial support, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies has been a "launching pad" for many women in science – advancing their careers, while at the same time, broadening the scope of the Center's affiliations around the world.

Dr. Jooke Robbins and Dr. Amy Costa, two prominent and talented scientists, are good examples of women who have grown and thrived professionally at PCCS. Both began their careers as interns who, under the tutelage and encouragement of PCCS senior scientists, went on to earn their PhDs, then returned to make invaluable contributions in their respective fields.

Today, Dr. Robbins is the Director of the Center's Humpback Whale Studies Program, including its three-decade study of the Gulf of Maine humpback whale population. She has extensive humpback whale photo-identification and biopsy experience and has conducted research in three oceans. She is also a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission.



Women of the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, Courtesy of PCCS

Dr. Amy Costa directs PCCS's Cape Cod Bay Monitoring Program. This program, instituted in the spring of 2006, was designed to study the quality and health of Cape Cod Bay through applied science and research. Recent initiatives of this program include testing for the presence of pharmaceuticals in the Bay.

Many other talented female scientists have begun their professional careers at the Center and moved on to influential positions in scientific research organizations around the world.

An alumna roster of PCCS-affiliated women features a network of individuals who have made significant contributions toward the conservation and protection of precious ocean resources. No doubt Barbara Mayo and Ruth Hiebert would be very proud.

Through the tireless work of its dedicated and passionate male and female scientists, the Center provides critical scientific research, policy development and public education dedicated to restoring healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems upon which healthy coastal communities are built – invaluable contributions that matter, beyond measure, to us all.

While the challenges facing our global oceans today are truly daunting, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies continues its original mission: the pursuit of "science that matters."



Karin Delaney and her husband, Richard, first moved to the Lower Cape to run the N.E.E.D. Collaborative in Truro – an environmental education program for fifth grade students.

Richard is currently the Director of PCCS.

After a long career in education, Karin completed an interior design program at Rhode Island School of Design and now owns Karin Delaney Interior Design in Orleans. She offers a broad range of design services with a focus on green design principles and environmentally sustainable materials.

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