A Chica Walks into a Spanish Bakery...  
...and brings in Long Island Sound!

by Nancy C. Balcom

What does a Spanish bakery in Waterbury, Connecticut have in common with Long Island Sound? Well, if it sells pastellios de camaron, then the answer is seafood! And if the patrons of this bakery have an interest in learning more about seafood or where some of it might come from, in short—Long Island Sound, then Maria Santana can help them. Supported by an award to Connecticut Sea Grant by the EPA Long Island Sound Study (LISS), Santana has been reaching out to Hispanic communities in the south central part of Connecticut since June to teach them about Long Island Sound. She is finding her audiences in some rather untraditional places. For example, on a powerless day in Waterbury following the October 2011 snowstorm, Santana joined the group of people enjoying the offerings of the local bakery, Pan del Cielo panaderia, which did have power. Seeing that the menu included pastellios, which are deep-fried pockets of dough filled with chopped meat (in this case shrimp or crab); Santana took the opportunity to talk briefly with the owners. With their permission, she put out some publications on Long Island Sound. As she watched, the materials disappeared with the customers almost as quickly as the bakery goods.

While a bakery may seem a bit unconventional as a place for outreach on Long Island Sound, Santana recognized it as a local gathering place for Latinos, making it therefore one of many ideal places where she can connect with her audience. She has spoken with families enjoying local parks or city beaches and children at summer camps, and chatted up anglers as they fish along the shore. She’s dropped material off at libraries, community centers, and even a few ob-gyn offices. In August, when the annual Puerto Rican Festival was held at Hubbard Park in Meriden, guess who was there talking to more than one hundred passers-by?

Santana, a Spanish teacher at Wilby High School in Waterbury, is sharing Spanish materials on Long Island Sound with bi-lingual and science teachers at her school, as well as with students in her classes, particularly those whose parents only speak Spanish. A student thanked her for the Connecticut Sea Grant booklet, Tesoros Viventes: Las Plantas y los Animales de Long Island Sound*, which she had brought home to her mother. Her mother had taken the time to read about the plants, animals and habitats of the Sound, grateful to have the information available to her in Spanish.

“We didn’t know this,” seems to be a fairly common reaction from this community of people when Santana talks with them about simple ways to protect the Sound, or about seafood safety. For that latter topic, she draws on the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s fish consumption advisory information, which is available in Spanish.

A fever for learning, especially from someone like Santana who oozes enthusiasm from every pore, can be catching. One afternoon this past summer, Santana brought several friends to Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven. They were looking at a series of informational panels on Long Island Sound that the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History (with support from Connecticut Sea Grant and other groups) had developed and mounted there with the cooperation of the City of New Haven.

“The information on the panels is in English and so I was translating for my friends,” Santana says. “At one point, I realized that I had drawn a crowd of other Latinos visiting the park who were interested in knowing what the panels said. I felt like a tour guide, as we moved from panel to panel. I could have used a microphone!”

*continued on next page...
As the end of this pilot project looms, Santana is now undertaking the translation of certain sections of the LISS web site for inclusion in a Spanish-resource section to ensure that Long Island Sound information continues to be available to Latinos.

“It makes sense to pull together whatever relevant resources in Spanish exist and make it a simple process for people to locate them,” Santana says. “People are constantly asking me for more.”

Another direction Connecticut Sea Grant is taking is to engage and empower teachers in schools with a significant complement of Latino students to utilize the existing resources in their classrooms. The model for this is the Long Island Sound mentor teacher program model established by Connecticut Sea Grant, and supported by the EPA LISS. Teachers in Connecticut or New York with experience in incorporating Long Island Sound into their jam-packed curricula plan workshops to teach their peers how to do the same. In 2012, the first mentor teacher workshop specifically for teachers working with Latino students will be held, enabling them to explore how math, science, writing, and even art classes can be infused with the flavors of Long Island Sound. Santana’s enthusiasm and “can-do” attitude have been contagious in the most positive of ways.

Nancy Balcom is associate director and extension leader for Connecticut Sea Grant.

Connecticut Sea Grant Arts Grant Program Reaps Results and Seeks New Submissions

by Syma A. Ebbin

Connecticut Sea Grant launched a new competitive funding program in 2010 for artists whose work is focused on Long Island Sound or coastal and marine themes relevant to our mission. We cast a wide net and welcomed submissions from artists who work in a broad array of different media including visual arts, literature, drama, music, film, multi-media, conceptual and performance art.

Our first Arts Grant recipient was Debbie Hesse, who has created a Parallel Guide to Seaweed, a book of etchings produced at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking which acts as a companion to a traditional field guide to the seaweeds of New England. She is having a solo show of her work including the prints created with the support of her Connecticut Sea Grant Arts Grant at the Orison Project, a new art gallery in Essex. Her show can be viewed from April 20 to May 27, 2012. For more information about the show, refer to the gallery web site: http://www.theorisonproject.com/hesse.

Our second recipient, Jeff Slomba, is creating sculptures using pieces of Styrofoam collected along the shores of Long Island Sound. An opening of his Connecticut Sea Grant supported sculptures is scheduled for the Alexey von Schlippe Gallery at the UConn Avery Point campus in Groton from Nov. 2 to Dec. 16, 2012.

We’re very excited by the art that has been produced to date. If you are an artist who lives in Connecticut, or whose work is Connecticut or Long Island Sound-based, there is still time to submit your proposal for the 2012 Arts Grant competition; see the box below.

Applications for the Connecticut Sea Grant arts grant must be received by 4:30 pm on Thursday, April 12, 2012. For guidelines, download: http://seagrant.uconn.edu/funding/fundpdfs/artsrfp.pdf. For more information, contact Syma Ebbin, Connecticut Sea Grant research coordinator, at syma.ebbin@uconn.edu.