

Photo by Berry Shore



EPA's Christie Whitman with the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary director and staff.

Recognizing HEP

Together in front of South Street Seaport Museum's schooner *Lettie G. Howard* for a late April Earth Day celebration recognizing the NY NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) were (l-r): EPA's **Robert Nyman**, HEP Director; EPA Administrator **Christie Whitman**; NYSG's HEP Outreach Coordinator **Laura Bartovics**; and NJSG's HEP Technical Specialist **Cathy Yuhas**. The event honored the Seaport Museum and 10 other groups receiving monies through HEP's mini grants program, which has encouraged citizen participation in the protection and restoration of the estuary since 1991.

Launching a "Disease Detective"

“*New York Sea Grant has a real understanding of a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach to issues facing New York's aquatic-based industries.*”

—*Dawn Norton*
Former graduate student on NYSG research

“In a nutshell, I'm a ‘disease detective,’” says **Dawn Norton** of her position as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer, Foodborne and Diarrheal Diseases Branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Norton is on 24-hour call for public health emergencies and responds to inquiries from the community, media, government officials and public health professionals. Her job at the CDC is to identify and investigate foodborne disease outbreaks and assist with control measures to help prevent future outbreaks.

Norton's success at her present job stems from her productivity as a graduate student. While pursuing her doctorate, Norton worked on a NYSG-funded project in the area of food safety with Cornell Food Laboratory's Drs. Martin Wiedmann and Kathryn Boor and NYSG seafood specialist, Ken Gall. (See the Fall 1998 issue of *Coastlines* available online for a synopsis of the project and its collaborators in the smoked fish industry.)

“That project really modeled the power of applied science and collaboration! We applied cutting-edge scientific technology to investigate an important food safety issue. Our research with NYSG and the smoked fish industry contributed to a better understanding of an important foodborne pathogen, *Listeria*

monocytogenes, and the continued development of science-based policy while providing a basis for future studies.” Norton completed her doctorate and has co-authored four publications on the pathogen.

Says Norton, “The project helped to move forward the overall goal of reducing foodborne illness in the U.S. We worked with our industry collaborators to develop targeted strategies for control of this important pathogen in the food-processing environment, which will reduce the risk of finished product contamination. These strategies will facilitate continued compliance with FDA's zero tolerance policy for *Listeria monocytogenes*. It's great that I was able to support NY's seafood industry.”

In Norton's experience, each of Sea Grant's components—research, outreach and education—was critical to a project that contributed much to science-based policies and a better understanding of an important foodborne pathogen. She brings this Sea Grant perspective to her job of designing and conducting epidemiologic studies that will lead to practical strategies for control and prevention of foodborne and diarrheal diseases in the US—and the world.

—**Barbara A. Branca**

CURRENTS