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## **Littoral Society Brings Music to the Coast for Members Day**

The coast will come alive with the sound of music for the American Littoral Society's annual Members Day on Saturday, June 11, 2016.

Members Day activities traditionally include seining in the bay, a walk through Sandy Hook's Holly Forest, and birding excursions. But this year, the Society is pleased to add a special musical performance by the award-winning Union City Music Project (UMCP).

Students of the UCMP range in age from four to 15 and will give an outdoor performance following lunch. In exchange, the students and their parents will get to experience the coast, many for the first time, as they share the Society's planned outdoor activities with Society members.

The Society's annual meeting is a day of celebration and thanks to members for their support over the past 50 years. The event takes place at Littoral Society headquarters, 18 Hartshorne Drive in Gateway National Recreation Area's Sandy Hook unit. The event is supported by the National Park Service and NPS Centennial.

Members Day is free for Littoral Society members and begins with registration at 9:30 a.m. Members can bring non-member guests at a cost of \$20 per person. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 732-291-0055 x100 or emailing [Diana@LittoralSociety.org](mailto:Diana@LittoralSociety.org).

The UMCP concert starts at 1 p.m. and is open to the public. The event is rain or shine, so attendees are encouraged to dress for the weather, and to bring chairs or blankets for a picnic-style lunch and concert under the tent.

The collaboration between the American Littoral Society and Union City Music Project has been made possible by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. Both organizations are Dodge Foundation grantees and the coastal concert provides a way for them to pursue their missions in new ways.

"We are thrilled that this partnership was formed as a follow-up to a recent Dodge's grantee convening. We believe that building relationships, making connections and working together, particularly across program areas and among non-traditional partners, are keys to greater impact," said Chris Daggett, President of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.

The Union City Music Project is a child-development non-profit organization that uses music as a vehicle for social change by providing students with intensive after-school orchestral instruction, mentoring, and academic tutoring. It is based on El Sistema, the Venezuelan music education model that has a 37-year-history of helping children and their families foster a sense of ambition and achievement.

The UCMP goes far beyond just teaching music scales. The project promotes fundamental life skills such as self-esteem, self-expression, cooperative learning, discipline, and creativity by teaching music in an orchestral setting. UCMP participants receive free musical instruction and instruments, and have the opportunity to attend a full range of cultural, social, and enrichment experiences for an annual participation fee, such as their visit to Sandy Hook.

The impact of the music program on participating families has been powerful, according to Melina Garcia, UCMP founder and Executive Director.

"One mother cried, saying she never had the opportunity to take her kids outside of Union City because she didn't have a car. She was so touched, and so moved," said Garcia.

The American Littoral Society has empowered people to care for the coast through advocacy, conservation, and education since 1961. The Society believes that helping people to get their feet wet and hands sandy will lead them to become stewards of the shore. Sitting at a computer or reading a book may cause people to develop an interest in the coast; but standing knee deep in sea foam with sand between their toes will cause them to develop a passion for the coast. Such public sentiment will encourage local, state and national leaders to support initiatives that protect the environment and maintain natural resources.

"We believe this is a remarkable opportunity to share beautiful music with our members and the beauty of the coast with the parents and children of the Union City Music Project," said Tim Dillingham, Executive Director for the Littoral Society. "We hope the combination will foster greater passion to protect and preserve our natural treasures -- like the songs of shorebirds and seals, as well as the places those creatures need to survive and thrive."

Learn more about American Littoral Society programs or become a member at [Http://LittoralSociety.org](http://LittoralSociety.org).

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Leaders in coastal conservation since 1961, the American Littoral Society, a 501

(c)3 non-profit organization, promotes the study and conservation of marine life and habitat, protects the coast from harm, and empowers others to do the same.

[www.littoralsociety.org](http://www.littoralsociety.org)

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