

Student's love of butterflies launches state-wide contest

By Patrick Boisi

During her studies last school year, Karina Franke, then a third grade student at Cortlandt Manor's Furnace Woods Elementary School, noticed that New York State has no official butterfly.

Franke, a self-proclaimed animal enthusiast, set out to change that.

She appeared on local television programs and sent a letter to Assemblywoman Sandra Galef requesting the Karner Blue be named the Empire State's top butterfly.

With her mother in tow, Franke traveled to Albany to meet with Galef, as well as representatives from the governor's office and other state officials, to discuss the issue.

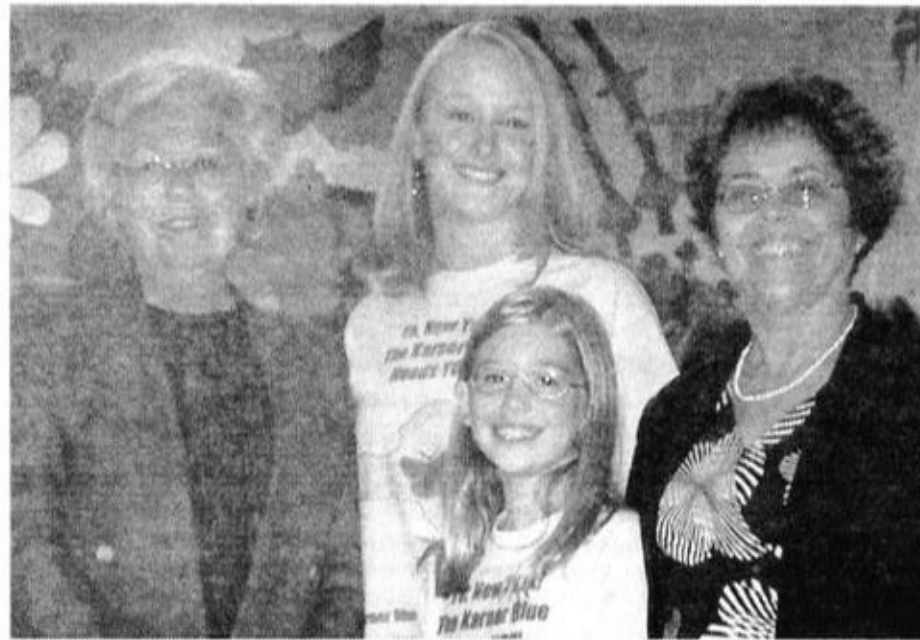
Her efforts paid off.

Impressed with the student's campaign, Galef started a butterfly contest that will take place on Election Day, which falls on Nov. 6 this year. All third, fourth and fifth graders in the state are encouraged to cast their vote for one of five butterflies. After the votes are tallied up, state butterfly legislation will be drafted and voted on by the Assembly and Senate.

Galef paid Furnace Woods a visit this past Monday morning to remind the children, as well as parents, teachers and district administration, to put in their two cents in November.

"I got the letter and I thought it would be a good idea to do it as a contest," Galef said before the massive crowd of elementary school students. "It was all Karina's idea and she came up to meet with me in my office. She started it all."

The contest idea popped into Franke's head last year, when she was a third



Furnace Woods School fourth grade student Karina Franke recently started a campaign to assign a state butterfly for New York. From the left: State Assemblywoman Sandra Galef (left), who spoke at the school this past Monday, teacher Valerie Howell (center) and Principal Helene Kane.



grader at Furnace Woods.

A portion of her curriculum was devoted to butterflies.

"New York State didn't have one," Franke reiterated this past Monday morning after Galef's address came to a close.

However, she didn't want to pick just any butterfly.

She settled on the Karner Blue, an endangered species.

"I wanted to do something meaningful," Franke continued. "I wanted to help it, to save it."

Franke credited Irene Toovey, her third grade teacher, as well as her current teacher Valerie Howell, for "help-

ing out a lot."

The rare butterfly occupies Franke's favorite animal slot at the moment.

However, she does have a soft spot for frogs and fish.

"I have a pond at home," she said excitedly. "They're both in there."

"She's amazing," said Galef of Franke as the well-spoken student walked back to her classroom.

"And she's only in fourth grade," added Helene Kane, Furnace Woods Elementary School's principal.

In addition to spearheading the contest, Franke has won several awards, including the New York State Senate's annual "I am Green" cele-

bration last spring.

There is a wealth of information on the contest on local television and the Internet.

Viewers can catch Franke's interview with Galef and Westchester County butterfly expert Brenda Freeman-Bates ("she was great," the assemblywoman said) on Peekskill/Ossining, Yorktown and Wappingers Falls' public access channels until the beginning of November.

News can also be found on Galef's web site (assembly.state.ny.us/member_files/090/20070607), which lists the five choices, and Franke's page, karnerblueforstatebutterfly.org.