

green news

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREEN DECADE COALITION / NEWTON



VOL.18 - NO. 2

MARCH/APRIL 2008

Environmental
Speaker Series

Cosponsored with the Newton Free
Library at the library Mondays, 7pm

March 24: Frances Moore Lappé "Getting a Grip: Our Food and Our Small Planet"



Author of seventeen books including the groundbreaking *Diet For A Small Planet* and, most recently, *Getting A Grip: Clarity, Creativity, & Courage in a World Gone Mad*. Involved in founding the Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First) and the Small Planet Institute, educational

and advocacy groups focused on food production and nutrition.

We all know that you are what you eat. But do you know how your food is produced and how this process affects:

- Land use?
- Oil consumption?
- Air and water quality?
- Nutrition and food safety?

Come hear the legendary Frances Moore Lappé discuss these issues and offer ideas on what can be done to address them.

Co-sponsored with The Newton Community Farm, The Newton Farmer's Market, Cheshire Garden, and Newton Conservators.

April 28: Special Earth Day Festival !

Save the date June 16 for the last speaker.

Strong showing for the Environmental Show

Started in September 2004, The Environmental Show on the NewTV community access (Blue) channel is well into its 4th year. The monthly show has a viewing schedule of eight weekly broadcasts and is produced by a partnership of the Green Decade and the Newton Conservators with each organization responsible for six shows yearly.

The Green Decade presented the following shows in 2007: "Healthy Household Cleaning Products for Your Home" in January. (How to eliminate toxic chemicals from your close environment.) "Prevention through Good Nutrition" in March. (On the benefits of Omega 3.) "A Conversation with Ann Berwick" in May. (On the Deval Patrick administration energy policies.) "Local Food and Farm Policies" in July. (What's in the Farm Bill for us and for the local production of food.) "The Extension of the Green Line" in September. (A historical perspective and a forward looking plan.) "Energy Options for the 21st Century" in November. (We are not going to freeze in the dark.)

If you missed them the first time around, you can watch them through the Green Decade web site. Go to www.greendecade.org and click on The Environmental Show under the "News" header. *by Francoise LaMonica*

School Outreach Committee



Interested in receiving future communications from the Green Decade Coalition/Newton about school-based environmental activities?

The Newton Green Decade Coalition's School Outreach Committee is seeking volunteers to act as liaisons to their school. Liaisons would help the School Outreach Committee promote activities in their schools such as the essay / energy contest, compact fluorescent light bulb sales, recycling, energy audits, and the low carbon diet program.

You would not have to take on responsibility for implementing such projects—unless you wanted to. Rather, GDC is seeking volunteers to help us spread the word and connect with others who would like to develop these types of projects in their schools. If you are interested, please contact Meg Wilcox at megwilcox@rcn.com or at 617-795-0028. *by Meg Wilcox*

Day of prayer and advocacy

A priest, a minister, a rabbi and an imam walked into ...the State House. Actually, many men and women of the cloth walked in and spoke powerfully to the assembled crowd. It was a gathering of MICAN, the Massachusetts Interfaith Climate Action Network, which planned a morning event in Nurses Hall at the State House to urge legislators to move more quickly to curb CO2 emissions. The goals of MICAN were spelled out in a pledge which the Interfaith community brought to our legislators for their signature.

Each one spoke with passion and eloquence connecting us all to the morality, the biblical injunctions, the insights from the Quran on the need to act now to slow global warming. They spoke of the future, our grandchildren, our children's grandchildren and what they will think of our generation. Did we act soon enough? Did we accept our responsibility to leave to them an Earth in which they too will find the resources necessary for their survival? An Earth restored?

The first legislator to speak was Senator Marc R. Pacheco, Chair of the Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change. He underlined the importance of mandating CO2 reductions; voluntary measures won't work fast enough. He has offered bill S534 which would require the state to reduce CO2 emissions by 20% of 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050. Following his talk, he signed the pledge which had been enlarged onto a poster on an easel at the front of the gathering. From the House, Representative Frank I. Smizik, Chair of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, also spoke and enthusiastically supported MICAN's work. The following are the goals and principles listed on the pledge:

- 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
- No new coal plants
- Efficiency first: prioritize funding and programs that reduce energy needs and costs. This includes – building performance contracting, including diagnostics, air sealing and weatherization; reduced costs and favorable financing for high-efficiency heating, cooling, lighting and appliances; high-efficiency vehicles
- Prioritize clean, safe, renewable energy sources
- Prioritize care for the poor and investment in low-income communities
- Invest in training and support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those coming out of the prison system, to obtain jobs in the growing green sector
- Distribute funding and resources that increase community energy self-reliance, particularly investing in community organizations in low-income communities
- Eliminate or minimize subsidies for fossil fuel-related and nuclear energy production
- Invest in public transportation to ensure mobility, job access and well-being for all.

Following the program, members of the audience went to their representatives' and senators' offices to ask them to sign the pledge and be leaders within the legislature on solving Climate Change problems.

The supporting communities (as of 1/25/08) are: The American Baptist Churches of MA; Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), New England District; Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life; Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries; Diocese of the Armenian Church in America (Eastern); Emerging Ecology Fellowship at Andover Newton Theological School; Episcopal Diocese of MA; Inspiration House; Islamic Institute of Boston; Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston; MA Board of Rabbis; MA Council of Churches; MA Interfaith Power and Light; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Religious Witness for the Earth; Union for Reform Judaism, Northeast Council; United Church of Christ, MA Conference; United Methodist Church, New England Conference; and the Unitarian Universalist MA Action Network.

It is encouraging to know that faith-based communities are speaking out on these issues, not only to their congregations, but to our government. We in Newton can join them by contacting our representatives and senators to urge that they pledge to "dedicate funding and resources according to the [above] principles." We can also encourage others to do the same who are in our houses of worship, schools, businesses, health care facilities, social gatherings, and other institutions that make up so much of what Newton is. These next few years will be critical. Members and friends of Green Decade can play a meaningful role in bringing about an Earth restored.

by Louise Bruyn

The Green Decade Coalition/Newton is a member organization of MICAN (MA Climate Action Network). MICAN is a supporter and ally of MICAN. For more information about MICAN, email nancy.banks1@verizon.net

For information on the Green Decade Faith and the Environment Committee, contact the Green Decade at: contact@greendecade.org

Thanks ! and . . next deadline

For the next newsletter, please send submissions or requests by email to Ira Krepchin, irapk@alum.mit.edu by Friday, March 7, 2008.

Thanks for making this newsletter possible to Managing Editor Ira Krepchin, Co-editors Peter Smith and Louise Bruyn, and those who wrote articles. Many thanks to our Newsletter Collator Chairs Marcia Cooper and Frank Propp, with their team for the last issue: Sarah Barnett, Jacqui Gross, Sharon Sholkin, Anne Rayman, Edie Propp, and Marcia Cooper.

Thanks for donations go to:



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Environmental Action: It's in the Bag

If you've joined Green Decade recently, or renewed your membership, you probably received a reusable shopping bag. By using the bags, donated by Shaw's, you'll be helping the environment by reducing the number of disposable plastic and paper bags that enter the waste stream. Over 100 billion bags are consumed in the U.S. each year. Manufacturing these bags uses energy. Save that energy by reusing your green decade bag for years. Very few plastic bags get recycled. Standard plastic bags break down into smaller and smaller pieces over time, but the plastic in them does not decompose. In fact, plastic bag pollution is a serious threat to wildlife, killing sea turtles, birds, marine mammals and other animals that swallow plastic bags or bits of plastic bags that look a lot like food.

Plastic bags are also a health threat to humans, polluting the soil, our oceans, rivers, lakes and streams. Conventional plastic bags are made from petroleum and millions of dollars are spent each year collecting plastic bag litter. There is one bright spot—there are strong plastic bags available that are derived from vegetable matter — potatoes and corn — that completely degrade and can be composted, and some retailers have started to use them.

The city of San Francisco has enacted a law, with broad public support, giving supermarkets from six to 12 months to stop using conventional plastic bags. Noncompliance will incur a fine. This ban will reinforce retailers' efforts to provide incentives for customers to acquire reusable bags, such as those made of canvas. The ban may also encourage the increased use of compostable bags. A similar ban would be a boon in Newton as well.

by Ira Krepchin
[background info from Lois Levin's last year's Tab article]

Eco tip: Reduce Paper

Sometimes it's necessary to print out an email, but before you do, think about the environmental impact of printing out yet another sheet of paper. You may find yourself using less paper than before. And, if it works for you, it could work for others—try adding a message like this one at the end of every email that you send out: *"Please consider the environment before printing this email."*

Our Mission

The Green Decade Coalition/Newton is conducting a campaign to make a significant improvement in resource use by businesses, institutions, and residences in Newton. We establish goals and seek to achieve measurable results in energy and water use, waste disposal practices, and pollution prevention through research, education, and action. Our goal is to make Newton a model of ecological and environmental integrity in a sustainable world community.

Green Decade and Chamber Environmental Expo in June

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, June 3, 10:30am-7pm, to attend environmental workshops and visit displays at the Newton Marriott Hotel. The Green Decade Coalition/Newton is partnering with the Newton Needham Chamber of Commerce in a special event that day called "Environmental Business Solutions." The workshops and exhibits are free. At noon there will be a luncheon with entertainment, speakers and environmental awards to businesses. The lunch costs \$35 and tickets are available through the Chamber of Commerce, call 617 244-5300. The goal of this all day and evening event is to

give attendees access to a variety of environmentally sustainable innovations that also save money. Examples of workshops highlighting sustainable practices while improving the bottom line include: NStar's energy saving business lighting audit and subsidy program; "smart paper" programs that save money and recycle; smart transportation solutions; water recharge and conservation innovations and green building materials and designs.

by Peter Smith

green decade
COALITION/NEWTON



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CALENDAR

- Mar 15 (Sat)** Deadline 'Newton student energy conservation essay/art contests' see art. spc. p.
- Mar 24 (Mon) 7pm** "Getting a Grip: Our Food and Our Small Planet" Frances Moore Lappé, Environmental Speakers Series, Newton Free Library. See box page 1 - FREE
- Mar 28-30 (Fri-Sun)** "Down 2 Earth" Festival Hynes Aud Boston, www.d2eboston.com
- Apr 24 (Mon) 7pm** "Special Earth Day Festival !" Environmental Speakers Series, Newton Free Library. See box page 1 - FREE
- May 18 (Sun) 1pm** "Bike Newton" rally and demonstration Newton City Hall War Memorial, See article January green news - FREE
- June 3 (Tues) 10:30am-7pm** "Environmental Business Solutions" expo Newton Marriott Hotel, FREE exhibits & workshops, Awards luncheon with speakers \$35 in advance, sponsored by the Green Decade with the Newton/Needham Chamber of Commerce. Call 617 233-6071.

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TODAY!*

Send environmental events to GREEN NEWS. email to Ira Krepchin by Friday, Mar. 7, 2008 irapk@alum.mit.edu. We will list as space permits.



Mailing team has fun sending out members renewal reminders

Thanks to our membership mailing team

Our Annual Appeal mailing was sent out in January. Many thanks to volunteers: Arlene Bades, Hope Dauwalter, Jacqui Gross, Naomi Osher and Lisa Sazer for their outstanding help on this important project.

by Marcia Cooper

"The challenge is not to provide a high-tech military response to terrorism but to build a global society that is environmentally sustainable and equitable — one that restores hope for everyone. Such an effort would do more to combat terrorism than any increase in military expenditures or than any new weapons systems, however advanced." P. 284

Lester R. Brown, From *Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*, Earth Policy Institute, 2008



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Baby's Toxic Bottle

Baby's Toxic Bottle is the alarming headline to a new report by the Work Group for Safe Markets. WGSMB bought baby bottles from six major brands (Evenflo, Gerber, Avent, Dr. Brown's, Disney/First Years and Playtex), rinsed them five times and then filled them with water. The bottles were heated to 80 degrees Celsius (below boiling for those of us still using Fahrenheit) and tested for Bisphenol A, a chemical used in some plastics. Bisphenol A is a synthetic estrogen. Animal studies link very low doses of exposure to prostate and breast cancer, miscarriage, lowered sperm count, diabetes, and other health problems. The results of the study show that, when new bottles are heated, those manufactured by Avent, Evenflo, Dr. Brown's and Disney/First Years leached between 4.7 – 8.3 parts per billion of BPA. Recent research on animals shows that BPA can be harmful by disrupting development at doses below these levels.

Almost all Americans have Bisphenol A in their blood and urine at levels higher than those that cause damage in animals. Bisphenol A is used in more than baby bottles. It is also in products like canned foods and plastic water bottles. Now the good news – Bisphenol A does not stay in our system. As long as we're not continually inadvertently consuming it, our bodies eliminate it within a couple days. Moreover, Bisphenol A does not need to be in our plastics, especially those we use for food and drink.

We are accustomed to thinking of pollution as grey smoke poring from industrial smokestacks or a truck's tailpipe, but all too often it is unseen in products we use at home, in our schools, and workplaces. But outside of alarming news reports – lead in drug store jewelry, poison in our pet food, cancer in plastic bottles – how are we to know what is safe?

An Act Providing for Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals (S-2481) is currently in the Massachusetts State Legislature. If passed, it would establish a pragmatic, gradual approach to reducing health impacts from many toxic chemicals we are exposed to in everyday life.

This approach targets the worst toxic chemicals in Massachusetts—chemicals that are currently replaceable with feasible, safer alternatives for many uses. The bill mandates a careful process to evaluate alternatives and replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives where feasible. It also stimulates research and development on new technologies and solutions when a safer alternative is not currently feasible.

For workers and businesses, it proposes programs to assist in the transition to the safest available alternatives, funded through a fee on toxic chemicals. As with all pollutions controls this Act is a case of spending money to save money. We would be spending money on research here at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, to save money in reduced health care costs, reduced (Improved?)

employee productivity and, also, increased exports. By improving Massachusetts product safety standards, we are able to export more of our products to markets, like Japan and the EU, with stricter safety standards.

An Act Providing for Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals has already passed the State Senate, with strong support from our State Senator Cynthia Creem. The bill is currently in our State House of Representatives. Contact our Representatives, Ruth Balser, Kay Khan and Peter Koutoujian, and encourage them to pass the bill quickly.

Let them know that safe products are important to you. In addition to this legislation, there is a nationwide petition to baby bottle manufacturers to remove Bisphenol A from their production.

For more information on the Baby's Toxic Bottle report, manufacture's petition, or An Act Providing for Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals visit the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow's website: www.healthytomorrow.org.

by Lucia Dolan

Here are the contact numbers for our state representatives Ruth Balser, 617 722-2060; Kay Khan, 617 722-2011; and Peter Koutoujian, 617 722-2130



Student Essay & Art Contest entries due March 30

Registrations are already coming in for this year's 2nd Annual Student Energy Conservation & Art Contest so don't let your student(s) miss out on this year's event! The Green Decade Coalition/Newton with funding from NSTAR, the Newton Schools Foundation and other organizations, is offering two contests on this topic this year:

- Energy Conservation Essay Contest
- Energy Conservation Art Contest

The contests are open to all students in grades K-12 who either live or go to school in Newton: Elementary, Middle School and High School. Students may choose to enter either or both contests.

PRIZES: Will be awarded for First, Second and Third places plus distinction prizes at each level. All participants will receive a certificate of participation. Judges include current and former Newton teachers, and the awards will be announced in April during the week of Earth Day.

All entries must be submitted by March 30, 2008. More information is available on the Green Decade website: www.greendecade.org, including the registration form.

by Contest Coordinators Amanda Frank and Oleg Kordiunsky

Fossil Fools Day April 1, 2008

Greetings from Canada,

On April 1, 2008 young people from around the world are rising up to show the world that we refuse to fool around with climate change and our future. Led by the Energy Action Coalition, Canadian Youth Climate Coalition, and Rising Tide, on April 1 we will take collective action to turn the tide away from fossil fuel dependence and towards a clean and just energy revolution. On this historic day of action we will tear down the dirty energy that stands in our way, while building the better world we need.

We Are Fed Up

We have had enough of fossil fuel tomfoolery - empty promises and lackluster leadership from our governments and dirty energy companies. We have had enough of coal companies that destroy communities, poison our air, and spew global warming pollution. We are sick of oil and car companies keeping us dangerously addicted to oil. We know that tar sands development in Canada must be stopped. And we will kick every politician out of office who refuses to show bold, political leadership in fighting climate change. Join us in making April 1 a day the fossil fuel industry never forgets! Sign-up for an action in your community today. <http://fossilfools08.org>

We Are Hopeful

Climate change is our generation's biggest challenge, but also our biggest opportunity. We can make sure that as we move away from dangerous fossil fuels we are building not only a cleaner, but also a more just future. We will help ensure that the clean energy revolution leaves no one behind and creates hundreds of thousands of new, green jobs. Join us in building a more just future. Plan an action to spur green job creation in your community today.

We Are Powerful

Together we can build a more just and sustainable future. We are calling on communities across Canada and the US to show the fossil fuel industry and bad politicians that we mean business by organizing a Fossil Fools Day action today. Ideas include, but are by no means limited to: rallies at gas stations or representative offices, critical mass bike rides, office occupations, Billionaire's for Tar Sands/Coal demonstrations, spank the bank visits, high-powered projections of solutions on the side of dirty energy factories, Board of Trustees meeting take-overs, hold a clean energy camp at a dirty energy site, do solar installations, make spoof videos and websites, offer alternative, clean energy bus rides, do some coal mining of your own at a coal company's headquarters...

This April 1st join with people around the world to end the fossil fuel age and stand up for a new energy future. Get more information by visiting the website now <http://fossilfools08.org>.

See you in the streets! The Energy Action Team, Arthur, Kassie, Jessy, Brianna, Aleli, Ragani and Whit.



Eric Olson and Newton North students have fun at EnviroJAM

EnviroJAM 2008 : Rock to reduce your carbon footprint

Thanks to the wildly successful EnviroJAM concert at Newton North on January 17, students raised over \$1500 for environmental projects, which they donated to the Green Decade. The event was coordinated by AP Science teacher Zachary Snow and students Annabel Raby and Rachel Gore, with musical performances by students and teachers at Newton North.

Green tips were offered by the coordinators in between the acts, which included group and solo performances, with songs ranging from Jackson Browne and Amy Winehouse to original compositions such as the eco-friendly finale, "The 3R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle."

With the kids' approval Green Decade is retaining \$100 for "services" including our webpage, newsletter, and other expenses. The remaining \$1400 goes to the New England Wind Fund, to support new wind power development in New England, with the recipient organization Mass Energy Consumers Alliance serving as either a direct developer of wind projects or a supporter of privately owned wind.

The rate-payer financed Renewable Energy Trust Fund then matches the wind power donation with a dollar for dollar gift to the City of Newton to support our Solar On Schools program. Both high schools have benefited from the Trust Fund and all four Middle Schools are about to sprout panels.

We predict that our elementary schools will benefit from this grant. And a SECOND match is made for solar panels on schools or community centers in lower income neighborhoods, that otherwise might not be able to participate in this kind of donor-initiated project.

Once again, we thank the students, parents, friends and faculty of Newton North for a delightful evening of earth-friendly entertainment for a good cause, and special thanks to Zach Snow and the AP Biology students for including the Green Decade in the evening's festivities!

by Margaret Ford & Eric Olson