

LIVING THE GREEN



MEMBER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIKE RILEY

THE EVOLUTION AND RESILIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Change and disruption have been a constant these last few years. From a racial reckoning to polarizing politics, pandemics and the shift to a hybrid workplace – to name just a few – we’ve experienced a lot since 2016.

A different way to frame all this change and disruption is evolution. There are many forces that have shaped The Environmental Center recently, some threats and others opportunities. They’ve forced us to build on our strengths, wrestle with our weaknesses, and adapt and grow to remain successful as educators and advocates for a sustainable, low-carbon future.

One way we’re evolving is to serve and provide programs to the entire Central Oregon region. It’s right there in our mission: to embed sustainability into daily life in Central Oregon. But the truth is, we have been mostly focused on Bend and Deschutes County to-date. With nearly half of our staff now living in Redmond, Sisters, and La Pine, we’re also better equipped and more energized to build deeper relationships in these communities.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR *CONT'D*

This year, we are exploring more opportunities to reach our neighbors in Madras, Prineville, and Warm Springs. Already, our educators have begun engaging youth in Madras, and they hope to reach kids in Prineville this year, too. Our garden program just awarded school garden grants in Madras and Warm Springs (see article on next page), and we're starting to plan a tour for our Garden Educator Network in Crook County this spring. We've also started discussions with local governments and garbage and recycling companies about expanding the Rethink Waste Project beyond Deschutes County.

From an advocacy standpoint, we've started looking beyond Bend for policies that support a low-carbon future. We are actively pursuing the development of an energy plan for Deschutes County, with a focus on reducing energy use and shifting to renewables. Several of our staff are also joining teams to advocate for legislative policy changes in the current 2023 legislative session in Salem: Neil Baunsgard on decarbonizing buildings and Udara Abeysekera Bickett on waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

Another way that we're evolving is growing both leadership opportunities and support roles for staff within our organization. We recently created a new Associate Director position, with Lauren Williams in

that role. Lindsey Hardy is now the Director of our new climate solutions department, overseeing energy and waste programs. And Tim Page has stepped up into a new Development Director role, overseeing our fundraising and communications activities. Adding more support staff, such as our new Development Coordinator and Rethink Waste Coordinator, has also helped strengthen the team's effectiveness.

My leadership role is also evolving. I began a new community leadership position as a Bend City Councilor on January 4. With those new responsibilities, my role at The Environmental Center is narrowing, focusing on three "F's": finances, fundraising, and our future (via our Eco Central Capital Campaign).

No nation, community, or organization can be sustainable in the face of rapid climate and social change without evolving. The times we live in require resilience: the ability to successfully adapt to challenging experiences and circumstances. I am excited about the tenacity of The Environmental Center, as we strive to be the most effective educators and advocates we can be. Thanks so much for your support to make that possible.

- Mike Riley
Executive Director



INCREASING CAPACITY FOR RETHINK WASTE

We have a new Rethink Waste Program Coordinator, and a few new changes to our Community Innovation Fund (CIF) program!

Thanks to partnership with Deschutes County Solid Waste and Visit Central Oregon, CIF will fund more reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost initiatives throughout Deschutes County and provide technical assistance to applicants and awardees. Learn more and find links to register for an info session at rethinkwasteproject.org. And, help us spread the word by sharing information about the opportunity with your networks!

Welcome, Kavi! This year, the Rethink Waste Project is excited to welcome a new staff member to help expand the CIF and support other projects that contribute

to the overall success of Rethink Waste! Kavi Chokshi is filling this role, with an impressive background in entrepreneurship, UX/web design, and policy and advocacy work on a local level! You can learn more about Kavi on our blog.



"Reducing waste and helping Central Oregon be more sustainable is a passion of mine, and I'm super excited to join the team! I look forward to maximizing the impact of the Community Innovation Fund."

- Kavi Chokshi, RWP Coordinator (pictured left).

WHAT'S GROWING: A GARDEN FOR EVERY SCHOOL

Our Garden for Every School program's main focus is to connect students across Central Oregon to gardens at their school or in their community, and we do this primarily through our small garden grant program.

Five years in, we have funded projects from Sunriver to Warm Springs, and most communities in between. Knowing that every community is different, we meet schools or other kinds of education facilities where they're at to fit their needs for new and/or improved learning gardens!



This year, we encouraged new schools and communities to apply, and we are pleased to be able to support projects coming from a wider geographic area. Among other projects, we'll be assisting three established learning gardens to the north (in Madras and in Warm Springs): Jefferson County Middle School's Land Lab in Madras, the Warm Springs K-8 Academy's school garden and greenhouse, and the Warm Springs Early Childhood Education Center garden.

Both the Warm Springs K-8 Academy and Warm Springs Early Childhood Education Center have gardens managed by tribal member John Brunoe, with the OSU-Extension Warm Springs office. Funds will be used from each grant to buy tables and benches to create an outdoor classroom area in the already established garden spaces (pictured above and left), and a new pollinator garden at the HeadStart campus.



"The proposed addition of a pollinator garden area will provide colorful beauty to the garden, promote fruit/vegetable pollination, and many pollinator insect viewing opportunities. The colorful, fun, informative signs will provide learning opportunities and support garden exploration activities for all teachers, students and family members who visit the Warm Springs Early Childhood Center Garden."

- JOHN BRUNOE

JCMS's Land Lab, headed up by Agriculture Teacher Sara Vollmer, seeks to add native drought tolerant pollinator plants as a border around the current garden.

"We would like to teach students to propagate, plant and maintain native plants in our classes. We would also like to distribute these plants to students and families in the Jefferson County area to help combat water instability and improve our native pollinator habitat for future generations." -SARA VOLLMER

Stay tuned for a forthcoming press release that gives details on the other 14 school garden grant awards that we're funding this year!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:	Diana Lemus	Udara Abeysekera Bickett	Lindsey Hardy	Denise Rowcroft
	Emily Dougan - <i>President</i>	Michael McLandress	<i>Rethink Waste Manager</i>	<i>Waste & Energy Director</i>
	Glenn Van Cise	Priscilla Calleros	Al Kolenda	Lauren Williams
Kevin Doner - <i>Vice President</i>		<i>Events & Outreach Manager</i>	<i>Development Coordinator</i>	<i>Associate Director</i>
Nicole Potter - <i>Secretary</i>	STAFF:	Kavi Chokshi	Tim Page	Becky Yaeger
Steve Rooney - <i>Treasurer</i>	Grace Andrews	<i>Rethink Waste Coordinator</i>	<i>Development Director</i>	<i>Youth Education Manager</i>
Diane Dedrick	Adrienne Atkins	Amelia Remington Corbari	Marianne Pyott	Wesley Yoder
Allen Engle	<i>FoodCorps</i>	<i>Communications Manager</i>	<i>Business & Facility Manager</i>	<i>Youth Education Coordinator</i>
Peter Geiser	Neil Baungard	Janet Llerandi Gonzalez	Mike Riley	
Jennifer Hoffmann	<i>Energy Program Manager</i>	<i>Business Manager</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	
Dave Howe				

SEE YOU AT THE TOWER!



It's time for our biggest fundraiser of the year: Mountainfilm! We are so excited to host this year in person at the Tower Theatre once again. Nothing compares to the buzz and energy of coming together to enjoy films, and take a chance at a great raffle prize from a local business!

As always, we are pleased to offer some incredible grand prizes both Friday and Saturday nights from local outdoor gear retailers as well as a GRAND grand prize (available for entry both nights): an electric bike from Bend Electric Bikes!

Remember to use your member discount code - MEMBER10 - for 10% off your ticket (valid for one showing only)! Tickets can be purchased online from the Tower Theatre. Shows are Friday, Feb. 24th & Saturday, Feb. 25th. Doors at 6pm.



Pictured: a still from *Janwaar* (showing Friday). This moving film relays the power of a community skate park in one of the poorest states in India.



SAVE THE DATE! 3RD ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION JUNE 17TH-18TH

The 3rd Annual Juneteenth Celebration, organized by The Father's Group, will be held at Drake Park on June 17th-18th. This fun, family-friendly festival will feature unique entertainment, music, food, and dancing. There will be face painting for the kids, a variety of historical and educational exhibits, artistic displays, and recreation. Our team is looking forward to supporting their sustainability efforts that weekend, in addition to other volunteer opportunities!

Learn more, make a donation, and/or sign up to volunteer at juneteenthcentralor.com



PLANNING THE ENERGY FUTURE OF DESCHUTES COUNTY

The Energy Plan Working Group has kicked off with over 10 wonderful community members from all over Deschutes County! If you are interested in joining this working group, we will continue to bring on new members throughout the process, so don't hesitate to reach out for more information.

This group is working together to:

- Curate and present local energy data
- Identify community priorities for renewable energy projects
- Determine a structure for the energy planning process for Deschutes County

Want to get involved?
Reach out to Grace:
grace@envirocenter.org
to learn more!



LOCAL YOUTH TAKE ACTION FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

After each EarthSmart lesson that Youth Education staff present to 3rd, 4th, or 5th graders, students are encouraged to create their own weekly goal or challenge for themselves to work on. The goals they set for themselves address a sustainability issue they learned about during the lessons.

This school year, we are inspired and impressed by the creative sustainability goals that EarthSmart students have set! Some students chose to focus their goals on natural resources: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing household and school food waste, understanding our food systems and how to make more sustainable food choices, and conserving water resources. One class started a recycling club after the Rethink Waste EarthSmart lesson, and they even consider ways to reuse recyclable materials before tossing them in the bin.

Other students are able to work on sustainability initiatives together through their school's Green Teams, or if they're in high school, via the Green Leadership Coalition (GLC). A few examples are:

- Students at **North Star Elementary** and **Lava Ridge Elementary** have the opportunity to compost with their schools' worm bins.
- A few students at **Sisters High School** are trying to encourage their teachers, school staff, and fellow students to reduce their waste by putting up better signage about recycling, and attempting to reduce recycling and waste contamination. Students are planning to perform a waste audit and collaborating with custodial staff to determine how many trash and recycling bins are needed in the cafeteria and common areas, plus how to make the custodial staff's jobs easier!
- Two students from **Summit High School** are working on a Food for Our Future campaign based on Meatless Monday campaigns elsewhere. They are sharing presentations with elementary school students about how eating a vegetarian or plant-based diet is healthy for both people and the planet. They plan to meet with Nutrition Services, and will also be seeking support from GLC members and have students from all different schools sign a petition to demonstrate interest across different schools and grade levels.

Way to go, students! We can't wait to share what you accomplish next.



DECARBONIZE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Over the past year, we have been part of a statewide task force that developed policy solutions for resilient and decarbonized buildings. **During the 2023 legislative session, you (yes, you!) can help us get these resilient building bills passed.**

Check out envirocenter.org/advocacy for more info on these bills, as well as the waste reduction initiatives that we are supporting.

WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

We are excited to announce that our website is getting a much needed makeover! Our goal is to enhance the experience of our site as well as the site's attention to accessibility for all types of users. **If you have a few minutes to complete a short survey** about how you use our website, please scan the QR code here:



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EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

March 3

Fridays for Future Climate Strike

This youth-led group plans to meet at Harmon Park at 11am to speak out for the planet and future. Learn more: fridaysforfuturebend.org.

Begins March 7

Happy Hour in the Garden

Join us in the Learning Garden every other Tuesday from 4-6pm! Anyone is invited, regardless of their gardening skills, to volunteer in the garden for some hands-on learning. Gloves and tools, as well as beer and non-alcoholic beverages are provided.

March 9

Green Drinks: Oregon Shines

Oregon Shines is passionate about making solar energy the rule instead of the exception. Learn about community solar with Oregon Shines at the Humm Kombucha Taproom!

April 12

Power Hour: Deschutes County 2040

Between now and February 2024, Deschutes County will be updating its Comprehensive Plan which is the County's map for the future and provides the goals, policies, and actions that are intended to guide the day-to-day decisions of elected officials and staff. Learn about the process and give your input.

April 26

Repair Café: OSU-Cascades

Attend our first Repair Café of the year, and celebrate our 10th year of hosting these events in Central Oregon! We will also have a clothing swap and donation drive for COCC Clothing Connections.

Coming soon...

Compost Workshops

Stay tuned for dates! This spring, join the Garden and Rethink Waste programs as they collaborate on hands-on food waste and composting workshops.

VIEW MORE EVENTS AT ENVIROCENTER.ORG.



April 22nd

Earth Day Fair & Parade

It's not too early to start thinking about your Earth Day parade costume! Make a splash this year in a handmade mask, upcycled outfit, or fabulous themed group get-up.

We will be announcing **costume making workshops hosted by local artists** prior to the festival, so stay tuned and get your creative ideas running wild. Or, gather materials from local recyclers or thrift stores and host your own costume making party!