

# LIVING THE GREEN



SUPPORTER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIKE RILEY

## **NEW YEAR, NEW FOCUS**

### **Where we are headed in 2024**

In 2023, our staff and Board spent some time reflecting on our past and where we need to focus over the next two to three years. Our mission and commitment to our core programs remains the same. What is changing is how we do our work. In the spirit of new year's resolutions, and in honor of our 35th birthday, I'm happy to share with you, our supporters, a first look into our new strategic focus areas:

- **Play an influential role in, and become more effective at, grassroots advocacy, policy change and organizing at the local and state levels.** We recognize the urgent need to transform policies and systems that are the biggest contributors to the climate crisis. While we've recently made progress in this area, we want to increase our effectiveness and impact as changemakers.
- **Prioritize climate action and learning across all of our work, while centering community needs and benefits.** The climate crisis is *the* sustainability issue of our time. This means connecting all we do back to climate. And it means devoting more time and resources to local action that both reduces emissions and improves the

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## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR *CONT'D*

quality of life for more individuals, specifically those most impacted by climate change.

- **Thoughtfully and gradually expand our programs and events to parts of Central Oregon currently underserved by TEC.**

Our mission requires an intentional focus on the smaller cities and more rural areas of Central Oregon, not just the urban hub of Bend. We know it will take time and effort to build new relationships with different parts of the region. In some cases, expansion of our work may not be the answer, but instead a re-prioritization or redistribution of our resources to deepen our impact and relationships.

- **Commit to and follow-through on more explicit and concrete actions to embed diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) throughout the organization.**

While we have been learning about and practicing how to integrate our commitment to DEI into all parts of our organization, we also recognize we still have substantial progress to make. That progress will require ongoing learning, reflection, and most importantly, action and accountability, all grounded in our values. For us, DEI is an on-going process of growth and change grounded in our values, not a destination.

- **Enhance our ability to respond and adapt to both our organization's and community's needs and goals.**

To achieve our mission, we need contin-

ued investment in our people, facility, fundraising and administrative systems. We will strive to put our organizational values into practice when it comes to internal operations and policies, and to improve the organization-wide systems that enable our success and effectiveness as a team. A big piece of this focus area is to build our capacity and skills to serve as a truly regional hub.

Through all our discussions, three other themes emerged. The first was the need to approach our work with humility and curiosity. The second was to honor and integrate cultural differences across our work. The final theme was the importance of collaboration as essential to ensuring that all members of our region see meaningful benefits from solutions to the climate crisis.

We're excited to translate these ideas into action over the coming year. If you'd like to learn more about our evolving values, strategies and focus areas, I invite you to spend some time on our website—we'll be adding more detail in the coming months, specifically under the *About Us* tab.



- Mike Riley  
Executive Director

## LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLERS ARE READY TO GROW

**By Denise Rowcroft, Garden Program Manager**

For the seventh year in a row, we've been thrilled to distribute funds through the Garden for Every School program to support local school garden efforts in our region. To date we have distributed over \$106,000!

**This year for the first time we had three high schools apply and receive funding.** Madras High School's Environmental Club students will be using funds to give back to their community, with a plan to engage students in reviving the Madras Community Garden. Realms High School will use funds to continue outdoor space improvements for their students. And Bend High School's Environmental Club students will partner with the Life Skills students, utilizing the greenhouse to expand pollinator plants in our community.

Although each school garden project is meaningful (this year we've funded 11 projects total) we're especially excited for these three projects to see our reach expand into the high school realm and help support more student led projects.



Students in the existing Madras Community Garden. The garden grand reopening will take place April 20, 2024, 1-4pm!

[LEARN ABOUT INCLUDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN AT ENVIROCENTER.ORG.](https://envirocenter.org)

# MOUNTAINFILM RETURNS FEB 23 & 24

**Thank you for being a Supporter! Remember to use discount code **SUPPORTER10** on The Tower Theatre's website for 10% off your ticket. Offer valid for one evening.**

Each year, our staff look forward to selecting and sharing a special lineup of films from Telluride's renowned Mountainfilm Festival. With our fellow Central Oregonians in mind, we pick out films that inspire us, move us, educate us on new perspectives, and fuel stoke for the natural world we share. This year's featured cover photo comes from the film *The Nine Wheels*, coming to the big screen on Saturday evening.



**About the film: "Mountain bike stars of the future, Emric (10) and Raoul (13) are home-schooled by their parents Toni and Laetitia. They are the Schneeberger family, aka The Nine Wheels. They live in their motorhome going from bike park to bike park across Europe, a decision prompted by the discovery of a neurodegenerative disease in Laetitia. The Nine Wheels explores what it is like to live with a disability, the power of brotherly love, the devotion of parents, and ultimately, what it is like to live life fully one day at a time."**

Whether it's the story of *The Nine Wheels*, a chance to win a ski package, or the camaraderie of community that brings you out, we're sure there will be something for everyone at this year's event. Grand raffle prizes include big-ticket items from The Crow's Feet and Mountain Supply, plus our usual table filled with other enviable prize packages as well as instant prizes in the lobby! Also in the lobby will be our new Presenting Sponsor, AdventurUs Women, to answer questions about their incredible guided outdoor excursions. We hope to see you there! Tickets are available at [towertheatre.org](http://towertheatre.org).

## OREGON LEGISLATURE SHORT SESSION UPDATE

**By Neil Baunsgard, Climate and Transportation Policy Manager**

Oregon's state legislature is gearing up for a brief but intensive "short session" commencing on February 5th. The state alternates between short sessions lasting up to 35 days and longer sessions stretching up to 160 days. This session promises to be particularly dynamic as we closely monitor and engage in discussions on several compelling bills related to waste, energy, and transportation. However, the primary emphasis this year will be on addressing housing issues.

Anticipate a whirlwind 5 weeks filled with swift and impactful legislative developments. Want to stay in the loop? Make sure you're connected to our regular e-newsletter— eLiving The Green— for updates on opportunities to actively participate in supporting our key priority bills. Get ready to make a difference!

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## MARCH GREEN DRINKS FEATURES NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM

In partnership with Outback Film and The Onward Project, we're honored to present a debut showing of *Dream Boldly: The Grand AdvenChair*. This inspiring film features the story of Bend adventurer, entrepreneur, and disability advocate Geoff Babb.

**About the film: "A survivor of two strokes takes years to perfect an all-terrain human-powered wheelchair, culminating in a rigorous 4-day expedition down and back out of the Grand Canyon, with a ripple effect on others from its creation—access to nature previously out of reach. Sometimes one bold dream can change the world for many."**

Join us at COCC's Wille Hall on **March 22nd from 5-7pm** for this thrilling film and conversation with panelists! More details to come, registration link will be made available on our website soon.



## WE'RE RECRUITING FOR OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Interested in making a difference in your community?  
Join our Board of Directors!

Our Board of Directors is a team of dedicated volunteers who help achieve The Environmental Center's mission. As we grow and evolve as an organization, we continue to seek people with different perspectives, skills, and experiences to strengthen our collective work.

We invite people from all corners of Central Oregon to apply today! No prior board experience is necessary. If our values align and you're passionate about community-based initiatives, we'd love the chance to connect with you.

**Position description, current board bios, and online interest form available at: [envirocenter.org/about-us/board-of-directors](https://envirocenter.org/about-us/board-of-directors) or scan the QR code below!**



# HEA PROGRAM LAUNCHES THIS YEAR

By Lindsey Hardy, Climate Solutions Program Director

Our homes are where we seek shelter, rest, and spend time with people we love. Unfortunately, housing affordability, difficult choices about critical home repairs, and high energy bills have made homes, that should be a place of refuge, a burden on many families. This year, we're addressing these burdens by launching a new Home Energy Assessment (HEA) program, modeled after other successful programs in Oregon.

The Environmental Center team has worked in Central Oregon to save energy and reduce our communities' climate impacts for almost ten years. While we have made great strides—we recognize we have not reached all members of our community equally. Data shows that utility customers who are Native, Indigenous, Black, Latine, people of color, 2SLGBTQ+, people, living with disabilities, experiencing low to moderate incomes, and living in rural areas have not received the same level of investments as those in positions of more privilege. In response, our goal with this program is to reach and deliver benefits to underserved communities.

Energy Trust of Oregon recently created a new Community Partner Funding program to deliver free home energy assessments (HEAs) and increased incentives for energy upgrades to households historically underserved by Energy Trust. To better understand this opportunity and the impacts it could have on our local communities, we looked to other successful HEA programs, such as Seeds for the Sol in Corvallis, who is serving as a model for our new program. They describe their HEA program as the "trifecta" of climate work:

1. It helps to reduce emissions by reducing energy use (mitigation)
2. It provides homes with an efficient heating and cooling system (adaptation)
3. It connects underinvested communities to resources to make their homes safer, healthier, and more comfortable and reduces their monthly energy costs (equity)

It's estimated that households have the potential to save \$1,000/year on energy costs when multiple projects such as insulation and heat pumps are completed together, though the savings amount will vary depending on the current conditions of the home. Currently, we are in the process of hiring a new Program Manager for this position and look forward to launching the free assessments in March, 2024. Keep an eye on our website for information about eligibility and how to apply!

## HOME ENERGY ASSESSMENT PROCESS



## NEW SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

In 2024, we're aiming to cultivate 35 new monthly supporters in celebration of our 35th anniversary as a non-profit! Here's a wonderful testimony from one of our newest monthly supporters, Kaitlin Greene (she/her):

***"I decided to become a supporter of the Environmental Center because their team sets their sights high on changing systems and policies to make Central Oregon a more equitable and sustainable community. From their education and advocacy efforts to the Earth Day Fair and Welcoming Week activities, they work to reach diverse ages and backgrounds with an intentionality that serves as a model for community building. I am proud to support TEC and look forward to what their future holds."***

Thank you, Kaitlin! We always love hearing your unique perspectives and reasons for joining this community. If you would like to share your story, reach out via email to Al Kolenda: [al@envirocenter.org](mailto:al@envirocenter.org).

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## EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

**February 28**

### **Power Hour: Fumes in Focus**

Wednesday, February 28 from 7-8pm at The Environmental Center and Zoom. We're teaming up with Beyond Toxics for a screening of their eye-opening film on natural gas and indoor air quality. As environmental and public health risks intensify, the Fumes in Focus project focuses on the pervasive issue of indoor gas stoves and how much they pollute our homes. Beyond Toxics Executive Director, Lisa Arkin, will be there to discuss the project and answer questions.

**March - October 2024**

### **Happy Hour in the Garden**

Beginning in March, we welcome volunteers with any level of gardening experience, from beginner to expert, to join us in the Kansas Avenue Learning Garden! We'll have tools, instructions, and beverages for all attendees. Happy Hour in the Garden takes place on Tuesdays from 4-6pm, every other week; check out our events calendar for dates.

**March 4**

### **Upgrading Your Water Heater**

Join Energize Bend, GreenSavers, and The Environmental Center for a free webinar on Monday, March 4, 5:15-6pm. Join Bend's local home energy experts at GreenSavers to get up to speed on the latest high-efficiency heat pump water heater technology, the performance and benefits, and the pricing, rebates and incentives available to help you save money and reduce pollution while you upgrade your home energy equipment.

**March 12**

### **The BuildRight Roadshow**

Presented by: Builders FirstSource – READY-FRAME. Join presenters Ron Nuttall, Carol Eisenlohr, and Greg Lasher for a morning of learning and 4 hours of CCB CE credits. From 8am-12pm at 20545 Murray Rd. in Bend.

**May 14**

### **Rural EV Charging Programs**

Presented by: Forth Mobility. This webinar on May 14 from 10-11am features speakers highlighting strategies and programs aiming to address rural EV charging challenges.



**Saturday, April 20**

### **Earth Day Fair & Parade**

Join us in downtown Bend for our annual Earth Day celebration! Signing up to volunteer is a great way to get involved.

Dressing up for the parade is another fun way to participate. Costume and mask making workshops will be open in the weeks leading up to Earth Day to get ready for the parade. Stay tuned!

VIEW MORE EVENTS AT [ENVIROCENTER.ORG](http://ENVIROCENTER.ORG).