

LIVING THE GREEN



SUPPORTER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIKE RILEY

UNITED IN AGENCY AND ACTION

As I write, the 2024 presidential election looms and climate change is not getting the attention it deserves. One presidential candidate is clearly a climate change denier. He will, no question, accelerate the already rapid pace of global warming. While the other candidate will be much better, it's not clear she'll take the steps scientists say are needed to avoid massive overheating and its dire consequences for human communities and the rest of creation that shares our world.

Yikes. I try hard not to get swallowed whole by the seeming cascade of bad news and to just give up. But what's a person to do?

The first step is to let these three facts sink in: climate change is here, it's not going away any time soon, and there is no place to hide anymore. Just ask our fellow Americans who recently moved from Florida to western North Carolina to escape coastal storms, only to be deluged by a hurricane in their new mountain homes. Or those who moved north to Central Oregon, only to be forced inside by increasingly hotter and smokier

cont'd inside

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONT'D

summers. Or the Europeans, South Americans and Africans who experienced record heat, floods and drought this year.

I like to remind myself that when I give up my agency by disengaging, I am also giving up my ability to make a difference. I am giving power to the players and forces who don't care about the seventh generation, those who care only about what's-in-it-for-me-today. No matter the outcome on election day, we can still make a difference by taking action in our local communities.

We can take individual action in our daily lives, actions that TEC works hard to make more feasible for more people. Waste less food, reuse more. Walk, ride a bike and take the bus more often. Buy or lease an electric vehicle. Improve the energy efficiency of your home and go solar—and take full advantage of the incentives that support those actions.

We can also keep calling on our local and state elected leaders to do what they can, in their sphere of influence. They should be adopting policies that both reduce emissions and help us adapt to a hotter, drier, and stormy future. And they should make sure to center the needs of those most impacted by climate change.

Our work at The Environmental Center is grounded in the importance of grassroots action, in the idea that what we do here matters and will help drive the change needed in Salem, in Washington DC and globally. You see that in our growing focus on reuse. You see it in our new home energy assessment program that helps lower income households and people of color access resources to invest in reducing their emissions and energy bills and adapting to hotter, smokier summers. You see it in our advocacy for policy in Bend that lowers emissions from natural gas. You see it in our work to develop the next generation of leaders. And you see it in the commitment of our staff to our mission and community.

Regardless of the outcome, I know we'll get through this election season together. Above all, personal agency and grassroots action will remain key strategies central to a cooler and more equitable future. Thanks for helping The Environmental Center do its part to build that future.



- Mike Riley
Executive Director

RETHINK WASTE GETS A BOOST WITH NEW STAFF

As the Rethink Waste Project program has grown over the years, the need for at least two program staff to manage the program's expanding reach and scope has become abundantly clear. This fall, we welcomed Naomi Serio as our new part-time Rethink Waste Coordinator, and she has jumped in head-first to take on some key components of the program: reusable dishware rentals, Repair Café (coming up on November 20!), and plenty of outreach opportunities across Central Oregon.

Naomi is excited to dive into her role just in time for the holiday season, where she hopes to work with all of you to make a meaningful impact on reducing waste—starting with introducing reusable dishware for all your gatherings! Borrowing dishware kits is free. Simply fill

out the request form on the Reusable Dishware Loan Program page at rethinkwasteproject.org, and Naomi will contact you to confirm the details of your request.



One of Naomi's first outreach opportunities took place at the first annual Food Safety and Sustainability Summit in Bend

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

ROOTED IN PARTNERSHIP: PART II

Our dream of building a Learning Garden in Redmond is finally taking shape! In late September, Garden for Every School Program Manager Denise Rowcroft joined the team at RootedHomes to kick off the groundbreaking at their first Redmond development, Rooted at 19th. From the outset of planning this project, we have been in collaboration with RootedHomes to develop an on-site community learning garden that will be accessed by school children and community members alike. Much like our now 14-year-old Kansas Avenue Learning Garden in Bend, we're developing this garden for use as an outdoor classroom by a nearby elementary school, Hugh Hartman, as well as a field trip destination for other Redmond schools, without requiring teachers to use their free time maintaining the garden space. This garden will also be accessible to residents, and will be managed in a cooperative, collaborative way so that all parties benefit from the learning garden space.

We'll be working with community members and local students to get design input for the bilingual garden space, with infrastructure and development slated to begin spring 2025, when applications open for the homes. We hope to plant our first batch of garlic next fall! As with our current learning garden, we will be inviting the community to join us for regular ongoing garden work parties. If you've been wanting to join our "Happy Hour in the Garden" volunteer work series at the Kansas Avenue Learning Garden in Bend but haven't been able to make it because you live or work in Redmond, this is your chance! Please contact Denise by email (denise@envirocenter.org) to get on a list of interested community supporters. In addition to donations to fund this garden project, we'll also be looking for support in various other ways. If you have skills and experiences to offer, such as in-kind donations, garden expertise, building experience, event organizing, community outreach, bilingual garden signage/support and more, please get in touch!



As pictured above (first and third images), the site is now being prepped for future new homes and the garden! In late September, Denise spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony to talk about the project and welcome the community to the future space (middle image). If you would like to know more about Rooted in Redmond, information is available at rootedhomes.org/communities/redmond.

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HEA PROGRAM NOW OFFERING ZERO-INTEREST LOANS

Back when we launched our Home Energy Assessment (HEA) program, we were hopeful that a key component to the program would include access to interest-free loans for upgrades that didn't fall under the "no-cost" category. As of this fall, we have received our first gift to launch a Zero-Interest Loan option for households who are participating in the HEA program. The vision for this component is to have a community-funded pool to draw from that assists clean energy projects in getting over the finish line. This funding will allow residents in Central Oregon to access benefits including energy savings and healthier indoor air quality. We are partnering with a non-profit based in Corvallis, OR, Seeds for the Sol, to replicate their successful community-funded loan program that has been operating for 10 years. The first \$100,000 that they received has supported more than \$800,000 work of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects installed by local contractors!

Community members can sign up for the free HEA program at envirocenter.org/hea and we will let participants know when the loan program is ready to go! The first round of applications will be limited to available funding but we hope to continue growing the loan pool to make clean energy more accessible than ever before.



Our HEA Program Manager, Satya, has been doing fantastic work since the program launched, completing around 50 assessments to date and counting!

Free assessments take place in the comfort of your home, with a full review of your dwelling's energy use, appliances, insulation, and other factors that impact energy performance and costs.



Left to right: Neil Baunsgard, Janet Ilerandi Gonzalez, Denise Rowcroft, Mike Riley, Stacey Stemach.

FACILITY COMMITTEE GATHERS IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

As you may have heard, a major part of our Eco Central Capital Campaign includes raising funds for an upgraded, state-of-the-art facility to host The Environmental Center and our community for years to come. As we continue to dream, design, and refine, a small committee of TEC staff and board has formed to oversee all the hundreds (if not thousands!) of decisions—miniscule to major—that go into a remodel.

Thanks to Stacey Stemach of Stemach Design + Architecture, our wonderful project architect, the committee toured Pacific Power's new building in north Bend to gather insights and ideas for a modern office space. From modular furniture to healthy, sound dampening building materials, the committee had a fun time asking questions and seeing what's possible.

Stay tuned for more updates as our campaign grows. As our supporters, you'll be the first to receive information about the direction of our facility renovation, upgrades to the space, and mission impacts!



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Redding

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Throughout 2024, we've aimed 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 recurring supporters, Jennifer Redding:

"By contributing to The Environmental Center on a monthly basis I appreciate knowing that my funds can support their mission year round, for the everyday costs associated with their non-profit. Personally, I appreciate getting the newsletters with tips and tricks on ways to live in such a way that is easier on the environment and creates sustainable habits. And The Environmental Center is always hosting great events to continue educating the community, and providing knowledge; I learn something every time. I look forward to their continued success in Central Oregon!"

So far, we've gained 15 new supporters this year. You can help us get to our goal of 35 new supporters by Dec. 31 by sharing our mission (and how to support) with your friends and family. Thank you!

35 YEARS OF STORIES

The Environmental Center has been through a lot over 35 years. While many aspects of the organization have shifted, changed, and grown, what has been constant is the unwavering support of a community of passionate human beings. Folks who have been involved since the very beginning are still working tirelessly in their own ways to ensure a sustainable future for Central Oregonians, whether directly through TEC or in their own personal lives.

When asked, many of these long-time champions came forward with wonderful stories about their recollection of our history. From meet-cutes as volunteers to now married couples, to the epic moving of the current building across Bend on St. Patrick's Day of 1991 (don't worry, we'll publish the long version on our blog someday)—TEC has so many stories of how we've been a place for convening, dreaming, and putting in the hard work.

To everyone who submitted and shared their stories, thank you; to those who have stories yet to share, we welcome you to join us at our next gathering or event and share the ways you've been a part of our collective history. We look forward to another 35 years of embedding sustainability into daily life in Central Oregon!

"The Center has been a critical part of the environmental consciousness of Bend as part of our community's ethic."

-Bill Marlett, founding board member

What's in a Name?

by Michele McKay, founding board member

The discussion was earnest, and the decision would be consequential. The issue before us, the Natural Resource Center board of directors: was it time for the NRC to adopt the "E" word? Would changing its name to the Central Oregon Environmental Center help to define the organization and move environmentalism forward? Or would it bring down conflict and hostility?

Today, 35 years later, it's a no brainer. The Environmental Center is a respected community leader and a recognized force for positive change! But let me tell you that 35 years ago the answer was not as obvious as it seems today. Timber Wars were raging in the Pacific Northwest; the friction over spotted owls and old growth forests bred deep animosity, and being an environmentalist wasn't a piece of cake. I believe the decision to become an Environmental Center helped shift the "E" word into a positive light, and helped to re-define environmentalism, moving it from 'conflict' to 'caring'. What's more, there was an issue of complete name confusion. You had: NRDC, the Natural Resource Defense Council; ONRC, the Oregon Natural Resource Council; NRC, the Natural Resource Center. Acronym chaos. Nobody could keep them straight.

In all, it was time for a forward-facing name change, and the result has been beyond our starry-eyed dreams.

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EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

November 20

Repair Café with Deschutes Public Library

Join us in Redmond at the Redmond Proficiency Academy for our final Repair Café of the year! Stop by anytime with your broken items between 5:30-7:30pm.

December 1

Winter Bird Walk with Think Wild

Interested in learning more about bird migration and our feathered friends who overwinter here in Central Oregon? Join Think Wild for a morning winter bird walk. Meet at Hatfield Ponds on Sunday, December 1st at 9 am. Binoculars and field guides will be provided.

December 4

Indigenous Speakers Series – Ancestral and Legacy Burdens

Join the High Desert Museum from 6-7pm for an enlightening discussion led by Del Laverdure, where they will explore the mental and

behavioral health challenges faced by indigenous communities and opportunities for healing and growth within these communities.

December 15

Kids' Entrepreneur Holiday Market

A holiday market run entirely by kids ages 5-17. This is a real-world experience that allows children to be creative, build confidence, learn skills beyond the classroom – and above all, have fun! Come support young entrepreneurs in our community from 1-4pm at the Elks Lodge in Bend.

January 15

Home Energy Assessment: Empower Your Home with De- schutes Public Library

Join The Environmental Center as we partner with the Deschutes Public Library for a hands-on session on improving comfort and reducing energy costs for your home! Learn all about the Home Energy Assessment program, interest-free loans, and energy saving tips from 2-3pm at the Deschutes Children's Foundation Becky Johnson Center in Redmond.

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



February 21 & 22

Mountainfilm on Tour: Bend

Mark your calendars-- Mountainfilm is returning to Bend in February 2025!

It's our biggest fundraiser of the year! We look forward to another excellent lineup of inspiring films, plus our signature raffle with prizes from local businesses.

Tickets will go on sale in January, and are sure to sell out! A reminder that as a Supporter, you receive 10% off tickets-- discount code to come!



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Your support has made the Environmental Center what it is today. From all of us here at The Environmental Center, THANK YOU!

This list is a reflection of donations from September 2023-September 2024. We are transitioning to a new donor management tool this year. If your other household members do not appear with your name on the list as they have in the past, we apologize.

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Adrian Bennett
AdventurUs Women
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