

LIVING THE GREEN



SUPPORTER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM INTERIM LEADERSHIP

Finding Hope in Transitions

Summer in Central Oregon brings that sweet transition to time spent outside exploring and enjoying the places we love so much. But this year has brought increased ICE activity, devastating news from our government with the “Big Bad Bill,” and the threat of increased wildfires. As I write this in mid-July, the air is unhealthy from nearby wildfire smoke, the earliest in summer I can recall. Certainly, there is a lot to be anxious about.

Even here at The Environmental Center, we are undergoing a transition from the long time leadership of our Executive Director to exploring new models of shared leadership. Times of change can be scary as we step into the unknown.

It's during these times that I reflect on how the natural world deals with transitions. I recently attended a composting workshop at the Pine Meadow Ranch Center for Arts & Agriculture, and was reminded that when we compost—tossing our eggshells, banana peels, gross slimy forgotten lettuce from the back of the fridge, it's because we trust the process of the transition. We trust that with time and care, those egg

LETTER FROM INTERIM LEADERSHIP CONT'D

shells and banana peels will turn into something that will nourish us once again as compost. While reflecting on this process, I think to myself, what are we letting go of? What are we letting decompose? How will this transform to nourish our collective future?

As the longtime gardener here at our Kansas Ave Learning Garden, I'm constantly reminded of nature's wisdom. What we see as waste and what no longer serves us is an opportunity for transformation. I trust that it will happen, but not without care. Part of any transition is trust in ourselves and others. I trust my coworkers and our community of supporters, and with our shared care we will emerge a stronger organization. And while I don't trust our current government administration, I trust the core tenets of democracy, knowing that it too will require care from all of us.

While we can't ignore the things happening around the nation and the world, we have many projects right here on the ground that are giving me hope as we continue to focus on getting the work done locally:

- Home Energy Assessments help households complete free assessments of their homes and then help them access free or low cost

energy upgrades. Considering the impact of wildfire smoke on our indoor air quality, energy efficient upgrades have real health impacts too.

- 19th St Learning Garden has its first two garden work parties on the calendar to really start bringing this welcoming community garden space to life!
- New energy loans will increase access to financing to make meaningful energy and health upgrades possible for many households.
- Reuse Deschutes is kicking off to finally do something about all the food cart waste!
- Action Nights in the Garden bring people together in a beautiful space to dig in - whether through weeding, writing their legislators, commiserating or collaborating on collective change. People want to show up and get involved!

In community,
Denise Rowcroft
Youth Education & School Garden Program
Director
Leadership Team

REPAIRING FOR A COOLER PLANET



Every year, 1.3 billion smart phones are purchased around the world. The electronics production industry is among eight supply chains responsible for over half of all global greenhouse gas emissions. From the mining of raw materials to manufacturing and international transportation, the majority of environmental damage your electronics cause happens before they even get in your hands. So-what can we do about it

here in Central Oregon? The most promising answer we have right now is repair. If we can extend the lifespan of our electronic devices by 50%–100%, we would cut in half their total lifetime greenhouse gas emissions.

One of the world's leading advocates for repair is Kyle Wiens, CEO of iFixit. We are thrilled to share that he will be volunteering as one of our invaluable fixers at our August Repair Café on August 21st 5:30-7:30pm at DIY Cave in Bend! He, along with another awesome fixer, will be offering electronics repair. If you or someone you know has a broken laptop, TV, or phones– Rethink the urge to buy a new one, and bring it to our Repair Café!

Learn more and RSVP at envirocenter.org/repair-cafe.

ACTION NIGHT IN THE GARDEN

It feels like every day, some new atrocity happens. Every day, the headlines grow more absurd, more cruel. It feels daunting to fully take in the damage, and exhaustion is settling in.

During a May Happy Hour in the garden, where we have volunteers maintaining our Kansas Avenue Learning Garden, local Sierra Club Oregon and Oregon Wild chapters joined us to get folks involved in their latest campaigns. The turnout was great, and folks expressed looking for ways to take action during a time when many felt powerless. This overall sentiment had us all asking: Can we do anything? And what should we be doing? With the success of that first garden collaboration, and more organizations wanting to join the June event, we had the genesis of Action Night in the Garden!

Action Night has evolved into an evening where people can come together and learn from experts in specific fields to write to their legislators and local elected officials. Alice Weston, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter Lead, said, "I think Action Night grew so quickly and organically because it came out of an ask by community members. People wanted a space to learn, gather, and act around environmental and social justice issues that are important to them and affecting our community. I would love to continue to co-create this space with everyone and find more ways to leverage our collective power for climate solutions and social justice." With each Action Night, we know we're not saving the world, but we are planting seeds of hope. We're giving people the opportunity to "do something" when it seems like we can't do anything. "Civic engagement can be hard - let's at least do it in a beautiful place where we can also experience joy in nature," added Denise Rowcroft, Youth Education and School Gardens Program Director.

People engaged in conversations about migrant justice in Central Oregon, the Fix Our Forest Act, the Roadless Rule, natural gas versus electric, reproductive freedoms, federal cuts to NOAA, and that's just the beginning.



On a recent town hall call, Congresswoman Janelle Bynum said she relies on constituents to tell her what they want. She looks to our stories to guide her votes. If we don't speak up, how will they know where we stand?

While Action Night began as a summer experiment, its future is still unfolding. For now, we're grateful for those who've shown up to plant seeds of hope and action.

If you joined us this summer, thank you. Stay tuned for more ways to get involved in local advocacy, and don't underestimate the power of showing up.

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ROOTED IN JUSTICE: TEC'S RENEWED COMMITMENT TO EQUITY IN A CHANGING CLIMATE



janet ilerandi gonzalez



Priscilla Calleros

From colleges to corporations to nonprofits, many entities have begun cutting or outright defunding their DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs and staff. Amidst a nationwide anti-“woke” campaign, TEC doubled down on its commitment to equity and inclusion in 2025 by re-establishing a working committee of dedicated staff. We started the year with a larger budget, additional resources, and clearer priorities for learning, healing, and action.

For TEC’s new DEI committee co-chairs, Priscilla Calleros and Janet Ilerandi Gonzalez, DEI is so much more than an acronym.

Our inherent values and personal connections to this “work” are not something we can opt into; it’s what we live every day with or without formal structures or funding. Centering the perspective of people with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences in our programs, events, and internal policies reclaims an intersectional approach missing from environmental movements. Without racial, social, and economic justice embedded into environmentalism, we’d be just another recycling club.

Some examples of what the DEI committee has been working on this year include raising awareness of the injustices migrant people face and its connection to our environmental past and future; addressing the accessibility barriers in our current facility; and evolving our youth education programs to include and reflect Spanish languages and cultures in our schools and garden. A major internal process we took on was creating space, pathways, and resources for staff to address and repair harmful practices of past leadership through guided consulting work with Insights and Opportunities.

We’re excited to continue to advance the values we hold both as individuals and as a collective, and we hope to see more actions around these commitments throughout the environmental sector.

REDUCING WASTE AT FOOD TRUCKS AND RESTAURANTS

The Environmental Center’s Re-think Waste Project is launching Reuse Deschutes! This initiative aims to replace single-use service ware with reusables at participating establishments throughout Central Oregon.

To guide this effort and ensure our approach is rooted in equity, we’re seeking diverse input and expertise from community members, restaurants, and food lovers (like you!) to help make the program successful.

This working group will be called DISH: Diverse Input on Sustainable Hospitality.

If you love eating out in Central Oregon and consider yourself a plugged-in community member or a restaurant owner, we’d love to have you join DISH.

Questions? Email Reuse Deschutes Coordinator Emma Yetter at emma@envirocenter.org or visit envirocenter.org/dish.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Why I support the Environmental Center!

"As modern humans, we hurt the planet in so many ways, so it's important to me to help the planet in just as many ways. I Reduce the single-use plastics that I buy, I Reuse (or buy used) whenever possible, and I Recycle everything that I can. But I'm only one person, and I can only do so much by myself. That's where The Environmental Center comes in. They leverage my small monthly donation to do the things I can't, like fight restaurant waste, get more electric vehicles on the road, teach kiddos how to take care of the environment, and advocate for our representatives to pass more and stronger environmental laws. By donating to The Environmental Center, I'm part of an effort to save the planet that is much bigger than my recycle bin." Sincerely, Isabel Milkovich / Bend



You can also become a monthly donor like Deb! Monthly donations are the most effective way to create lasting sustainable change in our community. Join the growing number of donors who give monthly at envirocenter.org/donate.

SUMMER CAMPS

School may be out for the summer, but learning about the planet never stops at The Environmental Center! This summer our Youth Education team ran our annual Eco Hero Adventures camp for youth entering 5-6th grade. Each day the group biked to businesses and places around Bend to learn about energy, food, materials and transportation, all while having fun and learning how to travel safely through our partnership with Commute Options.

We had a fun week of biking the streets and pathways of Bend! We practiced riding the free Cascades East Transit (CET) bus from downtown to the East Bend Library, visited The Gear Fix to tour their sew and bike repair shops, learned about local foods available at Central Oregon Locavore and the downtown Bend Farmers Market, and chatted about renewable energy during our visit to Sunlight Solar. Each day we made sure to stay cool by dipping in the Deschutes River! It was our first year biking from our downtown Bend office to Sawyer Park for one of our river outings, and probably our furthest bike ride of the week. Our hope is that these kids ended the camp feeling more empowered to safely bike around their Central Oregon homes as they explore their community.



In July, we piloted our new summer camp exploring Redmond. This camp is based at John Tuck Elementary, so we had the ability to walk to Dry Canyon for morning explorations, and visits to downtown Redmond and the Centennial Spray Park for the afternoons. We bought local food at a produce stand, hiked in Dry Canyon to the Maple Bridge and beyond, and crafted at the new library Makerspace. After the first day the kids wanted to call it "Summer Fun Camp!"



In August, our Youth Ed team will host the week-long Forest Explorers summer camps at Bend International School while the historic Skyliner's Lodge undergoes roof repairs. A new location brings a fresh take on exploring the Deschutes River, including new riparian areas and forests. We love these opportunities to be with kids outside, unplugged, and immersed in nature.



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EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

August 21st

Repair Café with DIY Cave

Got a broken something? Bring it to this free Repair Café on Aug 21st @ 5:30pm! The Environmental Center's Rethink Waste Project hosts Repair Cafés, which are free events that connect people with broken stuff with people who like to fix stuff. We are excited to hold this event in partnership with DIY Cave here in Bend!

August 28th

Supporter Appreciation Celebration

You're invited to join us at The Environmental Center to celebrate your commitment to our mission and community. There will be a taco bar provided by El Sancho and beverages on us! Please RSVP at envirocenter.org/rsvp.

September 13th Clothing Swap

The Rethink Waste project is teaming up with community members to put on a clothing swap at the downtown office! Drop your clothes off on Friday, September 12th so we can sort and organize, then join us at 10am on September 13th to get some "new" pieces! Swapping clothes is a great way to reduce landfill waste and update your closet in a conscious way! Please register in advance by visiting our events page!

September 20th Seed Saving and Storing

Join OSU on Sept 20th @ 10am-12pm to learn about types of seeds to save, how to collect and clean them, and how to store them to use in your garden next year.

October 8th-12th Bend Film Festival

Join Bend Film for the 22nd Annual Bend Film Festival this October 8th-12th! Five full days of films, fun, and festivities at theaters and venues around town. Enjoy individual screenings or grab a pass for better access to the best weekend of independent film in Central Oregon!

ecoCENTRAL

Top Off Drive!

We're excited to near the end of the Eco Central Capital Campaign which will fully remodel our facility, creating a better space for our programs and community partners. In addition, this campaign will allow us to expand our programs to more parts of Central Oregon! Will you help us cross the finish line? Your support means everything and helps us do what we do! Stay tuned for an invite to our groundbreaking, and in the meantime we hope to see you at our Supporter event in August. envirocenter.org/eco-central