

New Beginnings, Changes to Come!

Our office at 16 NW Kasnsas Ave has always been more than a building—it's been a gathering place for ideas, action, and community in the heart of Bend. As we begin a thoughtful remodel of our historic space, we're deepening our commitment to the values that guide our work: resiliency, efficiency, and a deep commitment to a healthy, low-carbon future.

Our remodel is more than an upgrade—it's a demonstration of what's possible when we align our buildings with our climate goals and our community's vision for a healthier, more resilient future. The design features super-efficient systems powered by on-site solar, all-electric heating and cooling, and clean indoor air—no fossil fuels required. This choice reflects growing evidence about the health impacts of gas use in homes and buildings. Studies show that burning gas indoors contributes to poor air quality and higher rates of childhood asthma and other respiratory illnesses. By going all-electric, we're creating a space that protects both people and the planet—one that models the kind of future we're working toward across Central Oregon.

Over the past few years, we've championed policies that limit natural gas use in new construction,

LETTER FROM INTERIM LEADERSHIP CONT'D

and promote building electrification for the health of our people and our planet. As we continue to advocate for strong, for ward-looking energy policy in Bend and beyond, our building will stand as a living example of those same principles and will serve as a home for climate action.

When construction is complete, our renewed home will continue to serve as a welcoming hub for collaboration, connection, and community.

It will honor our roots, strengthen our capacity to serve, and remind us all that real climate solutions start right here—within our own walls, and together as a community.

In community, Lindsey Hardy Climate Solutions Program Director



Youth Education Program Director, Denise, clearing out the garden.



Development Manager, Al Kolenda, greeting guests at our ground-breaking event on October 9th



The Environmental Center Team moving out of the facility.

Clean Energy Loan Program Expands Access to Climate Solutions



The Environmental Center's zero-interest Clean Energy Loan Program is helping Central Öregon households overcome one of the biggest barriers to adopting clean technologies—upfront cost. The program provides shortterm, zero-interest loans that make it possible for residents to install heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, solar systems, insulation, and other home upgrades.

Building on the success of our free Home En-

ergy Assessment (HEA) program, this revolving fund prioritizes people that have been historically under-served by energy programs. This program empowers more Bend and Central Oregon residents to make affordable, sustainable upgrades that reduce energy costs, improve home comfort, and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

During our pilot phase, we've partnered with Seeds for the Sol in Corvallis to administer our loan funds using their proven, community-powered model. This partnership has helped us test and refine the program, and we're now nearing the end of the pilot with plans to expand access to more households next year.

If you're interested in participating, visit envirocenter.org/hea to learn more or reach out to satya@ envirocenter.org.

LEARN ABOUT INCLUDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN AT ENVIROCENTER.ORG.

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

The people who work here, and the community who supports us are what make The Environmental Center what it is. The Environmental Center is not a building, or a garden – it is people who work together toward a shared vision for sustainability in Central Oregon. Currently, The Environmental Center is moving through a season of change, and with change comes opportunity!



As our long-time Executive Director departs, we are embracing the changes that follow. As a team, we recognized a few important facts that are informing how we navigate these changes. Within a small organization there are limited opportunities for staff to grow and evolve in their roles and we have a talented and dedicated team with many, if not all, the skills needed to run the organization. We have decided the expectations and burden of running the organization should not be on a single Executive Director, as this can lead to burnout and exhaustion that can impact the entire team; a trend seen across the non-profit sector.

In order to create opportunities for growth, and to cultivate the many skills present among the team, the

Board of Directors decided not to hire an Executive Director immediately. Instead, staff are taking time to explore different models of leadership, and to set intentional goals for culture change going forward. During this interim period, our Leadership Team of directors are managing day-to-day operations, and we've hired a consultant who specializes in organizational transitions to guide us through an exploration of alternative leadership models.

The entire team has completed two training sessions on types of organizational structures and what's required of a team to make decisions effectively within those varying structures. Following these sessions, a small working group is continuing to partner with the consultant to better understand the dynamics of our team, identify appropriate training opportunities, and to develop a recommendation for a future organization structure and leadership model.

Our goal is to arrive in a place where staff feel empowered to exercise leadership and decision-making in their roles. And, where the organization has excellence in leadership that is bolstered by well defined roles, mutual trust, and an empowered team with a shared vision.



Our team at the ground breaking event this October.

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Mary Pantenburg Communications Manager

Lindsey Hardy Climate Solutions Director

Al Kolenda Development Manager janet llerandi gonzalez Business Manager

Tim Page Development Director

Jessica Muñoz Youth Education Bilingual Program Coordinator

Lauren Williams Associate Director Denise Rowcroft Youth Education Program Director

Becky Yaeger Youth Education Manager

Satya Austin-Opper Home Energy Assessment Program Manager

The Power of Community: Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month in Central Oregon

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15–Oct 15), TEC proudly co-hosted a vibrant community celebration to uplift and honor the Latino, Latina, Latine, and immigrant communities in Central Oregon. With support from the Oregon Community Foundation-Latino Partnership Program, and Energy Trust of Oregon, this event brought together culture, art, food, music, and tradition—and most importantly, people.

What made this event even more meaningful was its purpose: 100% of the proceeds were donated to the Latino Community Association (LCA) to support migrant and immigrant families in our region.

As the daughter of immigrant parents, organizing this event was personal. It was a way to show up for my community, use the privilege I have, and ensure we stay visible and celebrated—especially in times when so many other events have been cancelled.

With folklorico dancers, a DJ, delicious food, local vendors, lotería, traditional decorations, and community resources, the event was magical. Thanks to my team members, Jessica and Mary, and the incredible venue support from Open Space Studios, the day was a beautiful success.

One vendor shared, "Gracias por este evento tan lindo y necesario... fue increíble."

As co-chair of TEC's DEI committee, I believe this is how we continue our Commitment to Equity—not just in words, but in action.

Let's continue to show up for immigrant communities, amplify their voices, and celebrate their contributions.

Immigrants make America great.

In community, Priscilla Calleros, Events & Outreach Manager



The Recycling Modernization Act is now live

Did you hear of the Recycling Modernization Act? Oregon's RMA, effective July 1st, makes many improvements to our recycling system, and also makes us the first state to make producers responsible for their packaging!

While many changes are behind the scenes, here's what's changed for recycling in curbside carts:

Now accepted:

- Food & Beverage cartons (milk, broth, juice)
- Pizza Boxes (empty)
- Small scrap metal (see limits)
- Plastic caps (leave on if they're screwed on)

No longer accepted:

Shredded paper (only at drop-sites)

Still not accepted:

- Plastic bags
- Plastic cups, takeout containers, or any single-use foodware
- Frozen food boxes

Learn more about all the changes at envirocenter.org/rma.

To stay updated, sign up for our Mindful Materials Monthly newsletter at rethinkwasteproject.org.

These changes are great, but please remember, reduce and reuse still come first!



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Why I support the Environmental Center!

"The Environment Center is a modest yet audacious organization. On the one hand, it creates small changes in everyday life—from community gardens to reusable tableware for food trucks. These are the small changes that can radically transform how we orient ourselves in our environment and how we live our lives. These are the small changes that transform us from passive consumers to active community members. And that's a pretty massive change for small changes.

On the other hand, the Environmental Center refuses to view climate change as a problem that can be solved by well-meaning individuals. In this regard, it advocates for structural and legal transformations. If we're going to take ecosystem collapse, ocean acidification, increased instability in global climate systems, and the heating of the globe seriously, then we certainly have to entirely rethink our laws and regulations.

I trust the Environmental Center. I trust it to build community—communities of gardeners, composters, and recyclers. And I trust it to advocate for environmentally sound jurisprudence and policy. It is precisely the type of institution we need today: local and global, the old saying goes."

Luke Donahue (he/him)



OUR FIRST TIME IN WASHINGTON DC

In September, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Oregon's congressional delegation and share what climate change looks like from our home here in Central Oregon. The timing of our trip came just as the Flat Fire burned through the region, forcing Deschutes County residents to watch daily fire updates and wonder whether their homes would make it through another season.

As the fires grew or slowed with each shift in temperature, humidity, and wind, it was impossible not to see how closely our lives are tied to the climate. These small, day-to-day changes now have outsized impacts on fire behavior, air quality, and community safety. We all understand that climate change is making fires more dangerous, but seeing it unfold in real time drove home why this work matters - and why Central Oregon's story needs to be heard in the halls of Congress.

We joined a national coalition of climate advocates called the Climate Action Campaign from across the country to meet with lawmakers and urge them to protect and fully fund key federal climate programs. Together with our Oregon partners Oregon Environmental Council, the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, and the Sierra Club, we met with policy staff and elected officials who helped shape the direction of our nation's climate response.

Federal agencies like the EPA, NOAA, and FEMA are critical to helping communities prepare for and recover from climate-driven disasters. We shared how these programs must remain strong and well-funded if we're going to protect people and places on the frontlines of climate change.

This trip also marked The Environmental Center's first time engaging at the federal level in this way and it was an important step in expanding our advocacy beyond state and local work. We brought to D.C. what we know best. And that is the lived experience of climate change and shared stories that connect policy decisions to real people, as well as our technical experience in transportation electrification, building decarbonization, and waste reduction.

Policy change often begins with a story. For legislators who spend much of the year in Washington, hearing about what's happening back home can make a world of difference. By describing what it feels like to watch a wildfire spread through your community, or how small shifts in climate patterns change our forests, rivers, and recreation, we can turn statistics into human experience. At The Environmental Center, we're learning that our most powerful role may be as a conduit for local voices helping translate what's happening here into the language of federal policy.

As we look to the future, we'll continue building relationships at every level, local, state, and federal, to ensure Central Oregon's perspective shapes bold and equitable climate solutions.

My trip to Washington, D.C. was just the beginning. The work continues, and we'll keep showing up, whether in Bend or on Capitol Hill, to make sure Central Oregon's story is part of the climate conversation.

Judick Brings

Policy Manager, Neil Baunsgard in DC with Congresswoman Janelle Bynum

By Neil Baunsgard



EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

November 8th

8am-4pm

Bend Snow and Avalanche Workshop

The Bend Snow & Avalanche Workshop is back in action this fall hosted by American Avalanche Association! Get snow-season ready with speakers from around the country touching on topics from risk and decision making, to traveling safely through the backcountry, to snow science and human factors. Presentations will benefit all experience levels and attendees will gain new tools and knowledge beneficial to traveling safely and having fun in the backcountry.

November 8th

11am-3pm

10th Annual Fill Your Pantry

This is the last hoorah for farmers, ranchers, and makers for the 2025 season so let's go big! Fill Your Pantry is an annual bulk buying event at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds – OSU Extension Parking Lot. Pre-orders will open near the end of October for folks wanting to purchase larger quantities or secure limited items.

November 13th

5pm-7pm

Repair Café with COCC Redmond

Got a broken something? Bring it to this free Repair Café! 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. Stuff like jewelry, small furniture, small appliances and electronics, outdoor gear, clothing, and more. We are excited to hold this event in partnership with Central Oregon Community College Sustainability at the COCC Redmond Campus.

December 4th 7pm-9pm Guardians of Life

Join the Tower Theater in welcoming photographer, filmmaker, and National Geographic Explorer Kiliii Yüyan will share breathtaking stories of survival, Indigenous resilience, and ecological kinship. From the Arctic to Australia, Yüyan reminds us that when we protect the more-thanhuman world, we are also protecting ourselves. end 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



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 2024-September 2025.

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