



# CENTER FOR EARTH LEADERSHIP

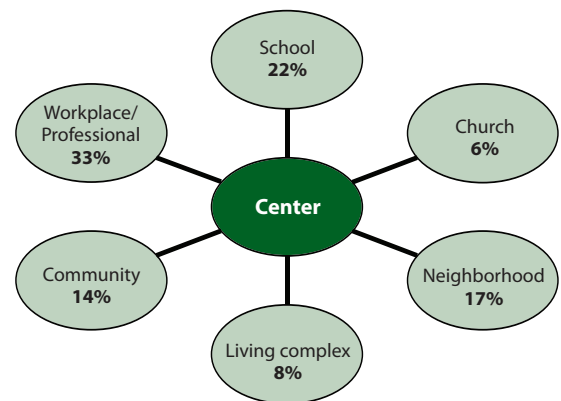
Forging citizen leadership to a sustainable future | 2009 MIDYEAR REPORT

## Agent of Change Network Unfolds

**At the Center**, we train citizens **how** to be an agent of change in a circle of influence. In turn, they determine **what** change to effect in their chosen circle. The training is designed to unleash the self-initiative and creativity of citizens as they assume the role of agent of change.

**Choice of circle.** After training over 350 agents of change, some interesting patterns are developing. A recent survey conducted by the Center indicated the following circle preference among those who complete the course.

This diagram also illustrates the metaphor we use for our outreach—the octopus. At the Center, we provide central training for agents who then fan out into the greater Portland area to take the lead on sustainability initiatives within their respective circles of influence. The Center then provides continuing support.



**Schools evoke passion.** As an organizing principle we seek to amplify the natural inclinations of our agents of change. In this way, the Center accomplishes two goals. First, those pursuing their natural inclinations do so with heightened enthusiasm. Second, natural inclinations often indicate the direction programs should take to have the greatest impact.

After we began offering the Agent course, it soon became clear that parents working to effect change at school bring enormous passion to their work. Pages 2 and 3 include stories from several schools that illustrate the parent creativity within our growing Eco-School Network.

**Movement into other communities.** Another inclination is for trained agents to take the Agent course into new communities. When Kelcey Beardsley relocated to Eugene for a year, she introduced the Center at a public meeting last October and a workshop that we presented in December. She then organized one Agent class in February and two more in April. With a trained group of over 30 agents of change in Eugene, the Center now has a strong platform for its continued outreach in that community.

Closer to Portland, Catherine Plaxton and Jeanne Farber decided to initiate a separate Agent program in Vancouver, Washington. They recruited and trained ten citizens of Vancouver citizens as a means to establish a separate presence in that community.

**Seamless transference.** In our Agent course, participants gain know-how and experience as they work to effect change in a specific circle of influence. We have found that two dimensions of this experience are easily transferable to future opportunities. First, the self-perception of change agent offers a new set of lenses for looking at the status quo in any circle, large or small. “What is the change I would like to see?” Second, from the course the agent has an array of tools and the confidence to apply them. “Through my efforts, I am able to effect the change I would like to see.”

– Jeanne and Dick Roy, Co-Directors

# Parent Agents Create Eco-Schools

As our Agent of Change Program unfolded, Jill Inahara, a parent agent at Skyline, had an idea. Agents working in their respective schools might create an informal network as a vehicle to get acquainted and share information.

Now guided by a steering committee of five parents, the Network has ambitious plans, including quarterly gatherings, educational events, and a manual for parents who seek to facilitate change at their local school. Several examples illustrate how parents do that.

As a new parent at Laurelhurst Elementary, **Meg Hagan** envisioned the school becoming a hub of earth-friendly activity. After meeting with the PTA, the principal and janitor, and key teachers, she invited parents to a kick-off meeting for a green team. To add a little color to the meeting, Meg arranged for students to perform a waste audit and state the case for discontinuing use of Styrofoam trays.

Inspired by the kids, an adult green team formed and went right to work. After Laurelhurst was selected to participate in Portland Public School's 2009 Energy Challenge, Meg worked with sixth graders who made presentations to all classes on ways to reduce energy use in the classroom. Meg also met with teachers to determine which "green" tasks they were willing to perform in their classrooms. To the kids' delight, 18 teachers signed up for worm bins, and Laurelhurst is now a spawning ground for red wigglers. After a successful drive to obtain bins and worms, the sixth-grade science students developed a PowerPoint presentation on the

*Below, left: A bowl of red wigglers. Right: Certified sustainable—an All Saints' classroom party pack.*



## The Path of a Parent-Agent

1. Parent enrolls in six-session Center course, "How to Be an Agent of Change in Your Circle of Influence."
2. Parent selects the school as a circle of influence and develops a plan to effect change within the school.
3. Parent joins the Center's Eco-School Network to gain skills and inspiration from other parent-agents on a continual basis.
4. Sustainable practices and eco-consciousness are introduced at school.

science of composting. They became so engaged that they are now part of a student green team.

On a roll, the adult green team carried out a silverware drive to eliminate "spork" packages—the plastic bag with a disposable fork, napkin, and straw that comes with lunch. Then Styrofoam lunch trays were replaced by durable ones that are washed along with the silverware. Projects on the horizon include an edible garden, an anti-idling campaign, an alternative transportation week, a rain garden, and possibly a solar panel on a remodeled outbuilding.

After spending over a year in Australia where vegetable gardening, food scrap composting, and "rubbish-free" lunches were second nature to school children, **Amy Culp** returned to the states with a new sense of the possibilities for her son's elementary school. Using the Oregon Green Schools process to get started, she formed a green team of about 20 parents and teachers.





*Kidnapping styrofoam blocks at Bridlemile.*

To reduce waste, the team created classroom party packs, collected cell phones for safe disposal, and “greened” the annual auction by eliminating disposables and composting food. While working toward Green School goals, the team sold reusable shopping bags with the school logo, completed an Energy Trust audit, held a rain barrel workshop, added green tips in the weekly newsletter, and organized Earth Week activities including assemblies, garbage-free lunch day, and alternative transportation day.

Inspired by the Center’s Agent of Change class, with the help of the principal, Amy organized a green-team steering committee to shape a long term sustainability plan for the school. Two teachers on the committee formed a green team for fifth to eighth graders. Student “Watt Watchers” monitor the school looking for lights or computers to turn off, and the team visits lower grades with a presentation, “What Is a Waste-Free Lunch?”

After **Kalei Augustine** and **Sarah Brody Webb** took the Agent of Change class, they teamed up as parents at Bridlemile Elementary. A front-page article in the May 2009 *Southwest Community Connection* featured their green team’s effort to eliminate Styrofoam lunch trays. Following the lead at Laurelhurst, the team had a silverware drive and eliminated spork packages. Parents now volunteer at school about three days each week, washing trays for recycling as a short-term solution, while they work on their long-term goal of switching to reusable trays. With the help of Brownies, Kalei and Sarah’s team conducted a successful Styrofoam drive in February, inviting the public to drop off rigid packaging material. About 1000 pounds of plastic foam blocks were hauled to the recycling depot.

## Center Spawns Lake Oswego Eco Network

To experiment in a confined school district, in February 2009 the Center organized an Agent class composed of only Lake Oswego parents and teachers, with nine of the 13 schools represented. The test would provide data on the utility of the Agent course as a vehicle to upgrade parent and teacher eco-involvement within individual schools in a single district.

The Agent class provided a forum for participants to get acquainted, plan, and collaborate, and it spawned creation of a network of parents and teachers now called the Lake Oswego Schools Eco Network, soon to have its own Web site. According to network coordinator, Heidi Schrimsher,

*The class brought together parents and teachers trying to make their individual schools more sustainable. This experience moved us to create our Eco Network and, in a personal sense, inspired me to reach further with goals for my school and community. I know that I have a support group to help me with brainstorming ideas and the know-how to turn the ideas into realities.*

### Parents Work at Four Levels

As the Eco-School Network emerged, so did a rich mosaic of initiatives by innovative parents using their creativity at school. To organize educational materials for parent agents, the Network identified four levels of engagement for introducing initiatives:

**Facilities and operations.** Many initiatives focus on reduction of solid waste, energy, and toxics in building operations. Others involve specific projects like constructing garden beds.

**Extracurricular activities.** Some agents organize extracurricular activities for the children, such as a nature club or recycling team.

**Classroom instruction.** Some agents develop units on topics such as recycling, composting, or ecological literacy taught by parent volunteers.

**Events involving adults.** Agents work to assure that events, such as auctions, carnivals, and other fundraisers, are conducted in an eco-friendly manner.

# Center Projects

*Center projects develop earth leadership within targeted disciplines and professions.*

## Center Raises the Oregon State Bar

A project of the Center, Oregon Lawyers for a Sustainable Future (OLSF) is putting a green sheen on the legal profession—both locally and, by reputation, nationally.

When Co-Director Dick Roy met with the Oregon State Bar Board of Governors (BOG) in 2006, he was told that sustainability was not a topic of concern for the Bar. With Jeanne Roy providing technical advice, an OLSF team then created six tools for the sustainable law office, which are now nationally recognized within the legal profession as the top tools of their kind.

Inspired by OLSF, the Massachusetts Bar Association created an Eco-Challenge for law offices in the state, and the California Bar Association did the same. Aware that the Oregon State Bar was falling behind, the BOG invited OLSF to its annual planning retreat last November. Representing OLSF, Jim Kennedy and Dick Roy presented the draft of a charge for a statewide task force and recommended its appointment.

As a result, a 14-lawyer task force is now hard at work preparing recommendations on how the Oregon State Bar might promote sustainability in five areas:

- Internal Bar operations
- The structure of the Bar including ongoing sections and committees
- Judicial and administrative proceedings
- Continuing legal education for lawyers
- Operations of private and public law offices within the state

The task force was also asked how the Bar might protect “the rights and opportunities of future generations”—possibly the ultimate question for the role of the profession.

## New Center Publication: *Energy and Carbon*

This new 34-page booklet is a resource for citizens who wish to be informed about key energy issues. The first section presents an overview of energy use in the U.S. and the problems related to our reliance on fossil fuels. It describes the key indicator of energy return on energy invested. The second section assesses each potential energy source, summarizing its potential, benefits, and concerns about its use. The last section provides a brief history of cap-and-trade systems. It then discusses voluntary offset programs.

*Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper*

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