

SPAN

State PIRG Alumni Network

State PIRG Alumni Newsletter • Summer 2007

Summer Canvass 2007 Fully Under Way

The Fund is running 60 citizen outreach projects for 52 groups this summer, including U.S. PIRG's federal lobbying office and individual state PIRGs, affiliated state environment groups, Environmental Action, Sierra Club, and the Human Rights Campaign.

Here's a sampling of the campaigns that these offices are helping their partner groups to win, while raising \$10 million and signing up hundreds of thousands of members along the way:

#1 Federal Priority: Clean Energy For America

The top federal environmental priority on the canvass this summer is to convince Congress to require utilities to generate 20 percent of the country's electricity from clean, homegrown, renewable sources by 2020.

In addition to canvassing for U.S. PIRG, canvassers are campaigning on the issue for MoPIRG, Environment California, and Environment Texas and are organizing field support throughout the nation.

#2 Federal Priority: Toxic-Free Communities

In at least 21 states this summer, canvassers are pushing for policies that better protect pub-

lic health against toxic threats. Goals include strengthening the public's right to know about toxic pollution in our communities, reducing the industrial use of toxic chemicals, and making sure that polluters pay to clean up the messes they create.

Environment Massachusetts: Global Warming Solutions

On the heels of Gov. Deval Patrick's decision to cap carbon pollution from power plants by re-joining the Northeast's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Environment Massachusetts canvassers are building support for an 80 percent cut in global warming pollution from all sources by 2050.

The proposal is closely modeled on the 2006 law won by Environment California.

CALPIRG: Keep Transit On Track

CALPIRG is standing up to the highway lobby and opposing a billion dollar cut in funding for public transit.

Instead, CALPIRG is supporting a new investment in transit that will bring new subways to Los Angeles, new light rail in San Diego, faster bus lines in San Francisco, and a high-speed train that will connect the entire state. ■



BRINGING THE ISSUES HOME—Current U.S. PIRG Democracy Advocate Gary Kalman canvasses a Worcester, Mass. resident in 1986.

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Celebrating a lifetime of organizing.

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Check out these nonprofit job listings for yourself or for a friend.

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Find out if there's an alumni party happening in your area.

Campaign Highlights

PIRGs in 22 states have created new organizational homes for their environmental work separate from other public interest advocacy. From now on you can look forward to reading about twice as many campaign victories from all these states!

Successful Legislative Session In Maryland

On April 9, the Maryland General Assembly passed one of the nation's strongest smoke-free workplace laws, and Gov. Martin O'Malley signed it into law on May 17.

The statewide victory follows on the heels of Baltimore's move earlier this year to go smoke-free, which Maryland PIRG Advocate **Johanna Neumann** helped orchestrate. Maryland PIRG celebrated several additional victories over powerful adversaries: strong energy-saving requirements for seven types of appliances, the ability for consumers to freeze access to their credit reports, and a new requirement that election ballots provide a paper trail.

Not to be outdone, Environment Maryland applauded lawmakers for passing measures that will reduce global warming pollution from cars, protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed from polluted runoff, include solar power in the state's clean energy mandate, fully fund the state's open space program, and advance the development of green buildings. ■

In Oregon, Nine Victories Within Weeks

State lawmakers passed four Environment Oregon-backed bills in late May. On May 25, the Oregon Senate voted to pass the 25 percent by 2025 Renewable Energy Standard and an expansion of the state's Bottle Bill. A week later, lawmakers approved bills requiring the use of solar power in new state buildings and setting up free and convenient recycling programs for computers and TVs. Environment Oregon's **Jeremiah Baumann** was quoted in the Salem Statesman-Journal article on the issues, as was **Lauri Aunan**, a state environmental official and OSPIRG alumna.

On the OSPIRG side, the Legislature passed an OSPIRG-backed bill limiting all consumer loans to annual interest rates of 36 percent. The bill came in response to payday loan outfits' and title lenders' triple-digit interest rates and their efforts to evade limits placed on their outrageous rates and fees.

Students across the state celebrated the passage of a bill to rein in the rising cost of college textbooks by requiring publishers to be clearer about pricing and buying options.

On June 19, Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed three additional bills into law: the Internet Lending Protection Act extends state interest rate caps to loans made via Internet, mail and telephone to Oregon residents and establishes a loan



Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley with Environment Maryland's Brad Heavner as O'Malley signed the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

database to improve enforcement; the Car Title Lending Protection Act caps the fees and interest rates for car title loans and closes a loophole car title lenders have used in other states to evade the law; and the Check Cashing Fairness Act requires check cashing to be licensed in Oregon and sets limits on check cashing fees. "This is a great day for state consumers," announced OSPIRG's **Laura Etherton**. ■

Washington Becomes First State To Ban All PBDEs

On April 17, Washington became the first state in the nation to approve a complete ban on PBDEs, or polybrominated diphenyl ethers. California has banned two types of highly toxic and widely dispersed PBDEs, but Washington is the first to ban all three.

In addition to traditional advocacy and organizing, WashPIRG—in coalition with organizations like the Washington

Toxics Coalition where alumni **Gregg Small**, **Ivy Sager-Rosenthal**, **Jim Dawson**, and **Laurie Valeriano** work—helped frame the issue around the health of Puget Sound, where PBDEs have built up in the tissue of orcas and other marine wildlife. ■

Multiple Environmental Victories In Colorado

CoPIRG and Environment Colorado both celebrated victories from the 2007 legislative session: among the most exciting was new legislation to increase Colorado's clean, renewable energy goal to 20 percent by 2020. Environment Colorado's **Matt Baker**, **Matt Garrington**, and **Will Coyne** joined Gov. Bill Ritter at the bill signing ceremony, which marked the doubling of the standard set by the 2004 Environment Colorado-backed Amendment 37. Meanwhile, CoPIRG's **Rex Wilmouth** and **Kirpal Singh** celebrated a law that will save the state \$1.2 billion through new energy efficiency initiatives. ■

Alumni Profile

Gina (Collins) Cummings: Human Rights Organizer

Originally hailing from Long Island, **Gina (Collins) Cummings** learned about the need for political involvement early on: as an elementary school student, Gina was upset when a bigoted teacher told her that people came only in black and white, not the many subtle shades and colors that Gina innocently recognized in her friends.

After explaining the incident to her mother, Gina was encouraged to write a letter to the teacher, which she did—her first political action.

Years later, upon graduating from Rutgers University, Gina was recruited by fellow Rutgers alum **Rob Stuart** to organize students at the Rutgers Livingston campus to establish a NJPIRG chapter. After that successful initial effort, Gina

went on to become the NJPIRG Student Chapters Organizing Director, the New Jersey summer canvass Regional Director, Executive Director of Green Corps, and Field Director for U.S.PIRG over the time span from 1984 to 1995.

One of her fondest memories from these years is of orchestrating a reaffirmation campaign at all of the NJPIRG campuses simultaneously: working alongside organizers **Ken Ward**, **Ennis Carter**, **Rebecca (Zisserman) Cesarz**, and **Matt Baker** and scores of student volunteers, the team implemented a plan that included meeting each night at midnight to hang thousands of posters.

Plastering the campuses must have paid off, because the vote was won across the state.

These days, Gina works as the Deputy Director of Operations with Physicians for Human Rights, an organization that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999 for their work to ban land mines, and enjoys the opportunity to make a measurable impact on global issues.

On a personal note, Gina is married to MASSPIRG Advocate **Deirdre Cummings'** brother, Tom (they met at Deirdre's wedding); they have two children, Conor (9) and Garvey (7).

Gina keeps in touch with many other PIRG staff and alumni, including **Pete Maysmith** (who served as 'man of honor' at her wedding), **Kelly (Wark) Nordini**, **Matt Baker**, **Ken Ward**, **Sheila Balen**, and **Leslie Samuelrich**. Every year, Gina and alumnae **Heather Collis**



MASSPIRG's Deirdre Cummings and alumna Gina (Collins) Cummings.

Puro, **Rebecca (Zisserman) Cesarz**, and **Ennis Carter** take a vacation together.

Gina (Collins) Cummings can be reached at CummingsG1@hotmail.com. ■

In Memoriam

The PIRG family recently lost six dear friends. Our thoughts go out to their families and friends.

• **Susan Birmingham** (see pg. 5.)

• For four years, **Bennie Bullock** worked part-time for the Fund's direct mail program and on other projects. Her warmth and joy will be missed by all in the Boston office.

• **Sarah Block** was a canvasser in Berkeley with **Andre Delatre** and **Faye Park** in the late 1980s. If you would like to remember Sarah with a charitable gift, please make a pledge via e-mail at sblock@gmail.com.

• **Jim Jontz** was a student founder of INPIRG, an Indiana state representative and state senator, U.S. Congressman, and a leader

in wilderness preservation fights in Oregon. He died after battling colon cancer. Please send any pictures or stories of Jim to brianvincente@gmail.com.

• **Paul Smolens** directed Fund canvasses in the mid-1980s. Donations in Paul's memory may be made to MASSPIRG; 44 Winter St., 4th Floor; Boston, MA 02108, or to any charity of

your choice.

• **Eric Tang** was a CALPIRG student leader at UCLA from 2000 to 2002 and summer field manager with the Fund in 2001. After graduation, he worked with the California Clean Money Campaign in L.A. and Sacramento. Those who worked with him remember his relentless energy and ability to inspire others. ■



Alumni and staff celebrating at Amy Floyd's wedding.

Weddings and Babies:

Alumna **Kate Canada** gave birth to Lillian (Lily) Royce Canada on April 24. Word has it that Lily was born with tons of hair, just like her father.

Current Grants Department Manager **Amy Floyd** married Erik Christiansen on March 31 in Las Vegas. Guests included numerous staff plus alumni like **Alex Kaplan, Scott Milbourn, Gigi Norcross, Bob Willems, Faye Hopper, Merriah Fairchild, Sue Moran, Wes Jones, and Lea Johnston.**

MASSPIRG alumna **Moire**

(Murray) Carmody and former Fund legal assistant **Chris Carmody** were married last September at the Round Barn Farm in Waitsfield, Vermont. Fund staffer **Jenny Douglass** served as "best woman" and other staff and alumni in attendance included **Dan Dial, Kim Nelson, Roland Kuehn, Kelley Whitmore, Alex Russell, Janet Domenitz, Lisa Bernstein, and Chris MacClinchy.**

Alumni **Sarah DiJulio** and **Adam Ruben** welcomed Gus Asher DiJulio Ruben to the world on April 17. Gus joins big brother Jasper, who will turn two

Alumni Updates

in January.

Alumna **Cathy Duvall** and her partner, Becky Levin, celebrated the birth of their daughter, Emerson Levin Duvall, on June 21.

Alumni **David Ponder** and **Shelly Connor** were married last summer in Marine-on-St-Croix, Minnesota. They met several years ago during their tenure with MontPIRG. David is currently in graduate school at Appalachian State University and working at the Appalachian State University Energy Center; Shelly is the Associate Director of Appalachian Voices.

Former alumnus—and CoPIRG's newest advocate—**Kirpal Singh** and his wife, Sara, celebrated the birth of their first child, Sophia Asha Singh, on May 23 in Denver.

Fund alumna **Sara Topf Garrington** and Environment Colorado Field Director **Matt**

Garrington expanded their family with the birth of Evelyn Debra Garrington on June 23 in Denver.

Alumni **Aaron Viles** and **Emily Greenfield** welcomed Zola Grace Viles (Zoë to her friends) to the world on May 7 in Louisiana.

Former canvass director **Woody Holton** and family recently celebrated the first birthday of daughter Beverly Ferris Holton.

Movers and Shakers:

After seven years as Oregon's chief insurance regulator, alumnus **Joel Ario** was nominated on June 12 by Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell to become the state's new Insurance Commissioner.

NYPIRG founders **Steve Atlas, Jay Halfon, and Donald Ross** recently joined VPIRG's first Executive Director, **Scott Skinner**, and OSPIRG and NYPIRG alumnus **Tom Novick** for a trip

New Babies



Evelyn Debra Garrington



Beverly Ferris Holton



Lillian Royce Canada



Sophia Asha Singh



Aaron Viles, Emily Greenfield and baby Zola

—Continued from page 4
to Tibet. They trekked to the Advanced Base Camp on Mt. Everest; at 21,600 feet, that's the highest place in the world to which you can walk.

Fund alumna **Angela Bonarigo** recently finished up 10 years of work at the EPA in New England to take a position as Associate Vice President in the Energy & Environment Group at Rasky Baerlein Strategic Communications.

Former campus organizer and administrator **Kevin Brown** moved back to Madison, Wisconsin in January after living and working in Alabama for nearly 20 years. He continues his work in child advocacy as Program Manager of Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin.

Alumnus **Chris Chiari** is running for the Florida State House of Representatives, District 91 (Broward & Palm Beach Counties) in 2008. He can be reached at chiari08@att.net.

Alumna **Jennifer Coken** began work as the Director of the Western Clean Energy Campaign in



Shelly Connor and David Ponder

early March. In this position, Jennifer organizes grassroots groups in eight states to stop new coal plants and enjoys getting to work alongside coalition partners like Environment Colorado's **Matt Baker** and Arizona PIRG's **Diane Brown**.

Thanks to the New Jersey alumni party in January, alumna **Patty Dorsey Kelmar** reconnected with alumni **Steve Ma** and **Curtis Fischer** and was able to arrange an interview with AARP of New Jersey, where she is now working as their Associate State Director for Advocacy on Health



Alumni Steve Atlas, Jay Halfon, Scott Skinner, Tom Novick and Donald Ross on Mt. Everest



Moire Murray Carmody and Chris Carmody

and Economic Security issues.

Green Corps alumna **Maureen Drouin** left her position at the Sierra Club in April to become the new Executive Director of the Maine League of Conservation Voters and Maine Conservation Voters Education Fund.

Former canvasser and campus organizer **Bob Filbin** is participating in a summer-long cross-country biodiesel bus tour called the Udall Legacy Bus Tour. The tour honors former Congress-

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Remembering Susan Birmingham



Susan Birmingham passed away in early April in New York City following a sudden illness.

Susan joined staff as a MASSPIRG campus organizer in 1978, served as MASSPIRG Campus Organizing Director, Boston Canvass Director, the Fund National Canvass Director, CALPIRG Executive Director, U.S. PIRG Solid Waste Advocate, and PIRG Recruitment Director.

Her family requests that any donations be sent to the Susan Birmingham Fund, c/o MASSPIRG Education Fund; 44 Winter St, 4th floor; Boston, MA 02108.

We have compiled a book of photos of Susan and reflections on her life. If you would like to view this memory book, please contact Kirsten Schatz at alumni@pirg.org. ■

Alumni Updates (continued from page 5)



David Schneider with daughter Anastasia

man Morris K. Udall's legacy by highlighting young people nationwide who are finding solutions to pressing environmental and Native American issues. You can find out more and view photos from the trip at www.udall.gov.

In March, the Maine People's Alliance announced that former canvass director **Jesse Graham** would become their new Executive Director.

Former canvass director **Tom Kotarac** recently began work

on Transportation and Appropriation issues for Sen. Dick Durbin (Ill.).

Former canvass director, Earthtones manager, and PIRG writer **Alex Maws** is (still) living in London, England, and has just begun a new job working for the Holocaust Educational Trust.

A photo spread in May's "Green Issue" of Vanity Fair featured key players in the Campus Climate Challenge, including the Student PIRGs' **Mary Nicol**, alumna **Eliza Simon** of the Sierra Student Coalition, Student PIRGs National Program Director **Dave Rosenfeld**, and alumna **Jessy Tolkan** of the Campus Climate Challenge staff.

Alumna **Kelly (Wark) Nordini** left her position as chief of staff for the Colorado House of Representatives Majority Office and Speaker Andrew Romanoff to join Gov. Bill Ritter's senior staff as Director of Special Projects.

Alumna **Elizabeth-Ann Row-lison** recently celebrated her conducting debut when she conducted a piece during the Randolph-Macon Woman's College spring chorale concert. She also just began a new position as the Experiential Learning Coordinator at the College, located in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Former WashPIRG Field Organizer **Alex Russell** has moved to western Massachusetts to begin her new position as Program Director for Free Press.

Former canvass director and campus organizer **David Schneider** is working at the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Civil Rights. David lives in Silver Spring, Md. with his wife and daughter and can be reached at schneiderd@verizon.net

Alumna **Kate Simmons** recently became the Caucus Director for the Maine House Democratic Campaign Committee. She continues her involvement with

Emerge Maine to encourage and train women to run for public office.

Former campus organizer **Jo Voss** recently left her job as Field Director for the New Hampshire Democratic Party to begin work as Deputy Field Director for Senator Clinton's Presidential Campaign in New Hampshire, where she will oversee the 1st Congressional District.

CoPIRG alumnus **Morey Wolfson** recently took a new position as the Utilities Program Manager at the Colorado Governor's Energy Office.

Despite his day job as a Resident in Otolaryngology at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, alumnus **Bill Wood** has somehow found the time to become a top-notch activist with PennEnvironment: he's done everything from get letters to the editor published to run successful lobby visits on priority issues like global warming. ■

Nonprofit Career Opportunities

- Work with alumna **Liz Framer** as Development Officer or Climate Initiative Director with the Center for a New American Dream in Washington, D.C. Send cover letter, résumé, two writing samples, and salary requirements to franca@newdream.org or monique@newdream.org, respectively, with the job title in the subject line.

- Work with alumna **Marlee Miller** as a Graphic Designer, Account Executive, or Development Director with United Way of Long Island. Send résumé and cover letter to acmiller@hr-dynamics.com.

- Work with alumni like **Joseph Gordon**, **Tara Losoff**, and **Pam Blackledge** as the New England Regional Field Organizer with NET's Marine

Conservation Education Program. Send résumé and cover letter to [Ivy Newman](mailto:inewman@net.org) at inewman@net.org.

- Work with alumna **Jodi Segal** as the Air and Energy Program Associate or the Water Program Associate with the Ohio Environmental Council in Columbus, Ohio. Send cover letter, résumé, and three references to [Keith Dimoff](mailto:Keith.Dimoff@theoec.org) at oec@theoec.org.

- Work with alumnae **Keri Powell** and **Joan Mulhern** as Legislative Advocate with Earthjustice in Washington, D.C. Send résumé, references, and writing sample to daboulhosn@earthjustice.org.

Ellynnne Bannon: Rejoining The PIRGs

The state PIRGs are excited to welcome back **Ellynnne Bannon** as Director of the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project.

Ellynnne's political organizing career began in 1997 when current Telephone Outreach Project Director **Nancie Koenigsberg** hired Ellynnne onto her West Hartford canvass team. Alumna **Audrey Rodriguez** trained the new observer, and U.S.PIRG Assistant Political Director **Cloe Axelson** served as a field manager in that office.

It wasn't long before then Regional Director and current alumna **Laura Cordes** was interviewing Ellynnne for a campus organizer position to begin in the fall.

After one year as the CALPIRG organizer at UCLA, working closely with alumna **Tiernan Sittenfeld** and National Organizing Director **Andre Delattre**, Ellynnne went on to organize at Lane Community College with OSPIRG.

She later worked in the PIRG recruitment department alongside current Environment Colorado Director **Matt Baker** and alumnus **Clayt Freed**, and then became the U.S.PIRG Higher Education Advocate in Washington, D.C.

Favorite memories include losing—and then finding—all of the UCLA student interest cards just days before the General Interest Meeting, and still pulling

in 150 attendees; jamming the California governor's office fax machine with petitions while working on an **Andy Igrejas**-led water bill; directing a summer canvass office in Olympia, Washington alongside alumnus **Roy Scranton**; and defeating the lending industry's attempt to eliminate the student loan consolidation benefit.

After leaving PIRG staff, Ellynnne served as the top advisor to the House Democratic committee on higher education and national service before working for Rep. Nancy Pelosi on a special outreach project. Ellynnne worked two election cycles (2004 and 2006) with Grassroots Campaigns on the MoveOn.org campaign before



Ellynnne Bannon

coming back on PIRG staff this past January.

As Director of the Student PIRGs' New Voters Project, Ellynnne is excited to establish efforts on up to 300 college campuses to increase voter participation and political engagement in the potentially huge youth voter block. Ellynnne can be reached at ellynnne@gmail.com. ■

Current Career Opportunities With The State PIRGs And Affiliated Organizations

For more information, please visit www.uspirg.org/jobs or call Surf del Mar at 303-573-5885 x325.

• Assistant Organizing Director, Green Corps, Boston, MA

Recruit, train, and develop new organizers through our Environmental Leadership Training Program. Work as part of the senior staff team to develop and implement classroom and field training curriculum for new trainees, manage several field campaigns, recruit new organizers, and fundraise for Green Corps.

• National Corporate Campaign Director, U.S.PIRG, Washington, D.C.

Oversee the market-based campaigns of the state PIRGs and related organizations, including Ecopledge and The Green Life. Develop strategies and campaigns to promote the state PIRGs' environmental and public interest agenda through the use of corporate campaigns, and train advocacy staff around the country on the use of market-based campaigns.

• Legislative Advocate, Environment Maine, Portland, ME

Develop campaigns and lobby state legislators, members of the Executive branch,

environmental agency staff, and municipal officials. Create a plan to win on our environmental campaigns; strategize how to gain political support for our agenda through coalition-building, grassroots organizing, media publicity, endorsements, and message development.

• Higher Education Advocate, CALPIRG, Sacramento, CA

Work to pass public policy on student campaigns such as the Affordable Textbooks campaign, Student Debt Alert campaign, and our campaign to stop global warming. Research the problems and develop policy solutions and campaign strategies. Act as the CALPIRG spokesperson to the media and coalition partners, build coalitions with university officials and the higher education community.

• Preservation Program Director, U.S.PIRG, Washington, D.C.

Develop policy and campaign strategy and bring problems and solutions to the attention of national decision-makers. Serve as the public spokesperson for U.S.PIRG's preservation campaigns. Write grant proposals and meet with large donors to bring more resources to our efforts to protect America's most treasured places. Oversee and manage a staff of two to four legislative advocates.

Save The Date: Upcoming Alumni Events

Alumni and staff are gathering in cities across the country to catch up with old friends and meet some new faces from the PIRG family. For more details on upcoming events and for photos from past events, visit www.pirg.org/alumni/calendar.html. If you'd like to help organize an alumni get-together near you, contact Kirsten Schatz at alumni@pirg.org or 303-573-5885 x331.

Chicago, IL Contact Karen Berg: karenberg@yahoo.com	July 19, 2007
Atlanta, GA Contact Jennette Gayer: jennette@environmentgeorgia.org	Aug. 2, 2007
Seattle, WA Contact Kirsten Schatz: alumni@pirg.org	Aug. 9, 2007
San Francisco, CA Contact Cindy Kang: cindy@greencorps.org	Aug. 29, 2007
Portland, ME Contact Harris Parnell: harris@toxicsaction.org	Sept. 2007
Hartford, CT Contact Laura Cordes: llccd1@mac.com	Oct. 4, 2007
Aspen, CO	Dec. 14-22, 2007

Eligible career alumni should save these dates for this year's Aspen vacation!
Contact Kirsten at alumni@pirg.org for details on how to register.



**Alumna Jen Hecker, U.S. PIRG staffer
Heather Kunst and alumna Jessica
Tritsch at the L.A. alumni party in April.**

The State PIRG Alumni Network
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