

SPAN

State PIRG Alumni Network

State PIRG Alumni Newsletter

August 2005

2005 Summer Canvass In Full Swing

Knock knock.

Yes, it's summer canvass season again, with thousands of young canvassers and their just slightly older directors taking job calls ("No, Sandy isn't in right now..."), interviewing potential staff ("Can you start today?"), knocking on hundreds of thousands of doors across the country and enlisting public support on critical environmental and public interest issues.

This summer, the canvassers are taking on the Bush energy plan, state initiatives to combat global warming, campaigns to clean up waterways and protect ocean waters and a bill in California that would put solar panels on one million roofs.

In order to make an impact on these and other issues, the Fund for Public Interest Research is running 70 offices nationwide for the PIRGs as well as the Sierra Club, the Human Rights Campaign and Environmental Action.

Many alumni will remember the original Environmental Activists from their work to launch the first Earth Day and defeat the Dirty Dozen—congressional members with the worst environmental records. Today, Environmental Action is back, building the nation's

largest grassroots environmental group and pressuring Congress to clean up the nation's dirtiest power plants.

Our Honolulu, Hawaii office has re-opened with **Moira Chapin**, federal field organizer for California and Hawaii, at the helm.

Alumnus **J Bonasia**, former National Student News Service director, remembers starting the first office there in 1991 with nothing more than a box of U.S. PIRG brochures and finishing the summer as one of the highest averaging offices in the country.

Caroline Griffith, a year-round canvass director, has crossed the 61st parallel to gather support in and around Anchorage, Alaska.

And for the second year in a row, we have been mobilizing activists in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Among the highlights so far:

- In early June, the California Senate voted 30 to 5 to approve our Million Solar Roofs bill. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has endorsed the bill and plans to sign it if and when it reaches his desk.

- In Colorado, our canvassers are working to convince Gov. Bill

—Continued on page 5



CANVASS FLASHBACK—*Megan Seibel, Chuck Bowe and canvassers kick off the first NJ canvass office in the early 1980s.*

In this issue . . .

MASSPIRG Leads The Way To Energy Efficiency . . . pg 2

The region's largest utility company lends its support.

NJPIRG, NYPIRG & CoPIRG Fight Identity Theft . . . pg 2

All three state governments pass bold new privacy laws.

Featured Alumnus Steve Ma . . . pg 3

Steve Ma walks 1,523 miles to advocate campaign finance reform.

Alumni Updates . . . pg 4

Find out who's married, who's having kids and who's changing jobs.

Students Work To Preserve Social Security . . . pg 7

PIRG staff organize students across the country to speak out.

Campaign Highlights

Environment Colorado Completes Successful Legislative Session

Environment Colorado passed a flurry of bills through both chambers of the state Legislature to protect the state's air, water and open spaces.

This is the first time in a decade that significant environmental legislation has passed the Legislature and headed to the governor's desk.

Citizens statewide celebrated a victory for clean air with the suspension of state rollbacks to Colorado's air quality rules.

Thanks to the work of legislative leaders, CoPIRG alumna **Kelly Nordini** (current Chief of Staff for House Democrats) and Environment Colorado advocates **Will Coyne** and **Elizabeth Ann Rowison**, the Owens administration has agreed to revisit the rules that protect Colorado's air quality.

These new rules are to include more scientific analysis and input from local communities, with an eye toward producing further opportunities to clean up the air.

Additionally **Stephanie Bonin**, Green Corps alumna and Environment Colorado energy advocate, helped to pass legislation that will facilitate implementation of Amendment 37, the successful ballot measure from November 2004 that ensures

that 10 percent of Colorado's energy will come from renewable sources by 2015. ■

MASSPIRG and Mass. Electric Both Push for Energy Efficiency

Green Corps alumnus and MASSPIRG Energy Advocate **Frank Gorke** is spearheading efforts to improve energy efficiency in Massachusetts.

At a June 7 hearing at the State House, an unusual group of interests aligned to support a MASSPIRG-backed bill to increase energy efficiency in common household and commercial appliances.

The legislation drew support from Massachusetts Electric—the region's biggest utility company—as well as advocates for low-income consumers and major environmental organizations.

The bill would set minimum efficiency standards for traffic signals, exit signs, home heating furnaces and 14 other residential and commercial appliances.

It would also save residents and businesses in the Commonwealth almost \$2 billion on electricity bills between now and 2030.

MASSPIRG is joining six other states—Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, California,



Stephanie Bonin meets with Lola Spradley, former Colorado Speaker of the House, about increasing renewable energy use in the state.

Washington and Arizona—which have all recently adopted similar standards. ■

NJPIRG, NYPIRG and CoPIRG Fight Identity Theft

Thanks to NJPIRG's newest staff member, Legislative Advocate **Abigail Caplovitz**, both the New Jersey Assembly and Senate overwhelmingly passed NJPIRG's Identity Theft Law.

The bill was sent to Gov. Richard Codey, who is expected to sign it.

The bill's marquee provision is the "security freeze," or the right to control access to your credit report.

The security freeze was first proposed in a 1996 PIRG report, "The Consumer X-Files," writ-

ten by our own **Ed Mierzwinski** and alumna **Pam Pressley**, former CALPIRG consumer attorney.

The freeze has now been adopted in approximately nine states. When used, the security freeze prevents identity thieves from getting new credit in your name.

The bill also provides for security breach notification and protects Social Security numbers against misuse.

On the same day, the New York Legislature sent a NYPIRG-backed security breach bill to the governor.

Because of **Rex Wilmouth's** work in Colorado, a similar identity theft bill passed out of the Legislature and was signed by Gov. Bill Owens at the end of the session. ■

Alumni Profiles

Steve Ma: NJ AARP

In 2001 Steve Ma decided to do something drastically different. He walked 1,523 miles through 260 towns and every legislative district in New Jersey to mobilize every day citizens and rally support for clean elections.

His trip culminated in Oct. 2001 with over 350 citizens—including 20 Harley-Davidson riders and a local drum line—walking Steve’s last mile with him to arrive at the steps of the capitol.

Prompted by Steve’s walk, state legislators and Gov. McGreevey signed a law to establish a pilot program for a clean elections system similar to those in Maine and Arizona.

After finishing his walk, Steve took over the grassroots operations of AARP New Jersey. His responsibilities include mobilizing the 1.3 million AARP members in the state.

Steve has helped to pass anti-predatory lending legislation, the nation’s strongest “Do Not Call” law and has defended the state’s prescription drug benefits for the elderly. He is currently working to protect Social Security from any plan that includes private accounts.

Steve got his start with PIRG at the age of 17 when a canvasser named Lloyd knocked on his door and signed him up as a citizen member.

While at Rutgers University (1990-1994) Steve was involved with the NJPIRG chapters and directed several canvass offices.

When he went to grad school, Steve chose a school that did not have a PIRG chapter so that he could start one. **Matt Baker** recommended he read memos from **Jon Motl**, gave him a copy of Bruce Springsteen’s “Born to Run” and sent him off to Indiana University. While there, Steve worked with **Karen Berg** and other IU students to start Indiana PIRG.



Steve Ma in 2001 as he walks for campaign finance reform.

He then worked as a field organizer and advocate with both CALPIRG and NJPIRG.

Steve is married to Pam Garfield—whom he met on the summer canvass—and lives in Ewing, NJ. He can be reached at sma@aarp.org. ■

Michael Stusser: Seattle-Based Author



Michael and his new wife, Vanessa.

If you live in Seattle, you’ve no doubt seen Michael Stusser’s contributions to *The Seattle Weekly* or *Parent Map*, a news magazine for Seattle parents.

For those of you not living in the Pacific Northwest, make sure to check out some of his columns online at www.parentmap.com and www.seattleweekly.com.

Congratulations are also due to Michael after he tied the knot on

July 9. He and his wife, Vanessa, will be honeymooning in Los Cabos, Mexico. His column in *Parent Map*, “The Accidental Parent,” chronicles their relationship and the humor found in raising her twin 10-year-olds, Rachel and Riley.

Michael has written for dozens of publications and has created games such as the Doonesbury Game with Garry Trudeau, EARTH ALERT and Hear Me Out, which you can pick up at your local Starbucks.

Michael is also currently writing a book entitled “The Dead Guy

Interviews,” which is a collection of re-created historical interviews with famous figures such as Cleopatra, Alexander the Great and Abraham Lincoln. Keep an eye out for it in 2006.

Michael was hired off the UC Berkeley campus by **Susan Birmingham** in 1986 and joined the CALPIRG campus organizing team. He had canvassed in the Berkeley citizen outreach office as a student and, once on staff, ran the MASSPIRG canvass with **Margie Alt** in the summer of 1987 before returning to California’s campus team. ■



Mark Ferrudo

Susannah Lindberg and Scott Randolph at their wedding reception in Orlando.

Babies and Weddings:

Susannah Lindberg, former campus organizer, married Scott Randolph on May 21st in Orlando, Florida. Susannah is the Florida program director for Clean Water Action (CWA), and Scott is a staff attorney with CWA. **Michael Stusser**, former campus organizer, was married July 9 (see profile, p. 3). **Michelle Mulkey** and **Nat Garrett**, former Green Corps organizers, were married in San Francisco on May 28.

Gina Coplon-Newfield, former Green Corps organizer, recently gave birth to her daughter Farah.

Movers and Shakers:

Tom Subak, former regional director and donor development director, is now the Director of Planned Parenthood Online. **Leise Jones**, former U.S. PIRG field organizer, is now the Clean Water Action organizer in Boston. **Michael Caudell-Feagan**, former U.S. PIRG consumer advocate, recently joined the Pew Charitable Trusts as an

education program officer. **Alex Russell**, former WashPIRG & USPIRG field organizer, is the new director of the Barbara Lee Foundation. **Stacey Hafner**, former MASSPIRG assistant organizing director, recently started as executive director of United Council of the University of Wisconsin Students. **Deidre Pate Omahen**, former CoPIRG staffer, is currently working with the National Lekotek Center,

Alumni Updates

a nonprofit for children with disabilities. **Marc Sidel**, former canvass director, recently took a development job with Hidden Villa, a nonprofit that runs educational programs on environmental and multicultural issues. **Jo Voss**, former OSPIRG campus organizer, is currently the field director of the New Hampshire Democratic Party. **Kristen Burns**, former canvass director and TAC organizer, is teaching high school chemistry and environmental science at Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School in Mass. **Kat Barr**, former NSCAHH advocate, recently joined Project Vote as a communications specialist.

Meg Gray, former MA Community Water Watch director, has just entered her first year at The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, a graduate school of Syracuse University. **Linda Mindrutiu**, former Ohio

PIRG campus organizer, finished her first year at Ohio State University Law School. **Megan Jennings**, former campus organizer, finished her first year at UC Berkeley's Law School. **Jacob Harold**, former Green Corps organizer, graduated from Stanford's Graduate School of Business and started working with The Bridgespan Group doing consulting for nonprofits. **Becky Kammerling**, former campus organizer and canvass director, finished her first year of law school at the University of Oregon. She received a grant from the Oregon Law Students Public Interest Fund that is allowing her to work with the Cascadia Wildlands Project this summer.

Rachel Heller and **Leslie Drozen**, former campus organizers, ran the Boston Marathon and fundraised for Horizons for

—Continued on page 7

New Babies



Sean Beach, former campus organizer, and his wife Theresa are proud to announce the arrival of Owen Thomas on March 29, 2005.



Annie Davini-Johnson, former WISPIRG board chair and organizer, and **Ed Johnson**, current FFPIR national canvass director, welcomed Agostino on June 9, 2005.



Clara Boyden Cooke, former CALPIRG student and assistant canvass director, welcomed Lindsey Ella Cooke into the world on May 1, 2005.

Continued Success For Green Corps

Green Corps, the Field School for Environmental Leadership, is completing its 13th year, and it was an exciting one. In April 2004, **Leslie Samuelrich** handed the mantle of leadership to incoming Executive Director **Naomi Roth**. Naomi spent five years as Assistant Organizing Director for Green Corps and got her start as a campus organizer for CALPIRG in 1998.

Under Naomi's leadership, Green Corps continued to provide field support to urgent and important campaigns. During the past program year, Green Corps worked with organizations to involve hundreds of citizen activists in efforts to register youth voters (with the state PIRGs' New Voters



Jesse Littlewood (GC'04), Dave Rossini (GC'04), Naomi Roth, executive director, and Kirsten Collings (GC'04) in Aspen.

Project); stop corporate water privatization (with Corporate Accountability International, formerly known as INFACT); protect endangered forests (with the Dogwood Alliance); prevent oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (with the Alaska Coalition and Alaska Wilderness League); defend the Endangered Species Act (with Defenders of Wildlife); and reduce toxic pollution (with Toxics Action Center).

Green Corps also launched expanded program work to provide additional support and networking opportunities to their 190-person alumni network; organized a series of successful social events in New York, Boston, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.; and is currently organizing an alumni gathering in Denver on Dec. 8 (prior to the Aspen shared vacation) for a discussion on the state of the environmental movement. ■

Green Century Funds' Successful Shareholder Advocacy

With **Amy Perry** at the helm, Green Century Funds has just wrapped up its most successful year of shareholder advocacy to date.

Green Century was started in 1991 by a handful of the state PIRGs.

Green Century Funds is among a small number of funds in the U.S. that focuses primarily

on environmentally responsible investing.

This year Green Century Funds filed seven shareholder resolutions that resulted in three environmental victories.

ConocoPhillips agreed to withdraw from Arctic Power, an oil industry lobbying group that promotes drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge;

Apple Computers agreed to offer free recycling for iPods at retail stores around the country; and Whole Foods Market agreed to label all of its "Everyday 365" products with information regarding their genetically engineered content.

For more information about Green Century Funds go to www.greencentury.com. ■

Summer Canvass

—Continued from page 1

Owens to protect the state's 4.4 million acres of pristine national forests.

The forests need Owens to step up in their defense since President Bush repealed the Roadless Rule, which had kept them off-limits to most logging and road-building.

- With the prospect of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge whetting the appetite of oil companies for more drilling off the nation's shores, Oregon staff are working to reinstate a statewide coastal ban on offshore drilling.

- Canvassers in three New England states—Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island—are working to stop global warming by convincing their governors to reduce pollution from power plants and motor vehicles.

- In Texas, we are urging Gov. Rick Perry to round up polluters by enforcing current clean air rules.

- Arizona PIRG has launched its first summer campaign to increase renewable energy to 20 percent by 2020.

For more information on these and other state PIRG and environmental group campaigns, visit each organization's Web site. ■

Alumni Socials

On June 2, alumni and staff joined **Gene Karpinski, Wendy Wendlandt, Margie Alt** and **Kimberly Larson** for cocktails at a local D.C. establishment.

In addition to the usual D.C. crowd, some out-of-towners were able to join the group including **Adam Ruben, Bill Holland, Alan Noguee** and **Matt Wilson**. Photos of the event are online at www.pirg.org/alumni/calendar.html.

Just a few weekends later, on June 11, alumni and staff from the Philadelphia area got together for an evening of reminiscing and catching up. **Steve Ma, Carlota Masinsin** and **Anita Ward** enjoyed telling stories about their organizing days at Rutgers University as

Washington, D.C., Philadelphia And Aspen...



State PIRGs' John Rumpler; Heather Collis Puro, MASSPIRG alumna, with daughter Arden; Gina Collins-Cummings, NJPIRG alumna; and Chris Lindstrom, MASSPIRG organizing director at MASSPIRG's 30th anniversary celebration in 2003.

well as plotting an overhaul of the health care system in New Jersey. **Linda Babecki**, former TOP director and current attorney with New Jersey's Legal Services, and **John Weidman**,

former PennPIRG Fuel Buyers staffer currently working with the Food Trust, both stopped in for a while. An alumna we haven't seen in a while, **Chuck Shainberg**, who helped estab-

lish the NJPIRG chapter at Rutgers Camden Law School in the early 1970s, swung by the event as well. A special thank you to everyone who was able to join us at these events.

Aspen Count Down

With sweltering temperatures in many parts of the U.S., it's a perfect time to start planning for the Aspen Shared Vacation (December 9-17). **Wendy Wendlandt, Mia Scampini, Rose Garr** and **Surf Del Mar** are already working hard to make this the biggest and best Aspen Vacation ever.

We'll be dressed to the nines for dinner at the St. Regis Hotel, dancing the night away at Tipler's, playing in the fresh powder and relaxing in hot tubs. You don't want to miss it. For more information contact Emily Francis at alumni@pirg.org. ■

Current Career Opportunities With The State PIRGs And Affiliated Organizations

For more information, please visit www.pirg.org/jobs/experienced.

You can also call Amy Perry at (617) 747-4360.

• Executive Director, WashPIRG and New Hampshire PIRG

Location: Seattle, WA & Concord, NH; Description: Direct statewide campaigns, set policy priorities, build organizational influence in the state and oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization.

• Donor Development Coordinator, State PIRGs

Location: Los Angeles, CA; Description: Coordinate the development and implementation of a strategic plan to increase the number of new and major contributors to the organization by developing fundraising projects and new prospecting techniques.

• Political Director, Environmental Action

Location: Boston, MA; Description: Expand the political influence of the organization by identifying policy priorities, overseeing fundraising and coordinating outreach to the media, celebrities and decisionmakers.

• Entry Level Recruitment Director, State PIRGs

Location: Denver, CO; Description: Work as part of the national team of the State PIRGs and affiliated organizations overseeing a newly expanded section of the recruitment department to focus on the on-going recruitment of entry-level staff outside of college campuses.

• National Legislative Program Coordinator, State PIRGs

Location: Denver, CO or Boston, MA; Description: Facilitate the process of campaign development and implementation for the organization by providing strategic input and assistance to PIRG policy advocates nationwide.

Students Join Social Security Debate



PIRG campus team members most exited to be protecting Social Security: Andy MacDonald, MASSPIRG organizing director and Andre Delattre, national campus organizing director.

During the spring 2005 semester the student PIRGs, along with the United States Student Association, launched Students For A Secure Future, which is a nonpartisan coalition of youth leaders who recognize the need to strengthen Social Security.

The project, led by campus team program director **Dave Rosenfeld**, is the newest addition to the PIRG student chapters' program mix. Two organizers, **Jessica Wilbanks** and **Adam Alexander** (based in Washington, D.C., and Colorado, respectively) organized student government leaders around the country to make a statement about the long-term sustainability of the program.

Over 150 student body presidents from universities in all

50 states have signed onto an official letter to both Congress and the White House, making it the largest collective statement made by young people on the Social Security debate.

The statement calls on Congress and the White House to work together to find a fiscally responsible solution that addresses the projected funding shortfall and preserves the program for future generations, without sacrificing benefits or increasing the federal deficit.

Student leaders continue to meet with members of Congress to express their opinions and deliver the concerns of fellow students and young people nationwide. For more details check out www.StudentsForASecureFuture.org. ■

Alumni Updates

—Continued from page 4

Homeless Children. **Robin Eiseman** walked the SD Marathon in June for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society. **Jen Mueller**, former campus organizer and U.S. PIRG staff, is training to run the Marine Corps Marathon on Oct. 30 to support the Whitman-Walker Clinic. **Eric Olson**, former canvass director, will run the Chicago Marathon for the Red Cross of Greater Chicago.

Alumni Around The World: **Sam Sager**, former SET organizer, is working in Azerbaijan with the National Democratic Institute (NDI). **Sheila Ballen**, former PennPIRG director, is also working with NDI in Kazakhstan.

Liz Freirich, former campus organizer, started rabbinical school in Jerusalem. **Laura Zahn** and **Emmet O'Hanlon**, former fellows, are currently in Santiago, Chile studying human rights, the environment and journalism.

Ken Estep, former Media Center staff, has been in Japan for over a year now on a working holiday; he's still producing videos. **Amy Kelley**, former publications staff, spent part of her summer in Ecuador. ■

Additional Nonprofit Career Opportunities

Check out these career opportunities around the U.S. working with alumni.

Visit each organizations' Web site for more information or www.pirg.org/alumni/JobOpps.html.

- ME, RI & OR Organizers, Endangered Species Coalition with **Sarah Matsumoto** (GC '99); www.stopextinction.org
- Director of Constituency Outreach & Policy Advocate, Physicians for Human Rights with **Gina Coplion-Newfield** (GC '97); www.phrusa.org
- Communications Consultant, Grow Sales, Inc. with **TJ Tedesco** (former MASSPIRG organizer); www.growsales.com

- Organizers, United Council of the University of Wisconsin with **Stacey Hafner** (former MASSPIRG assistant organizing director); www.unitedcouncil.net
- Finance & Admin Director, Major Gifts Officer, Communications Director, Corporate Accountability International with **Leslie Samuelrich** (former GC executive director); www.stopcorporateabuse.org
- Organizing Director, North Carolina Conservation Network with **Brian Buzby** (former CoPIRG campus organizer and advocate); www.nccconservationnetwork.org
- Operations Staff, Alternative Telecom and Networks with **Jerry Skomer** (former FFPIR budget director); www.alttel.com

Save The Date

You're invited to an alumni social near you!

Staff and alumni are organizing social events all across the U.S. this year. Check out the dates below. For more details and to RSVP visit: www.pirg.org/alumni/calendar.html. If you'd like to host a social event in your city, contact Emily Francis at alumni@pirg.org.

Chicago	August 6, 2005
Denver	August 14, 2005
San Francisco	September 17, 2005
Portland	September 18, 2005
Seattle	September 25, 2005
Boston	October 6, 2005
Aspen, CO	December 9-17, 2005

(Career alumni should save these dates for the Aspen Shared Vacation.)



**Jeff Tufenkian and Andy
MacDonald at the 2002
Los Angeles alumni social**

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