



ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH
STRATEGY CENTER

2016

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

• Our healthy future depends on all of us •

Imagine a world where mothers don't have to worry that toxic chemicals in drinking water, groceries, furniture, and products throughout their homes are making their children sick. A world where frightening diseases don't spread more easily because the climate's warming. A world with decreasing rates of autism, learning disabilities, asthma, allergies, infertility, and cancer.

**Imagine healthy people, thriving in a healthy economy.
That's the world we're working for, with help from people like you.**

“Arsenic is the biggest public-health problem for water in the United States—it’s the most toxic thing we drink.”

-- Yan Zheng, geochemist and senior research scientist, Columbia University

You promoted climate-friendly, renewable products and green jobs.

Our “Plants to Products” partnership with the University of Maine has been broadly endorsed by business leaders, elected officials, and economic development agencies. We aim to position Maine as a global leader in “biobased” manufacturing, which converts the renewable resources of forest, farm, and sea into the next generation of safer chemicals, plastics, and advanced materials. We staff a business alliance called Biobased Maine that’s responding to rising demand for more sustainable products that reduce the use of oil and gas. We’re working on a “roadmap” to attract investment in biobased products, to revitalize rural Maine communities distressed by the decline in the pulp and paper industry.

You took action for safe drinking water.

Working with a bipartisan group of Maine legislators, we helped pass a bill last year--vetoed by Governor Paul LePage--to improve testing and treatment of the well water nearly half of all Mainers drink. One in eight Maine wells contains arsenic above safe levels, according to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Linked to skin, bladder, and lung cancers, arsenic in Maine drinking water also is affecting schoolchildren’s brains and reducing their IQ levels, according to a Columbia University study. Health impacts fall disproportionately on lower income families in Maine’s rural areas. We are continuing to educate and organize statewide about this issue.

INSPIRING LEADERS

Friends and families joined business, political, and thought leaders for our 2015 Celebration for Healthy Families.



Legislative Leadership Awards for fighting for safe drinking water for all Maine families went to State representatives Drew Gattine (D-Westbrook), Karen Vachon (R-Scarborough), and Gary Hilliard (R-Belgrade).



The Frank Hatch Environmental Health Leadership Award for extraordinary vision and leadership that has improved the health and safety of products, workplaces, and communities worldwide went to Dr. Ken Geiser, left, with Strategy Center Executive Director Mike Belliveau.



A Business Leadership Award for outstanding leadership within the business community to eliminate toxic flame retardants from furniture went to Ross and Christine Endicott of Endicott Home Furnishings. (The whole family joined us!)

A Grassroots Leadership Award was given posthumously to our dear friend Bettie Kettell for her generosity of spirit as a nurse, which compelled her to protect children, families, and public health from toxic chemicals.

“Facing pressure from consumer groups, Home Depot said it would discontinue use of a potentially harmful chemical in its vinyl flooring by the end of the year.”

-- “Home Depot Says It Will Phase Out Chemical Used in Vinyl Flooring,” *The New York Times*, April 22, 2015

Toward the world we're working for,

LOOK WHAT YOU DID!

WITH SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE LIKE YOU LAST YEAR, THE STRATEGY CENTER WORKED WITH DIVERSE ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND POLICYMAKERS. THAT'S WHY WE SUCCEEDED.

You made the marketplace safer.

You supported our victories in the national Mind the Store campaign that encourages retailers to “mind the store” responsibly by eliminating toxic chemicals from the products they sell. Our Executive Director Mike Belliveau led campaign negotiations that convinced the world’s largest home-improvement retail chain, The Home Depot, to stop selling vinyl flooring made with phthalates (thah-laytes), a group of toxic chemicals linked to reproductive harm, learning disabilities, and asthma and allergies. Within days of Home Depot’s announcement, Lowe’s, Menards, and Lumber Liquidators announced that they, too, would replace phthalates in vinyl flooring with safer alternatives. Next, Macy’s preempted Mind the Store demonstrations planned at its stores nationwide by announcing it would join Ikea, Walmart, and Ashley Furniture in stopping sales of furniture containing toxic flame retardants linked to cancer and harm to the brain and reproductive systems.

You made our chemical safety laws stronger.

As this report goes to print, final negotiations are underway in Congress to fix the badly broken Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. We’ve worked for a decade for a new federal law that cracks down on health-threatening chemical exposures and ensures the safety of all chemicals in commerce. In the final push, we’re fighting to preserve state authority to restrict dangerous chemicals and federal authority to halt imported products containing toxic chemicals banned in the United States. In Maine, we made sure the state used its Kid-Safe Products Act, passed with our leadership in 2008, to require that manufacturers reported toxic phthalates in household products sold throughout the state. Next step: get product makers to switch to safer alternatives that are widely available, effective, and affordable.



“The Environmental Health Strategy Center and its partners recognize the importance of incorporating innovative technologies in Maine’s traditional forest-based economy to help convert Maine’s renewable biomass into biobased products that meet the growing market demand to replace fossil carbon.”

-- Senator Angus King, in a letter to the U.S. Economic Development Administration, June 8, 2015

“Both of my parents died from cancer, and I have too many friends who have battled it. Some friends struggle with unexplained infertility, while others have children who must overcome learning disabilities. . . . Lives turned upside down by illness remind me of why I support this work.”

-- Lalla C., mom, educator, and community member

Slowing climate change and eliminating toxic chemical hazards creates opportunity for the next generation while benefiting us all. As a public health organization, the **Environmental Health Strategy Center** works for healthy people who thrive in a healthy economy by reducing exposure to toxic chemicals in our homes and promoting products that are safe for people and the planet. In state and national campaigns, we use research and education to reform policies, change the marketplace, and advance science-based solutions that are socially just. Next year we'll celebrate our 15th anniversary.

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A State and National Leader

As a national reporter wrote this year, the Strategy Center's achievements have "turned out to be more than just a local triumph." Our leadership has helped achieve the strongest protections in the country against dangerous chemicals.

We succeed because of you. Stay informed, by signing up for our eNews and action alerts. And help us protect you and your family by making a tax-deductible gift to our work. **Visit ourhealthyfuture.org for more information.**



Focused on the Future

In 2016, your support will help us work for these priorities:

In Maine

- Ensure safe drinking water for all Maine children and families by substantially improving well-water testing and treatment for unsafe levels of arsenic.
- Develop a "roadmap" that shows Maine how to attract investment and create jobs, turning plants into biobased products.
- End the unnecessary use of toxic chemicals in upholstered furniture to protect family health and curb the cancer epidemic among firefighters.

Nationwide

- Drive hormone-disrupting chemicals known as phthalates from the marketplace and food supply, in favor of safer alternatives.
- Complete the reform of our nation's broken chemical safety law and make sure it's aggressively enforced.
- Develop new tools that use online technology to help ensure the public's right to know about toxic chemical hazards.