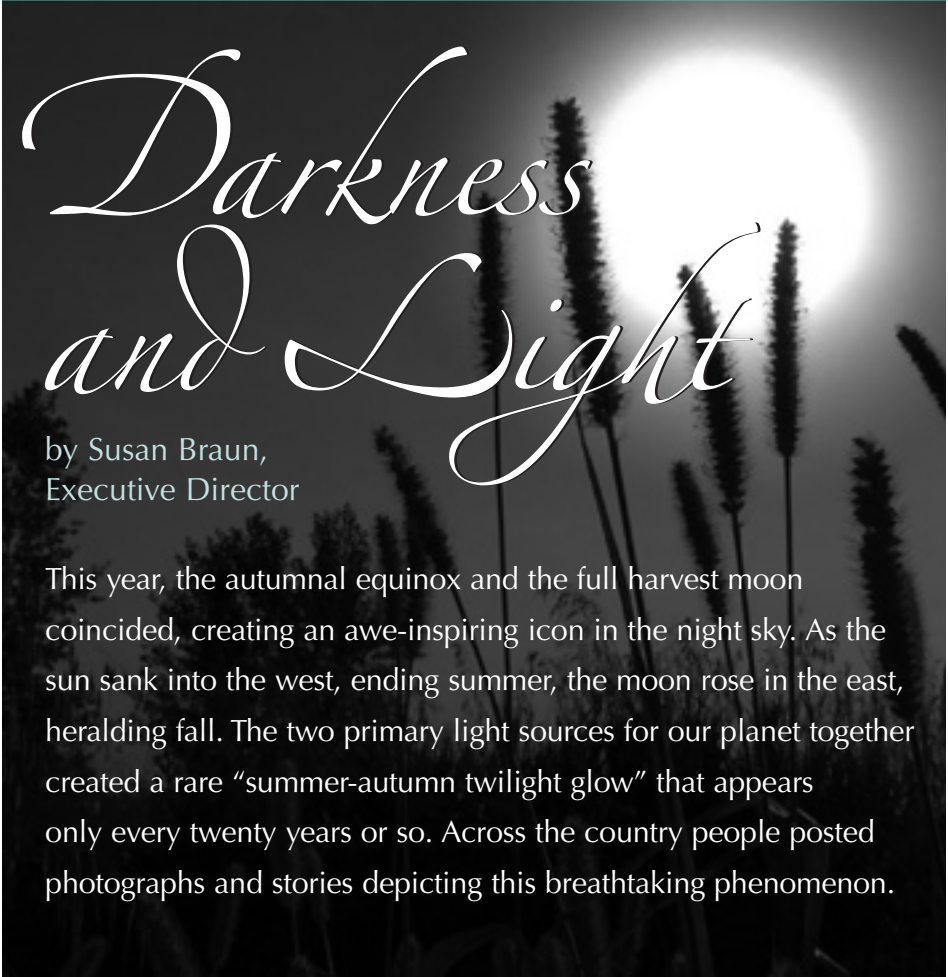

COMMONWEAL

com•mon•weal (n) kōm'an-wēl noun 1. The public good or welfare. 2. Archaic: a commonwealth.

D E C E M B E R 2 0 1 0



Darkness and Light

by Susan Braun,
Executive Director

This year, the autumnal equinox and the full harvest moon coincided, creating an awe-inspiring icon in the night sky. As the sun sank into the west, ending summer, the moon rose in the east, heralding fall. The two primary light sources for our planet together created a rare “summer-autumn twilight glow” that appears only every twenty years or so. Across the country people posted photographs and stories depicting this breathtaking phenomenon.

In American myth and folklore the full moon of each month is given a name. Although there are many name variants for the full moon that welcomes autumn, it is generally called the Harvest Moon, so named because it provided ample light for farmers to extend the long days of harvesting crops into the night.

In *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, JC Miller tells us that *the moon is universally symbolic of the rhythm of cyclic time; universal becoming. The birth, death, and resurrection phases of the moon symbolize immortality and eternity, perpetual renewal; enlightenment. The moon also represents the dark*

side of Nature, her unseen aspect; the spiritual aspect of light in darkness; inner knowledge; the irrational, intuitional and subjective; human reason as reflected light from the divine sun.

I've been thinking about what this means in our own lives, during this time of global shifting. We are reaping benefits from the ubiquity of information made possible by the Internet. Are we reflecting our light into this information and harvesting wisdom? How do we hold the darkness and allow its beauty? Are we acting with wisdom to evoke the perpetual renewal that nature affords us?

Under the Harvest Moon

Carl Sandburg

*Under the harvest moon,
When the soft silver
Drips shimmering
Over the garden nights,
Death, the gray mocker,
Comes and whispers to you
As a beautiful friend
Who remembers.*

*Under the summer roses
When the fragrant crimson
Lurks in the dusk
Of the wild red leaves,
Love, with little hands,
Comes and touches you
With a thousand memories,
And asks you
Beautiful, unanswerable
questions.*

At the equinox, the length of the day equals the length of the night. Although scientists correctly dispel the notion that this is a precise measure (*day and night would each be exactly 12 hours long on a spring or fall equinox only if the sun were a single point of light and Earth had no atmosphere*, we're told by nationalgeographic.com), the autumn equinox is a time when many of us weigh the waning light of spring and summer with the impending darkness of fall and winter. We contrast what has been with what is to be. We see the

continued on the next page

light that we hold in balance with the darkness we often cover; we observe the conscious mind alongside the subconscious. And we head toward the midwinter solstice—when many cultures celebrate the re-dawning of light and inevitability of rebirth.

As we envision Commonwealth's future, we are perched in this equinox position. We see the amazing light that has accompanied our work over more than three decades. Programs that have been dramatically ahead of the curve—fighting for conservation of our oceans decades before we knew about the lethal effects of climate change on coral; for physicians to retain their heart as they practice medicine before this disconnect had even been recognized; for people with cancer to find a place of healing long before standards for hospice and palliative care were defined. We recognize the dark time ahead as our economy continues in one of the longest recessions in history. Simultaneously, we embrace our own need for regeneration—winding down some of our work and planting seeds for new efforts through trainings, outreach, and collaborations. And we are expanding our areas of inquiry with a series of conversations about issues at the end of life.

On our beautiful Commonwealth grounds, we recognize and embrace this “rhythm of cyclic time” as we cut back dead limbs in the forest and stock our woodpiles, knowing that this work in the dark times is rich and deep. In our planning we hold the dark for what it is, recognizing the inevitability of death and holding the ways that facing this “edge of life” can also be rich and deep; healing. We balance this with the hope that life is stubbornly persistent and inevitably springs again. And that love crosses the ground of both. ☐

We are deeply grateful to the Jenifer Altman Foundation, two anonymous foundations, and many individual donors for their generous core support of Commonwealth.

EXPLORING END-OF-LIFE ISSUES

by Steve Heilig, MPH, Director of Public Health and Education

My mother died recently. And she was hardly the only one. Over 6,500 Americans die on the average day. But knowing that hasn't made her death—even though a peaceful one at home—any easier to accept. And I'm supposed to be somewhat of an expert in these things.

As a medical ethicist, hospice worker and director, and university and medical school lecturer, I've spent many years wrestling, both professionally and personally, with issues surrounding death. That used to seem a lonely, even subversive arena, but it is becoming less so. For whatever combination of reasons—demographic, financial, political—the way we die is increasingly front-page news, and more people are talking more about death. To be sure, most of us don't want to confront it until we absolutely must—that's human nature. But many of the wisest teachers and spiritual leaders throughout human history have counseled that acknowledging our mortality is essential to a fully-lived life. Still, my reluctant conviction is that most Americans are full of denial and discomfort about the end of our physical lives.

This is changing, however slowly. In the health professions, much overdue attention is being paid to the difficult tasks of improving care at the end of life—hospice care, especially, but also pain relief, general palliative care, and mental/spiritual support. Progress has been made—but much more needs to be done.

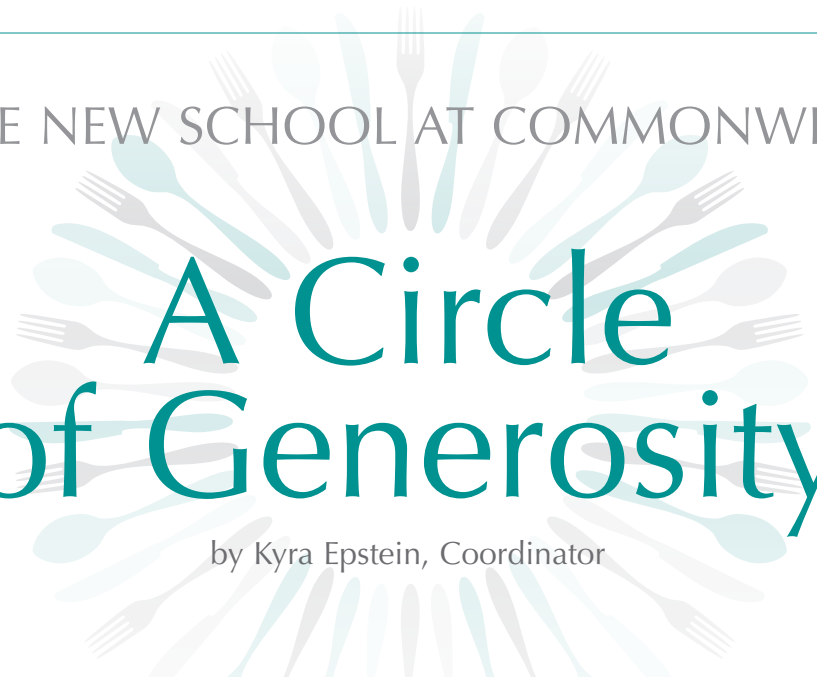
At Commonwealth, the Cancer Help Program is justly renowned for helping people with a life-threatening diagnosis confront the reality of their disease and to live better and, where possible, longer lives. Now, we are exploring ways in which Commonwealth can usefully contribute to people dealing with end-of-life issues. To begin, The New School at Commonwealth is presenting a series of open conversations related to dying. The scheduled conversations include:

Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.	Stories and Poems at the End of Life	Sept. 5
Michael Lerner	Death and Dying: Lessons from the Commonwealth Cancer Help Program	Oct. 3
Susan Braun	Fighting till the End?	Nov. 7
Eric Karpeles	The Last Threshold: Artists and Mortality	Dec. 5
Frank Ostaseski	Being a Compassionate Companion	Jan. 16
Steve Heilig	The Modern Evolution of Death	Feb. 6

Beyond this, we are exploring how we might be of service. Speaking for myself, it does feel like a natural evolution of other Commonwealth work. We will keep you posted, and hope you will join us in this new aspect of our work. ☐

For more information about these conversations and to access podcasts of them, please go to: www.The-New-School.org.

THE NEW SCHOOL AT COMMONWEAL



A Circle of Generosity

by Kyra Epstein, Coordinator

A few weeks ago, I ate at a restaurant in Berkeley called Karma Kitchen. Staffed entirely by volunteers, the place was buzzing with vitality: people in conversation with neighbors, others scribbling reflections on little pieces of paper about the day's "theme," and one diner spontaneously offering a song. It felt unlike any restaurant I've been to.

When we got our check, it said:

Your meal has been paid for by someone who came before you. Since it's a gift, you can't pay them back—but you can pay-it-forward by making a contribution that will allow future guests to experience the same generosity. It is this circle of giving that allows Karma Kitchen to keep going.

In Karma Kitchen that day, a community came together. Each of us brought what we could to that moment—attention, an open heart, a hearty appetite, hours of precious time, a song. We were open to a new way of relating and connecting, building something that felt important and different. This was my introduction to the concept of the Gift Economy, something that sank into my bones with a sigh and lightened my heart.

It occurred to me that a similar thing happens when The New School community comes together. Like my experience at Karma Kitchen, coming to a New School event feels different—people bring open hearts and minds to be a part of a discussion. Peer-to-peer, we open to the wisdom that life has brought to us all, soften as we grapple with difficult issues together, and experience the beauty in the people and world around us.

During a talk he gave at Bioneers, Nipun Mehta (founder of the non-profit Charity Focus as well as Karma Kitchen) outlined four elements that Karma Kitchen

works toward in its experiment in generosity: a shift from consumption to contribution, transaction to trust, scarcity to abundance, and isolation to community. These elements have lodged in my mind as a measuring stick for decision making.

We're moving toward that at The New School. If you haven't been to a New School event, you're in for a treat. There are no degrees, no grades, no homework; instead, a new kind of school—a community of inquiry exploring topics in health, the arts and sciences, the environment, and the inner life. The New School presents conversations, book readings, performances, and other events with thought and action leaders which are recorded and then offered as free podcasts on iTunes and our website. Over the past four years, we have offered more than 80 events, including Paul Hawken, Joanna Macy, Ram Dass, Terry Tempest Williams, and many others who help us see the beauty in the world and bring more of who we are to it.

Almost every event is offered free of charge, as a gift to the Commonweal community. We receive gifts from you and from other generous donors that allow us to keep presenting the events. It is a circle of giving, and you are part of it. ■

For more information on Karma Kitchen, go to:
www.karmakitchen.org.

To learn more about The New School, go to:
www.The-New-School.org.

The New School at Commonweal is supported by grants from the Bet Lev Foundation, the Kalliopeia Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Whitman Institute, as well as contributions from many individuals, for which we are profoundly grateful.

Collaborative on Health and the Environment

by Elise Miller, Director

Since its inception in 2002, CHE has primarily focused on our core expertise—namely, the emerging science on environmental contributors, particularly toxic chemicals, to chronic disease and disability. We are now beginning to define new efforts that take into account the cycles of life and the complexity of interacting factors that influence health.

4 CHE's new Healthy Aging and the Environment initiative is particularly reflective of this approach. This program complements CHE's Initiative on Children's Environmental Health by underscoring the need to look at a range of interacting influences on human health throughout the lifecycle—from conception to death. To lead this initiative, we are delighted to welcome Maria Valenti, who has been working on environmental health issues for almost two decades at Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility—most recently as program director for GBPSR and head of GBPSR's healthy aging project.

The aging process is, in fact, the best case study for another area to which CHE is now devoting considerable energy—namely, cumulative impacts on health. By cumulative impacts we mean the multiple environmental factors or stressors—including nutrition, toxins, infectious agents, socioeconomic status, climate change, and so forth—that influence our health throughout the lifespan. We are particularly pleased to be partnering with the Science and Environmental Health Network to

develop this work, given their intellectual leadership on these issues.

To highlight various stressors that can influence early development and have lifelong health consequences, CHE co-sponsored an exceptionally successful symposium, "Children First: Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child," with the Whole Child Center and the

University of California San Francisco's Osher Center for Integrative Health in early October. The UCSF auditorium was packed with health professionals, researchers, students, and many others eager to hear some of the most prominent experts from a range of fields describe model programs for creating optimal and sustainable environments in which children can thrive.

CHE's Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative received the Autism Society of America's 2010 Autism Champion Award in July for "improving the lives of all affected by autism." Given how highly respected ASA is in this field, their acknowledgment of LDDI reflects how much this working group has become a valued



Elise Miller welcomes participants at the Children First symposium, which highlighted a range of interacting factors that influence child health and development.

partner in the developmental disabilities sector. In addition, Erika Hagensen, MPH, MSWc, who has extensive experience in the disabilities field, took over the leadership of LDDI in May. She has already brought considerable energy, intelligence, and expertise to this position.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to commend Julia Varshavsky for her exceptional leadership of the Fertility and Reproductive Health working group over the last few years. Julia left CHE earlier this fall to start a graduate program in environmental

health sciences and public health at UC Berkeley. Though we sorely miss her at CHE, we are also delighted she is taking these next steps to expand her professional career. Our search for Julia's successor ended fruitfully, and we hired Karin Russ, RN, MS to serve as CHE Fertility's new national coordinator in October. Karin's 20 years of experience in nursing along with her dedication to environmental health issues and reproductive health bodes very well for the future work of CHE Fertility and for CHE as a whole. ■

For more information about CHE, go to: www.healthandenvironment.org.

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment is grateful for the generous support from Becker Family Foundation, Cedar Tree Foundation, Community Funds, Inc.—John Merck Fund, The Erb Foundation, Integrative Medicine Institute, The Johnson Family Foundation, Kresge Foundation, The Louisa Kreisberg Family Foundation, Passport Foundation, Teleosis, Wallace Genetic Foundation, an anonymous foundation, and individual donors.

Commonweal Launches New Training Initiative

by Davis Baltz, Training Coordinator, Environmental Health Training

In August, Commonweal was excited to conduct the first pilot training of our new Environmental Health Primary Prevention Training Program at Commonweal's retreat center in Bolinas. This is an initiative of Commonweal's Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE), which will bring CHE's expertise in science translation to health advocates in key strategic positions.

The training program is designed to train health advocates in environmental health science, in particular those who have many years of experience working on environmental health issues but who lack professional scientific training; representatives from communities that are disproportionately impacted by environmental contaminants; and those who work on health issues but who are new to the rapidly expanding field of environmental health sciences.

There are many key opportunities where advocates can influence important appropriations, research, and policy decisions. Increasing the capacity of these advocates to articulate concerns based on the best available science can greatly strengthen their effectiveness. Reaching and activating these leaders is what the Environmental Health Primary Prevention Training Program is all about. We aim to provide tools that enhance good judgment and lead to good decisions.

Commonweal collaborated with the California Breast Cancer Research Program and the Breast Cancer Fund as partners in the development of this work, and their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Our August training focused on environmental health science and breast cancer. It brought together leaders in the breast cancer research, education, and advocacy communities for three days of stimulating presentations and dialogue about what we know about environmental links to breast cancer. We were very fortunate to have as

our lead trainers Janet Gray, Ph.D., Director of the Program in Science, Technology & Society at Vassar College; Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, Science Director at CHE and at the Science and Environmental Health Network; and Marion Kavanaugh-Lynch, MD, MPH, Director of the California Breast Cancer Research Program.

We will be expanding these trainings in 2011 to address additional health impacts such as reproductive health while continuing to deliver trainings on environmental health science and breast cancer. ■

The Environmental Health Primary Prevention Training Program was made possible by generous funding from the Cedar Tree Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and an anonymous donor.



Participants and trainers at the Environment Health Primary Prevention Training Program, held at Commonweal in August.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS AT COMMONWEAL



Terri Mason, Volunteer Coordinator

I'm Terri Mason and I'm volunteering as the new Commonweal Volunteer Coordinator. Julie Portelli—after initiating this role and doing a splendid job recruiting and organizing volunteers for the last year and a half—is passing me her notebook of resources and her offer to be my wise adviser. I am an alumna of the Commonweal Cancer Help Program (Feb. 2007), medical librarian at San Francisco General Hospital, poet, mother of two, and walker of one dog. I am so impressed with the quality of Commonweal's programs and the people who take part in them. Continuing my connection with Commonweal through volunteering is fun and nurtures me. If you are interested in volunteering or want to update your information on the volunteer roster you can contact me at terrilmason@gmail.com. I look forward to working together to sustain a vibrant volunteer program.



Deborah Reynolds, Development Director

I am the sixth child of seven. Thanks to the influence of mom and five brothers I cook, play football, and don't hide behind a mitt when a baseball is coming my way. I also learned to be heard above the din—sense of humor maintenance—and the importance of doing good and sharing my toys.

After school in Hawaii and other places, stints in public and commercial radio, Guam politics, and community clinics, I have happily landed at Commonweal. It is my job to get positive attention (and funding) through grants, events, and talking to anyone who will listen. Over the next few months you may see changes/additions in our efforts. We've updated the Retreat Center page of our website—take a look, it's lovely. We're working on an electronic newsletter, fundraising activities—and of course grant applications. I welcome your ideas on these efforts. Email me at deborah@commonweal.org

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Lynn Stasior, MD, National Director, Graduate Medical Education, Institute for the Study of Health and Illness (ISHI)

What an honor to be welcomed into the Commonweal community. As a physician trained in Internal Medicine and Integrative Medicine, I found Dr. Rachel Remen's work and ISHI's innovative programs to be tremendously supportive both professionally and personally. As I practiced medicine at Northwestern's Integrative Medical Center, I wondered what effect a person's spirituality or outlook on life had on his or her health and wellness. To explore this question, I returned to school and completed a Masters in Pastoral Studies. I came to appreciate medicine as a vocation and am thrilled to join the vibrant team at ISHI that also envisions the practice of medicine as a service of healing.

My primary work at ISHI includes coordinating the nineteenth year of the *Healer's Art* elective at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine and expanding the tremendously successful *Healer's Art* program into medical resident education nationally. I look forward to meeting you on your next visit to Bolinas, or hearing from you at drlynn@commonweal.org.



Kyra Epstein, Coordinator, The New School

I am delighted to join the Commonweal community as the coordinator for The New School. I offer my expertise, enthusiasm, and heart to this unique forum of collaborative learning—a community that comes together to explore and dialog about the important issues that Commonweal champions. My vision is that The New School community continues to thrive and that it becomes a place where you are comfortable bringing the gift of your joy, or grief, or wonder to enrich our exploration of important issues. For information about New School events, you can contact me at TheNewSchool@commonweal.org.

To The New School, I bring 20 years of writing, journalism, and communications management experience in the field of sustainable living. I also bring my love of helping others find the deep roots, healing, community, and magic that I have found in my sacred journey with plants, ignited by a year-long plant medicine apprenticeship in the mountains of New Mexico and an amazing Four-Seasons permaculture certification course at the Regenerative Design Institute. I hold degrees in Environmental Policy and Management, Applied Communications, and English from the University of Denver and Colorado State University.

Reviving the Skills of the Craftsman

by Penny Livingston-Stark and James Stark, Co-directors


Fall is always an amazing time of year at Commonwealth Garden, and this fall, the gardens are buzzing with activities as we start an exciting new series focused on teaching vital skills that were once common in most communities. The Re-skilling Series at RDI was inspired by our greater community's interest in reviving craftsmanship skills.

Our ancestors, perhaps only a few generations back, were able to make what they needed for daily life, or trade for what they needed with a skilled neighbor.

In this modern culture, most of us have lost the skills of basic craftsmanship. If we are to transition away from global consumerism and towards localized, earth-friendly economies, we need to reclaim these skills for ourselves and for our community. Many of us have already started to re-skill around food—growing fresh vegetables in the backyard or cultivating a plot at a local community garden. This self-sustaining practice is deeply satisfying, and in the Bay Area there is a vibrant local economy around food that supports local farmers, garden teachers, restaurants, and burgeoning new vegetable landscaping businesses.

Re-skilling requires that we connect more deeply to the natural world. It involves cultivating (or foraging) plants for basketry, building materials, medicine, general body care, dyes, food, and clothing. It invites us into a closer relationship with domestic and wild animals and asks that we pay more attention to the changing of the seasons and the cycles of the natural world. It also fos-

ters a deeper gratitude for all that nature continues to provide.

For those of us who live and work here at Commonwealth Garden, making our own cheese and spinning our own yarn is a wonderful part of our everyday life. We are excited to share these skills with others and to invite some of the best teachers to share their knowledge. We love to see the joy and satisfaction of people as they learn more ways of providing for themselves. It is this joy that we believe will foster greater self-sufficiency within our communities and meet the growing needs for a local, regenerative economy. 

For more information about The Re-skilling Series, please go to www.regenerativedesign.org/.

The Regenerative Design Institute at Commonwealth Garden is supported through grants from the Randy Weil Fund, Tides Foundation, Kalliopia Foundation, Morning Glory Family Foundation, Stinson-Bolinas Community Fund, Jenifer Altman Foundation, Barbara Smith Fund, Marin County Board of Supervisors, Muriel Murch Full Circle Endowment Fund, and many other generous individuals and foundations.



JUST INTRODUCED The Safe Cosmetics Act of 2010

by Heather Sarantis, Program Manager, Women's Health

For the first time in 70 years, Congress is ready to close the gaping holes in the outdated federal law that allows chemicals linked to cancer, birth defects, learning disabilities, and other illnesses to be in the products we use on our bodies every day.

On July 21, Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc., introduced the Safe Cosmetics Act of 2010 (H.R.5786), which gives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authority to ensure that personal care products are free of harmful ingredients. This legislation will affect every American—everyone who puts on moisturizer or uses shampoo or deodorant. More and more people are concerned about unsafe chemicals in our everyday lives, and getting these toxics out of the stuff we rub on our bodies every day is just common sense. It will also help the cosmetics industry by fostering the development of the safer products American consumers are demanding.


Good for Consumers, Businesses, and Innovation

When there are cancer-causing chemicals in baby shampoo, hormone disruptors in fragrance, and lead in lipstick, you know the regulatory system is broken. That's what you get when you have an entire industry that's practically self-regulated. Existing law—the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act of 1938—cedes decisions about ingredient safety to the cosmetics industry. Under the current law, the FDA can't require cosmetics companies to conduct safety assessments, and can't even require prod-

uct recalls. In a recent example, the FDA could not recall skin whitening creams that were found to contain illegal levels of toxic mercury.

The new legislation will be good for consumers, and it will also level the playing field for businesses that are making the safest products. New advancements in science have exposed the health risks of repeated exposures to low-dose hazardous chemicals—while also enabling green chemists to develop safer, non-toxic formulas. The cosmetics industry as a whole has not kept pace with safety innovations due to a weak regulatory system that encourages ignorance about chemical hazards and allows companies to hide the true toxicity of products.

What You Can Do

Ask your U.S. Representative to support the Safe Cosmetics Act. Congress needs to know that this issue is important to constituents! To learn more about what's in this legislation and get your friends and family involved, go to: <http://www.safecosmetics.org>. 

We are grateful to the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund for their support of the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics.

Women, Wealth, and Sand Tray Wisdom

by Kate Levinson

Kate Levinson, psychotherapist and co-owner of Point Reyes Books (a sometimes Commonwealth special event co-host), recently participated in a group sand tray at Commonwealth facilitated by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD and Marion Weber. The sand tray experience offered Kate insight in the process of writing her book, *Emotional Currency: A Woman's Guide to Creating a Healthy Relationship to Money*, which will be published in April 2011. Learn more at www.emotionalcurrency.com.

How rare it is that we spend time giving thought to money beyond its dollar and cents realities. Eight women, led by Marion Weber and Rachel Remen, had just such an opportunity. We created a group sand tray, inaugurating the wonderful new sand tray room at Commonwealth, which brought into view aspects of our relationship to money that are generally invisible. We were instructed not think too much about which objects to choose, rather to let our unconscious inform the selections. Patterns, connections, and insights flowed as we sat back and observed the scenes we had created and shared about them with the group. Yet other connections were made when, at the end, we took away the wooden dowels that separated each of our sections to create one large, circular scene made up of our individual ones.

The tray was filled with a variety of animals, plants, figures, and objects. Those that appeared repeatedly were shells, masks, snakes, hearts, and hands. The image of these objects has stayed

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ISHI Launches a New Website to Mark Its 20th Anniversary

“Our modern medical techniques are only
the branches of a very old tree whose trunk
is healing and whose root is service.”

—Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, Director

The big news from ISHI is our newest website. Our own gifted Kathy Peters, with the help of a multi-talented team of web designers, has completely re-designed and launched our ISHI website in just three months of intensive work. ISHI's programs have often been described as re-integrating the feminine principles of compassion, community, and heart-centered relationship with the masculine principles of evidence-based scientific medicine. Appropriately, the new website blends the aesthetic and creative efforts of a group of nine women—the seven ISHI staff and two remarkable web designers from the award-winning women's design firm, Barking Dog Creative in Sausalito, CA.

Drawing on one of Rachel's best known quotes, our web designers suggested an innovative design based on the “Tree of Life,” sym-

bolic of the ancient lineage of medicine. ISHI used a tree image for the first time on the cover of its new DVD training materials, *The Healer's Art: Honoring the Heart of Medicine*, a set of modules for directors featuring the actual sessions of ISHI's award-winning course for first year medical students, *The Healer's Art*. The tiny new maple tree on the DVD cover symbolizes each of the beginning medical students that the course serves throughout the United States and abroad. The tree image is carried throughout the new website in the form of a mighty centenarian fig tree, but the heartwood of the website is the moving words and photos of a few of the many thousands of physicians and health care practitioners who have participated in ISHI's programs in the twenty years we have served those who serve others.

We have a new address too. ISHI can now be found at its own url (ishiprograms.org) as well as on the Commonweal website (commonweal.org/ishi). Come visit us to read the words of nurses, doctors, chaplains, psychologists, and many others describing their sense of renewal and recommitment to their service work; and see the faces of health professionals and students alight with a new awareness of a shared community of service. We are so grateful for the opportunity to do this work and the chance to celebrate it and share it with you. ■

ISHI is grateful for the generosity of her donors, who choose to remain anonymous.



The tiny new maple tree on the *Healer's Art* DVD cover symbolizes each of the beginning medical students that the course serves throughout the United States and abroad.

FUNDRAISING AT COMMONWEAL

Puddle City Bluegrass Band

In early June, our own Sharyle Patton reunited with her Puddle City Blue Grass Band—a group that originated in Portland's coffee houses in the '70s—to play in the Pt. Reyes Dance Palace for their Bay Area friends as a benefit for Commonweal. We already knew Sharyle is brilliant and funny and even that she could sing. The surprise was the standing bass! Puddle City combines skilled musicianship, great voices, and their own original brand of silliness that had the audience belly laughing, toe tapping, and dancing in the aisles. They put the fun in fundraising!

Puddle City Blue Grass Band members (left to right) Peter Langston, Greg Booth, Sharyle Patton, and Chris Montague reunite for a fundraiser for Commonweal.



Maxine Kraemer's Benefit

Having participated in the Cancer Help Program with my sister Susan way back in 1991, Commonweal owns a piece of my heart. Although Susan is no longer with us, I am still so grateful for the eight days we spent together at Commonweal getting "healed." So, when this incredible group needed some help from alumni, I was so happy to have the chance to say thanks.

About 50 guests gathered in my garage/grotto for this benefit. Treated to tasty appetizers and liquid refreshments, we were entertained for four hours of jazz guitar, Brazilian music, original folk music, and a reading by an author from his book on hospice volunteering. Around the room were etchings and paintings by a local artist who donated a portion of his sales to Commonweal. Everyone generously lent their talents to this wonderful evening. I was especially honored by Michael Lerner's attendance, as he had just returned the night before from vacation. I will never really be able to repay the people at the Commonweal Cancer Help Program for their love and care during my stay, but this benefit was certainly a beginning, and one I hope to repeat in 2011.



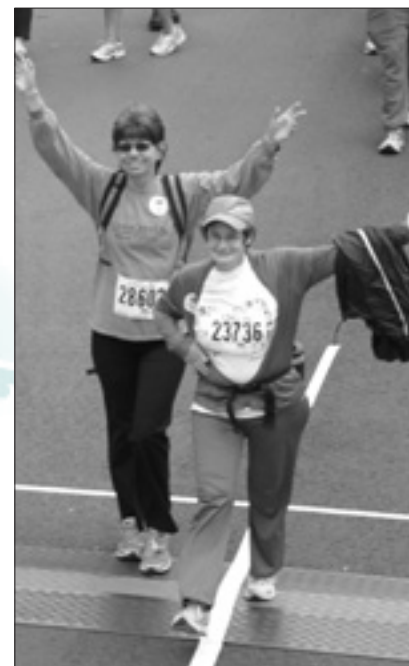
Maxine Kraemer and Michael Lerner at Maxine's benefit for CCHP.

Hot Weals at Bay to Breakers

It was a cool June day, perfect for our jaunt. The Hot Weals—Commonweal's first ever team in the annual San Francisco Bay to Breakers footrace (from the Bay to the Pacific Ocean)—strode across the city to raise money for the Commonweal Cancer Help Program (CCHP). The four of us had different kinds of cancer, different levels of fitness, and different levels of dread when we faced the daunting Hayes Street incline. What we had in common was our connection to Commonweal, and our desire to do something good for CCHP and for ourselves.

As we ambled by princesses with tiaras, bumble bees with swaying antennae, ballerinas in tutus, hippies in tie die, and naked men in nothing but sneakers, we gawked and mused, shared memories of CCHP, talked a little about cancer, made resolutions about getting and keeping in shape, and allowed our conversation to meander wherever our thoughts took us. By the time we reached the beach, we were tired and pleased with ourselves. With six weeks lead time, we had each found sponsors, and collectively raised over \$2500 for a program that helped us heal (in the sense of healing as "moving toward wholeness").

Join us next year! We welcome walkers and runners and anyone who wants to do a good deed for the CCHP while sharing fun and camaraderie. Contact Terri Mason at terrimason@gmail.com if you are interested, and we'll keep you posted.



The Hot Weals cross the finish line of the 12K Bay to Breakers footrace in their first annual fundraiser for the Commonweal Cancer Help Program.

Fundraising At Commonweal (cont'd)

Kelly Corrigan/Rebecca Katz Benefit for CCHP

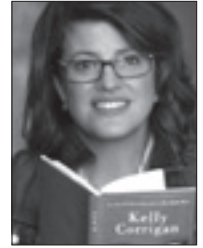
On Sept. 11, a group of Commonweal supporters gathered at Point Reyes Books for a magical evening of culinary treats by award-winning author, lecturer, and CCHP nutritional advisor, Chef Rebecca Katz, and a heartwarming reading and conversation with best selling author, Kelly Corrigan. The event was a fundraiser for the Commonweal Cancer Help Program.

A light supper and talk with Rebecca featured delectable dishes prepared from her cookbook, *The Cancer Fighting Kitchen*. Immediately following, Kelly read from her *New York Times* best-selling books, *The Middle Place*, a memoir of her battle with breast cancer as her beloved father also fought cancer; and *Lift*, a loving letter to her daughters and a tribute to motherhood. The evening was a demonstration of hope, healing, and the power of humor.

Our thanks to Steve Costa and Kate Levinson of Point Reyes Books for their generosity in providing a lovely space for this event.



Rebecca Katz



Kelly Corrigan

THE COMMONWEAL CANCER HELP PROGRAM

Singing the Blues

by Waz Thomas, CCHP Intake Coordinator

The Circle of Hearts is the affectionate name for the community of participants and staff of the Commonweal Cancer Help Program. This edited piece comes from the May 14, 2010 Circle of Hearts newsletter, which Waz Thomas writes. Waz is a CCHP co-founder, and for 23 years he served as program coordinator, yoga teacher, and muse. The newsletters communicate information and resources to the community—but they are really love letters to a remarkable family.

These are curious times for some of us, perhaps all of us. For some of us no matter how much we meditate, how much nutritious food we eat, how many support groups we attend, how many roses we smell, or how long we pray, life seems to wear us out. This exhaustion may be persistent or may be noticed from time to time. These weary feelings often come along with feelings of guilt and failure. There is the guilt of not trying hard enough and the failure of disappointing our loved ones or ourselves. Sometimes we don't know why we feel as blue as we do. We may get to the point of wanting to give up or pack it in.

I admit to having all these feelings. Although I'm better now, for too many months I lived with an uncomfortable, undiagnosed condition. It has something

to do with a spindly spine. I'm not sure if it helps me deal with the discomfort, but I frequently find myself thinking that I am not the only one hurting. To be human is to experience discomfort. Many of us are dancing through life partnered with our aches and pains. The dance floor is always crowded.

Over the years CCHP retreat participants have often expressed the burden of feeling like they always have to present a positive attitude—to see the gift of cancer, the half-full glass, or the joys of healing. Sometimes we see it, sometimes we don't and that's fine. It is OK not to feel positive just as it is OK to feel positive. You can feel what you feel and not what others feel. If you are feeling funky, so be it. No apology required. We all sing the blues now and

then, but even when we sing the blues there's a little rock and Bach playing in the background.

What are thoughts or feelings and what is the connection between them and our sense of wellbeing? Where do we draw the line before tossing our thoughts into one basket or the other? Once set they never seem to stay put for long.

There are wisdom traditions that suggest that the task is loosening whatever tightly attaches us to our moods. We are encouraged to acknowledge whatever is happening, then let it go, making room for the next pain and pleasure that is sure to follow. Simply stated, no matter what you do, some moments or some days are better than others. I think this is true for yesterday, today, and probably tomorrow.

Whether you are down or uplifted, the Circle holds the best for you and yours. ■

For more information about the Commonweal Cancer Help Program, go to: www.commonweal.org/programs/cancer-help.html.

The Commonweal Cancer Help Program is supported by generous grants from the Kresge Foundation, the Morning Glory Family Foundation, and individual contributions from CCHP alumni and other Commonweal friends.

The Ganges River Project at Commonweal

by Catherine Porter, Commonweal Fellow and Director of Friends of the Ganges/US

Catherine Porter has been a longtime friend and colleague at Commonweal. She has worked on staff with the Collaborative on Health and the Environment and in key organizational roles. We are proud to serve as fiscal sponsor for part of her long-standing work to clean up the Ganges—work that actually took its inspiration from the ecological design of the Bolinas sewage system. Here is her report:

The Ganges River in India is the lifeblood for over 500 million people. Beautiful, it's also horribly polluted, mainly with industrial waste or sewage. For over 25 years the Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) in India—and its international partner, Friends of the Ganges (FOG)—have worked for a clean Ganges at Varanasi, the most sacred city for Hindus.

SMF's founder Dr. Veer Bhadra Mishra (also called Mahantji) first started the campaign to clean the river in 1981 with support from a band of Americans and the Tides Foundation. He visited the US to learn from activists here, and on his return to India he met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (and after her assassination, with her son Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi) to speak of the plight of the river. Thanks to these meetings, the Ganges Action Plan began in 1985.

Alas, the sanitation system built for Varanasi was a debacle: dependent on electricity, which is unreliable in this city, the system never worked properly. Never once. But there have been accomplishments:

- SMF spent years fighting for a better system. They finally hosted their own *International Symposium on the Ganges at Varanasi* to discuss options. By 1994 global experts had helped SMF select a low-electricity system called AIWPS (Advanced Integrated Water Pond System) whose first installation was in Bolinas, CA! Mahantji and many team-members came to the US—and Commonweal—to see examples of the AIWPS.

The next ten years were spent fighting for this plan—from the community level up to the Prime Minister's office. In 2008 Friends of the Ganges, with a grant from the Wallace Genetic Foundation and help from many Indian and international allies, sparked a campaign to influence the PM on his visit to Varanasi on World Water Day.

- 2009: VICTORY (if partial). The Prime Minister said, “the Ganges will be clean.” He chose our AIWPS for the upstream part of Varanasi and anointed the SMF as lead organizer for the project. It's unheard of that an NGO would be given this authority.
- Today the SMF struggles with the enormity of the task. Even as Mahantji serves on the national Ganges River Basin Authority, our team needs to keep a watchdog eye on corruption. But we are hopeful. Nearly three decades in, the chances are good for a clean Ganges.

At the onset of the Save the Ganges Campaign, when it all looked beyond the scope of this tiny group of committed activists, Fran Peavey, a FOG founder said, “when they told us it was impossible, we knew we should get started right away.” And so we have. It is an honor and a privilege to continue this effort. ■

Catherine Porter returns to Varanasi in November; she invites the interest and support of any friends of Commonweal. *She is deeply grateful to the Tides Foundation, the Wallace Genetic Foundation, and many other donors through the years for generously supporting the work of Friends of the Ganges.*

When they told us it was impossible,
we knew we should get started right away.

—Fran Peavey, a FOG founder

News from the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center

by Sharyle Patton, Director

Watching Carla Perez monitor the air inside my house and outside was impressive—and of little concern. Ms. Perez was working for Communities for a Better Environment, which had teamed up with the Silent Spring Institute to monitor air in 40 homes in Richmond, CA and 10 homes in Bolinas, CA for a set of toxic chemicals considered to be endocrine disruptors. EDCs (endocrine disrupting chemicals) are a set of bad actor chemicals associated in animal and human studies with such diseases as diabetes, obesity, asthma, infertility, developmental disabilities, and others. But we are very careful about what we bring into the house and what we use, so I had few concerns about what the study might find.

The purpose of the study was to compare levels of EDCs in the indoor and outdoor air in two very different communities. One community, Richmond, CA, is situated in an industrial area where oil refineries and freeways predominate the landscape. The other community, Bolinas, CA, located in a rural area on the edge of the ocean and surrounded by organic farms, is an ideal contrast.

My smugness disappeared when the results were reported back to us. Outdoor air around the house was fairly clean, but inside air held another story. We had high levels of phthalates, for example. Phthalates are often found in personal care products and other daily use items. Maybe my “air fresheners,” whose labels declare them to be eco-green and super-clean, contain phthalates, since most products that list “fragrance” as an ingredient contain phthalates. And the cheap vinyl flooring in the kitchen, which we’ve postponed replacing, might also be a source of phthalates. So armed with this new information, we are making some changes. The flooring is being replaced and we are now fine with indoor air that carries the fragrance of our last meal, with aromatic high notes

supplied by the cat’s last dinner.

And since we had very low levels of flame retardants called PBDEs (poly brominated diphenyl ethers), I feel better about our decision not to buy a new couch. Our old one, somewhat lumpy and slightly stained, was manufactured before California laws were passed requiring such furniture to contain fire-retardant chemicals. PBDEs have been recently associated to neurodevelopmental problems, according to a study* that monitored pregnant women for levels of PBDEs and that subsequently tested developmental capacities in their children. So the couch stays.

The outcome of the study was surprising. Although the finding that the levels of 39 EDCs in outdoor air in Richmond were higher than outdoor levels in Bolinas (as expected), the 63 EDCs detected in the indoor air for both communities was remarkably similar. All homes, Richmond or Bolinas, had roughly comparable levels of flame retardants, PCBs, pesticides, phthalates, and parabens. Many of these chemicals are produced in large quantities and used in consumer items such as plastics, detergents, furniture, carpets, electron-

ics, building materials, and cosmetics. The fact that levels of the chemicals in homes in both communities were high suggests that chemical exposure from consumer products are common, widespread, and don’t vary by geography or the underlying demographics of the community. Richmond or Bolinas, we are buying and using the same stuff, and we are breathing equally contaminated air and living with equally contaminated dust. For a full description of the study, consult <http://www.silent.spring.org/>

The Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center continues to provide biomonitoring services to several ongoing studies, and we will report on these in the next Commonweal newsletter. ■

We are grateful to the Kresge Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and an anonymous foundation for generously supporting the projects of the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center.



Carla Perez, in her role as Program Director for Communities for a Better Environment, with equipment for monitoring the air for toxic chemicals in and around homes in Bolinas and Richmond, CA. Sharyle Patton, as CBRC Director, served on the advisory group for this air monitoring study.

* Herbstman JB, Sjödin A, Jones R, Kurzon M, Lederman SA, Rauh VA, Needham LL, Wang R, Perera FP. 2008. Prenatal Exposure to PBDEs and Neurodevelopment. *Environmental Health Perspectives* doi: 10.1289/ehp.0901340

JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM

More Downsizing for the California Youth Prison System—but a Progressive Bill to Modify the State’s Juvenile “Life-Without-Parole” Law Is Defeated

by David Steinhart, Director

As of October 1, California lawmakers had yet to approve a state budget, setting a new record for the longest delay in California budget history. A budget agreement is expected by mid-October. That agreement will likely include several changes affecting youth in the California Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), including:

- **No more time-adds.** 2010 will be the year that marks the end of DJJ staff “time adds” to youth sentences for disciplinary infractions and other reasons. Until 2009, time adds were responsible for about 30 percent of the incarceration time spent by youth in DJJ facilities. Corrections officials and CCPOA (the guards’ union) fought hard to keep time-add power but were unable to persuade key lawmakers who saw time-adds as costly and ineffective population management tools.
- **DJJ parole moves to county probation.** Starting in 2011, youth released from DJJ will no longer be under the control of the state parole division. Instead, DJJ parolees will have their probation conditions set by local courts and will be supervised by county probation officers. Counties will be paid the equivalent of \$15,000 per parolee to take over this state operation.

These changes mirror prior reforms that have shifted state juvenile justice cases to local control. As of September 2010, the DJJ inmate population was down to 1,350—about half the level three years ago and well below the all-time high

There are presently about 265 prisoners serving life without parole sentences in California for crimes (mostly homicide) committed when they were juveniles.

of 10,000 in 1996. A key factor in gaining bi-partisan support for DJJ downsizing has been the soaring cost of state youth custody—a cost which still exceeds \$200,000 per ward per year. In the last decade, CYA/DJJ has closed six youth institutions.

If DJJ downsizing signals a progressive juvenile justice policy trend in California, that view was not reflected this year in the Assembly’s last-minute rejection of Senator Leland Yee’s SB 399. SB 399 would have relaxed California’s tough juvenile “LWOP” (life without parole) law, allowing juvenile LWOP prisoners (those whose crimes were committed when they were under 18) to have their sentences reviewed by the committing court after serving 15 years in prison. The proposal got a boost from the May 2010 decision of the United States Supreme Court, in *Graham v. Florida*, holding that life-without-parole terms for juveniles convicted of non-homicide offenses violate the Eighth Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment. There are presently about 265 prisoners serving LWOP sentences in California for crimes (mostly homicide) committed when they were juveniles.

Piloted by the Human Rights Watch and a cluster of youth advocacy groups, SB 399 cleared all legislative hurdles before hitting the Assembly Floor this spring. There, an intense lobbying effort by opponents—mainly prosecutors and victim-rights organizations—put the Assembly outcome in doubt. In the final vote, SB 399 was defeated by a narrow margin (33 Aye, 38 No). A number of liberal Democrats—like Fiona Ma (SF), Anna Caballero (Salinas), and Norma Torres (Pomona)—joined the solid Republican core voting against the measure. This was Sen. Yee’s second try at juvenile LWOP reform—an effort likely to be renewed when the Legislature reconvenes in 2011. ☐

For more information about the Juvenile Justice Program, go to: www.commonweal.org/programs/jjp.html.

The Juvenile Justice Program is supported by grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, the California Wellness Foundation, the van Loben Sels/ RembeRock Foundation, and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

WOMEN, WEALTH, AND SAND TRAY WISDOM

continued from page 8

with me, along with the powerful creative energy we brought to engaging about money. The strongest image for me in the intervening months has been of hands—and the intimacy they bring to making, giving, and receiving money. The snakes have aided me in remem-

bering to shed “my skin” and continue to question who I am and what I feel in relationship to money. The “good girl” figure alerted me to my thinking that I should be a good little girl with money management, and how I feel like a bad girl when I don’t follow the rules. Minnie Mouse driving a pink car reminded me that I still want to be carefree when it comes to money—and have Mickey provide for all I need. My particular images and details aren’t

important other than to convey that the sand tray worked on deep levels and in enduring ways.

I believe each of us was touched by the generosity of Marion, Rachel, and Commonweal in creating the welcoming space, guiding and encouraging us to explore our inner world, and affirming the existence and importance of the invisible inner realms. Many thanks to Commonweal for being a place of inspiration. ■

WITH GRATITUDE

We express our deep gratitude to the following organizations that have supported Commonweal this year:

Alan and Nancy Baer Foundation • American AgCredit • AmeriCorps NCC Pacific Region • Annie E. Casey Foundation • Barbara Smith Fund Barb’s Race • Becker Family Foundation • Bet Lev Foundation • The California Endowment • California Wellness Foundation • Cedar Tree Foundation Community Funds, Inc. – John Merck Fund • David and Lucile Packard Foundation • The Erb Foundation • Farm Credit West Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund • The Flow Fund Circle • Foster Dykema Cabot • Health Care Without Harm • Integrative Medicine Institute Jenifer Altman Foundation • John Merck Fund • Johnson Family Foundation • Jordan Shields, Inc. • Kalliopeia Foundation KCRA / KQCA-TV, Hearst Service Center • The Kresge Foundation • The Lia Fund • The Louisa Kresiberg Family Foundation M&I Wealth Management • Marin County Board of Supervisors • Marin Community Foundation • Morning Glory Family Foundation Muriel Murch Full Circle Endowment Fund • Nathan Cummings Foundation • Passport Foundation • Peter Mayer Advertising Poelman Construction, Inc. • The Randy Weil Fund • Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund • Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Runyon Saltzman & Einhorn, Inc. • The San Francisco Foundation • Schwab Charitable Fund • Silicon Valley Community Foundation Stinson-Bolinas Community Fund • Susan G. Komen for the Cure • Sutter Health – Sacramento Sierra Region • Teleosis Tesler, Sandmann and Fishman • The Tides Center • The Tides Foundation • U’ilani Fund • Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program van Loben Sels/RembeRock Foundation • Vineman, Inc. • Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation • Wallace Genetic Foundation Wells Fargo Community Support and United Way Campaign • Whitman Institute • The Whole Child Center and several foundations that prefer anonymity.

We offer special thanks and gratitude to the following Commonweal Friends for their generous contributions during the last six months:

(Those who have donated after 10/6/10 will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.)

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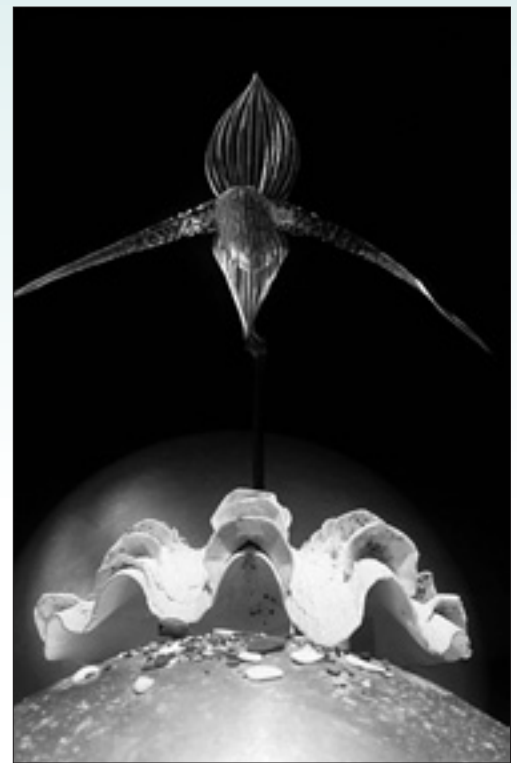
The Commonweal Gallery

This fall, Art Exhibitions at Commonweal was pleased to present *Ken Botto: Last Work 2008: White Hat and Mothership*. A long-time member of the Bolinas art community, Ken Botto died in 2008 of cancer.

Botto created and photographed miniature tableaux using his toy collection, unique props, and found objects. Armed with his “funky 1973 Nikkormat,” he relied on natural light in his Bolinas backyard and used reflected mirrors to produce illuminated and atmospheric effects. All images were created in the camera with neither digital nor darkroom manipulations. Botto created over 35 series, each containing from 9 to 153 images. Much of the work comments on cultural contradictions and absurdities of everyday life.

Ken Botto’s work is in the collections of major museums including Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Oakland Museum of California, Oakland; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.

Learn more about the Kenneth J. Botto Photography Trust at www.kenbotto.com.
For more information about the Commonweal Gallery, go to
<http://www.commonweal.org/new-school/gallery.html>



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