

# 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 1

## Living on the Edge

by Susan Braun, Executive Director

Sipping morning tea outside my home on a warm fall morning, I am rendered breathless by the spectacular view. Unbroken by walls, homes, or fences, the vista is tall grass swaying lightly in a delicate breeze; a cow pasture and a forest; rolling hills that lead up to cliffs. A hummingbird flits and dives between trees and flowers, and a covey of quail runs in seemingly mindless circles. It reminds me of Tuscany, and then of Santiago, L'Aquila, Hanshin. It is beautiful, and possibly deadly. It is the mantle for the San Andreas Fault.

I'm learning what it means to live at the edge of the continent. The most recent Uniform California Earthquake Rupture Forecast from the U.S. Geological Survey explains that, "California straddles the boundary between two of the Earth's tectonic plates. As a result, it is broken by numerous earthquake faults. Taking into account the earthquake histories and relative rates of motion on these many faults...there is a probability of more than 99% that in the next 30 years Californians will experience one or more magnitude 6.7 or greater quakes, potentially capable of causing extensive damage and loss of life." For powerful quakes of magnitude 7.5 or greater, there is a 46% chance of one or more in the next 30 years. The likelihood of a smaller quake is greater—a magnitude 6.0 or greater quake is expected about every year and a half. And the fault line that lies just beyond my back door is a prime target.

It strikes me that each day, more and more of us live life on the edge.

The edge geographically, psychologically, physically. It may be adrenalin-fueled and exhilarating. Or induce an acrophobic fear of freefall. When we choose to live close to the limits, it's an adventure. But backed into a corner, sliding closer and closer to the edge as the result of a lost job, a major illness, a flood, an earthquake, the loss of a loved one, we can lose our bearings.

David came to the Commonweal Cancer Help Program years ago with his first wife. Although she later died of her cancer, David reflected to us that her week here was transformative. In his gentle and effective way, David grew intent upon extending our program to his home state of Texas. We organized time together with him and his new wife. Joani's first husband had also died of cancer. Years later, she fell madly in love with David and they married. Together they found deep joy in loving again. In fact, Joani found joy in everything around her. Her unstoppable energy didn't flag.

When she went to her doctor in early July with chest pains and shortness of breath, although still able to run three miles, she and David were shocked to find that Joani had metastatic colon cancer. Closer to the edge than we ever could have imagined, she died eight days later.

So many who are the focus of Commonweal's work are right at the edge. Some are fighting for their lives. Some are protecting the fragile lives of others. Some are young and incarcerated. Some are endangered species. Children, mothers, elders, brothers, friends. Humans and animals, plants and a planet. Facing the edge without having chosen to, often with great courage and strength, at times with fear and regret. Our task is to help them live well in that space. To heal with cancer. To retain heart in the midst of a crumbling health-care system. To keep a species extant. To advocate for a safe world. To die with grace.

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# The Marin Human Race: Our Next “Step” in Fundraising

by Shelia Opperman, Event Coordinator

In 2010, Gail Weinstein, Commonwealth Cancer Help Program alumnae, organized a fundraiser for the CCHP: a walk in San Francisco’s famous marathon/carnival, the Bay to Breakers. Six people walked—and they raised over \$2000.


In 2011 we continued the fundraiser in Gail’s memory and moved the venue to the Marin Human Race, a local fundraising event for non-profits. With the passionate leadership of Commonwealth’s Volunteer Coordinator Terri Mason, a small but mighty group of 10 walkers and volunteers raised a stunning \$11,000 for CCHP.

We plan to make the 2012 event even bigger! Our goal is to have 25 walkers/runners and raise \$20,000 to support Commonwealth programs.

Mark your calendar for *Saturday, May 12, 2012, from 8:00 am to 11:00 am* and join the extended Commonwealth family for a morning walk in the Marin Human Race at the Marin Center Fairgrounds and Lagoon. It’s a fun, family friendly, beautiful 5K run, walk, or roll. We hope you will participate in some way, even if you are not in Marin that day. One fundraiser in the 2011 race did her walk in the Netherlands (see her triumphant photo). In fact, you can be a fundraiser without walking a step.



Commonwealth Grants Administrator Diane Blacker completes her 5K walk at a canal in Utrecht

After February 15, 2012, you can go to the Marin Human Race website at [www.marinhumanrace.org](http://www.marinhumanrace.org) and click on Commonwealth’s page to register or donate. 

If you have any questions or would like to help, please contact Shelia Opperman, Commonwealth Coordinator for the 2012 Marin Human Race, at [sopperman@mac.com](mailto:sopperman@mac.com) (925-324-3076).


## Commonweal Helps Communities and Academics Partner in Breast Cancer Research

by Heather Sarantis, Women’s Health Program Manager

It was a whirlwind summer! Earlier this year Commonwealth began a National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences-funded partnership with the California Breast Cancer Research Program. Together we are working to encourage community based participatory research (CBPR) on environmental links to breast cancer and health disparities in breast cancer. CBPR is an approach to research that honors and includes the knowledge and wisdom of communities that are affected by the

research subject. It focuses on building an equal partnership between community based organizations and academic researchers to develop research questions, develop and implement the research methods, and publish and report the results.

Our team hosted 11 workshops across California in less than two months. We went to Vista, Los Angeles, Chico, San Francisco, Oakland, Arcata/Eureka, Merced, Nevada City, Watsonville, San

Bernardino, and Sacramento. We spoke to more than 270 people in these workshops, giving them information about CBPR and the science of what we already know. We also took the opportunity to tell participants about a year-long training we are offering in 2012 to help teams of community based organizations and academic researchers prepare to apply to the leading breast cancer research funders. 

*gratitude ~  
in the way that i am honored  
to stand beneath the eternal sun;*

*so too, am i grateful  
for being a witness to your radiant  
light.*

*...as i whisper to the night-sky my  
thankfulness for my son,*

*i will remember you.  
as i stare at tall trees with wonder,*

*i will remember you.  
as i embrace another and feel love  
shared between us,*

*i will remember you.  
if ever i am tired,*

*i will remember you.  
if my soul's misplaced its center,*

*i will remember you.  
...and as i find myself rejoicing,*

*in the beauty of this life,  
i will remember you.*

*and as was said:  
'love does not die,'*

*neither then shall you.  
for having known you,  
i am amongst the blessed ones.*

*it is an honor,  
to remember you.*

*Written by Aimee, for Joani*

Joani lives on in our work through the Joan Schwartz Spaw Memorial Scholarships for the Commonweal Cancer Help Program. And she lives on in our hearts, always on the edge of joy. ■

Please go to [www.commonweal.org](http://www.commonweal.org) to learn more about our work.

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

## The Lineage of the Commonweal Cancer Help Program

by Michael Lerner

Our 160<sup>th</sup> Commonweal Cancer Help Program ended on Sunday, September 25. Eight participants, six women and two men, seven with cancer and one spouse, gathered from across the country. The program continues to evolve in subtle but important ways. The unchanged core includes delicious organic primarily vegetarian meals, yoga, meditation, deep relaxation, breathing practices, massage, morning support groups, sand-tray, exploration of sacred space, individual counseling sessions, and an evening of healing words. I lead two evenings of exploration of choices in healing, medical treatments, integrative therapies, pain and suffering, and death and dying. The new additions to the program include individualized counseling sessions—on nutrition (with Rebecca Katz and Sadja Greenwood, M.D.) and yoga (with Kate Holcombe)—and a joyful evening of music (with musician Tim Weed). Participants can also request a consultation on treatment choices.

These additions raise the number of one-on-one sessions to at least eight. This extraordinary level of individualized attention reflects the fundamental intention of the program—to offer the best possible week-long support program for people with cancer. That dictates the small number of participants for each retreat. Eight is the ideal size for small-group interaction. Eight is the number of participants that each of us on staff can pay close attention to individually.

In the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the Cancer Help Program, the power of these seven precious days together to transform the human experience of living with cancer remains undiminished. Fear, grief, anxiety, depression, anger, trauma, and other common responses to cancer often resolve or are greatly diminished during the course of the week. Other current or lifelong problems of living

or psychic wounds may also be transformed in remarkable ways.

The power of the Cancer Help Program depends on more than the skills and dedication of the staff and the design of the program. We emphasize that the real work of the week depends on the strength of the participants' intentions to make good use of the week. It also depends on their collective capacity to work well together and to support each other in healing.

For the 160<sup>th</sup> time, we witnessed the awesome capacity of this intensive small group experience to support physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing. We sent eight people back into their lives with deep renewed hope that they had found something of lasting value. For the staff, the experience is as fresh and astonishing as ever. I often think of us as a chamber music group that has played classics together for decades, ever discovering new depths of meaning in these great compositions—but also adding some newer pieces from time to time.

The music of the Cancer Help Program is the perennial wisdom of healing. That music began in the earliest shamanic traditions of original peoples. The lineage can be traced up through the Aesculapian healing temples to the present day. We do nothing new. The lineage is ancient. It belongs to the genetic, humanistic, and spiritual codes of what it means to be human beings. We heal in community. ■

*To learn more about the Commonweal Cancer Help Program, please go to [commonweal.org/programs/cancer-help.html](http://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, The Alberta S. Kimball–Mary L. Anhaltzer Foundation, and individual contributions from CCHP alumni and other Commonweal friends.*

# Collaborative on Health and the Environment

by Elise Miller, Director

“By not engaging thoughtful adults who are active long after the age of 65, we are losing an invaluable and irreplaceable resource...and putting the future of our society at risk.” This sage counsel was offered by Mary Catherine Bateson last summer at the bi-annual national conference of Generations United in Washington, DC. Bateson, author of *Composing a Life* and more recently *Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom*, underscored how older adults can serve as vital advocates for a healthier future. She noted that our society often perceives those in “Adulthood II”—the term she uses for people who continue to be fully engaged and reinventing their lives beyond what is traditionally considered retirement age—as uninterested in the future given they are closer to the end of life. By contrast, her research shows that most people in this demographic are even more concerned about the world that their grandchildren and great grandchildren will inherit. She added that those in Adulthood II also have the kind of experience that can only be derived over many decades—and for this reason, our society needs their perspectives and

wisdom to shift unsustainable economic and social patterns towards more meaningful, positive relationships with our families, communities, and the planet itself.

This view serves as the cornerstone of our Healthy Aging Initiative (HAI), one of CHE’s newest and most robust working groups. HAI, under the inspired leadership of Maria Valenti, is focusing increasingly on opportunities to foster intergenerational connections by prioritizing the importance of environmental health across the lifespan. By working with AARP and other major organizations that primarily serve seniors, HAI is educating those in Adulthood II about how they can enhance the lives of current and future generations by addressing a variety of environmental factors—from chemical exposures to psychosocial concerns. Having just published a user-friendly “pocket book” based on the seminal report, *Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging*, co-authored by Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, Jill Stein, MD, and Maria Valenti, HAI is now devoting significant staff resources to organizing a major conference, “Promoting Intergenerational and Environmental Health Across the Lifespan,” to be held at the New York Academy of Medicine in June 2012. CHE sees this meeting not as an end unto itself, but as the launch of what we hope to become a driving intergenerational force for upstream, systemic change that can improve environmental health in every sector of society.

Other CHE initiatives are feeding into and reinforcing this “across the lifespan” approach. For example, CHE’s new Diabetes and Obesity Working Group has gone from 0 to 100 in a matter of months, given Sarah Howard’s dedicated and passionate work to raise awareness



CHE staff at their 10th anniversary retreat

about the emerging science on environmental contributors to these escalating health issues. She has spent innumerable pro bono hours circulating new studies with thoughtful commentary, drafting letters and articles for peer-reviewed journals, and starting to educate diabetes advocacy groups. Likewise CHE’s Fertility and Reproductive Health working group, guided by Karin Russ, whose exceptional experience and commitment have proven invaluable, continues to shed light on environmental threats to reproductive health by providing health practitioners and advocates with key resources, and promoting a national agenda for expanding research into hazards to fertility and prenatal development. In addition, CHE Fertility is serving to coordinate and help develop a new Reproductive Environmental Health Consortium, composed of academics and other experts interested in collaborating on new research in this field.

CHE’s Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative is also in high gear organizing three state-based workshops with the Autism Society of America. These workshops will be held in Research Triangle Park, NC, Austin, TX, and Los Angeles, CA, in late 2011 and early 2012, and will feature leading researchers in environmental health and



Bolinas Matriarch, Marianne Patton (Sharyle Patton’s mother and Michael Lerner’s mother-in-law). At 100, she is deeply engaged with family and friends and is a model of a life well lived. Happy Birthday Marianne!

neurodevelopment as well as experts in public health policy. These meetings are intended to build on recent national efforts to press for safer chemicals policy by focusing on opportunities in specific states.

CHE's other working groups, including those focused on cancer, electromagnetic fields, integrative health—and now pets and climate change—continue to bolster public understanding of environmental health science and influence research priorities and public health policy. Our cumulative impacts working group, co-facilitated with the Science and Environmental Health Network, and our environmental health primary prevention trainings are also gaining real traction in previously untapped sectors.

In closing, and perhaps most important, CHE held a retreat with the core leadership at Commonweal in October—the first since 2006. As CHE prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2012, this was an invaluable opportunity to think deeply about lessons learned and next steps. Central to our discussions was how CHE could help articulate and apply a complexity model (sometimes referred to as an ecological health model) to address the multi-factoral, multi-level impacts on health across the lifespan. Emerging from that retreat was an energetic and collective commitment to build on CHE's long-term and effective engagement with different health-affected sectors by developing prevention-based, cross-disciplinary, and well-leveraged initiatives as a means to improve public health from the community level on up. In order to achieve this, we see “active wisdom,” as described by Mary Catherine Bateson, as essential to our process and our future. We deeply welcome yours. ■

For more information about CHE's work, please see [www.healthandenvironment.org](http://www.healthandenvironment.org)

CHE is deeply grateful to the following foundations for their generous support of our work: Cedar Tree Foundation, Community Funds Inc.—The John Merck Fund, The Erb Foundation, Forsythia Foundation, The John Merck Fund, Johnson Family Foundation, Kresge Foundation, New York Community Trust, Orchard Foundation, Passport Foundation, Wallace Genetic Foundation, an anonymous foundation, and individual donors.

# California Legislature Passes Legislation Restricting the Chemical Bisphenol A

by Davis Baltz, Special Projects Advisor

In the final days of the 2011 legislative session, the California legislature acted to ban the chemical bisphenol A in baby bottles and sippy cups by passing AB 1319, the Toxin-Free Baby Infant and Toddler Act authored by Assemblywoman Betsy Butler. The bill, whose passage was led by members of the coalition Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE—<http://changepcalifornia.org/>), now moves to Governor Brown's desk.

Bisphenol A, or BPA, was originally developed as a synthetic estrogen in the 1930s. Today, it is produced in huge volumes and found in plastic water bottles, canned food linings, compact discs, and carbonless receipt paper, among other consumer products. Biomonitoring studies have detected its presence in the bodies of 93 percent of Americans. Studies by the Food and Drug

Administration and Health Canada have documented that BPA leaches into canned infant formula and out of polycarbonate baby bottles.

BPA is an endocrine disruptor at very low doses. The National Institutes of Health are concerned that BPA exposure in infants may lead to problems with brain development and behavior, early puberty, breast cancer, and prostate cancer.

Nine other states have already enacted legislation to restrict the use of BPA. BPA is listed on Health Canada's Toxic Substances list. Earlier this year, China banned BPA in baby bottles and sippy cups. California's action is welcome, but also somewhat belated. ■

*Davis Baltz's work with chemical legislation is supported by a foundation that wishes to remain anonymous*



Sarah Janssen of the Natural Resources Defense Council with her daughter Zoe and friends at the State Capitol urging lawmakers to support a ban on BPA

# Biomonitoring Fire Fighters

by Sharyle Patton, Director, Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center

People often ask whether conveying news to participants about their biomonitoring results is really a good idea. “How can you tell people their body is full of toxic chemicals?” It’s a good question. Our experience is that the process we use to convey biomonitoring results creates curious concern rather than fear.

We work closely with those who step forward to be tested, sharing information about the chemicals to be tested for and providing counseling and responses to concerns from the moment of recruitment to a few years after the results are distributed to participants. This process makes the data useful for informing personal and policy changes; without it, the data could easily be ignored as incomprehensible and possibly irrelevant medical statistics.

We’ve been biomonitoring fire fighters this year—31 fire fighters from 16 states—working closely with the International Association Fire Fighters (IAFF). My privilege has included reviewing exposure histories with these fire fighters. I’ve heard stories about the fire ground, where fire fighters carry out fire suppression knowing that their personal protective gear will likely protect them from most, but perhaps not all, of

the toxic chemicals they may encounter. Hydrogen sulfide and formaldehyde are big concerns as are other chemicals and ultrafine particulate matter. Because halogenated flame retardants, ubiquitously used, produce dioxins and furans when burned, we tested for dioxins and furans and for a set of chemicals used in fire fighting foam.

Fire fighters proportionally have higher levels of some diseases than the general public, and the concern is that such diseases as testicular and prostate cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, and cardiovascular disease, as well as infertility and thyroid disease, may be related to the toxic chemicals fire fighters encounter. Certainly the stress, high temperatures, extreme exercise, and multiple toxicant exposures may all act together in ways that might help explain the incidence of such diseases

in a population that needs to be strong and healthy in order to save lives. As always, more research is needed to connect all the dots, but in the meantime, we hope the study will help fire fighters find ways to lower exposures to toxic chemicals that have no business being in anybody’s body.

We presented the protocols we developed for this study at the IAFF Redmond Symposium in New York City in August 2011. ■

For more information about the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center, go to [www.commonweal.org/programs/brc/index.html](http://www.commonweal.org/programs/brc/index.html)

The work of the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center is supported by the generous support of the Kresge Foundation and a foundation that prefers to remain anonymous.

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## TNS Community Grows Worldwide

by Kyra Epstein, Coordinator, The New School

Now four years old, The New School at Commonweal has built a strong community in the Bay Area and a growing number of friends (more than 2,000) who listen to our podcasts across the United States and in Canada, Europe, Turkey, India, Japan, the Philippines, and Australia.

You may not know that we record some New School conversations without an audience. They are only available as podcasts—so we encourage you to take a look in our library for conversations that look interesting. All of our 2011 podcasts are listed in the adjacent box and some are featured here:

- **Orland Bishop: A Spiritual Biography**—Michael Lerner interviews Orland, exploring the world of the founder of the ShadeTree Multicultural Center in Los Angeles.
- **Anna Deavere Smith: Listening between the Lines**—Commonweal board member and artist Eric Karpeles interviews Anna Deavere Smith, whose production at the Berkeley Repertory Theater in 2011, *Let Me Down Easy*, explored multiple perspectives on the human experience of healthcare.



- **Arjun Makhijani and Richard Heinberg**—These two recent interviews explore the interface of energy and finance in our brave new world. Arjun’s *Carbon and Nuclear Free* describes how the United States could have a green energy future by 2050. Richard’s new book, *The End of Growth*, shows how resource limitations, environmental crises, and the financial crisis may literally mean we have seen the end of growth—and what we can do to live well in these radically altered circumstances.

# Remembering Meaning in Medicine— ISHI's new Program for Resident Physicians

by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, Director

The practice of medicine is about relationship. The small room with the patient waiting on the examining table is its own kind of universe—a place where fears and hopes intersect with the precision of medical science. This can be a place of contraction or expansion, a place of aloneness or connection, a place of routine or discovery. Yet in today's economically driven healthcare system where time is money, there is little time for the art of healing relationship.

While many doctors begin their education with ideals of compassionate healing and service, long years of rigorous training may erode these values. After medical school, new doctors begin their hospital-based residency training to learn to take major responsibility for their patients. In caring for the nation's sickest patients, young physicians enter the most demanding years of training with little attention paid to their own emotional or spiritual well-being. The standard 80-hour work-week leaves scant time for such basic self-care as sleep—a high toll for doctor and patient. Numerous studies document the growth of cynicism, depression, and disaffiliation during medical school;

yet residency training may be the place where the last door of compassion closes firmly—or is enabled to remain open, despite the most extreme professional challenges.

In response to this critical time in the lives of new doctors, ISHI developed *Remembering Meaning in Medicine* (RMM), a new program to support residents in remaining faithful to their values, calling, and passion for service. Although specific to the needs of residents, RMM is based on ISHI's 20 years of experience in developing, piloting, and disseminating two other programs—*The Healer's Art* (for medical students) and *Finding Meaning in Medicine* (for physicians). The new program is designed to help resident physicians tap into the deep river of meaning—a source of strength, inspiration and professional support—that flows through their day-to-day work lives, enabling them to find deeper satisfaction in their work, live closer to their deepest values, and support one another in ongoing community groups.

The impact of this program is highly promising. In the words of residents who have implemented RMM

at Cox Family Medicine Residency in Springfield, Missouri:

“RMM is one of the few activities that I really look forward to. It has become a time to reflect on residency, medicine, and my relationships with colleagues and family. This time together has become a stress reliever, a time to help each other keep balance in our lives, a time to evaluate my priorities, a time to check my own mental health as a physician.”

“By having the opportunity to talk, cry, listen and laugh, I left much stronger than when I arrived! It was good to think about ‘that one thing that you do for yourself each day’ which in turn helps you to be stronger for your patients.”

*If you are interested in learning more about ISHI's new program for resident physicians, please contact Lynn Stasior, MD (DrLynn@commonweal.org).*

*ISHI thanks Kalliopeia and several anonymous donors for their generosity in supporting this new program.*

- **Kate Levinson: Emotional Currency, A Woman's Guide to Building a Healthy Relationship with Money**—Susan Braun interviews Kate about the strong taboo around the personal details of money—what we earn, what we save, and what we spend—that has contributed to many women feeling financially isolated and vulnerable. ■

*You can download podcasts of New School conversations at The New School website ([www.The-New-School.org](http://www.The-New-School.org)) or by finding us on iTunes (our website has a link).*

*We are grateful to the Kalliopeia Foundation, The Whitman Institute, and many individual donors for their support of The New School.*

## 2011 TNS Recordings

Richard Heinberg—The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality

Arjun Makhijani—Carbon-Free and Nuclear Free: A Design for U.S. Energy Policy

Kate Levinson—Emotional Currency: A Women's Guide to Building a Healthy Relationship with Money

Orland Bishop—Spiritual Biography

Anna Deavere Smith and Eric Karpeles—Listening between the Lines

Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD, and Kristina Flanagan—Goddess Archetypes in the Ring Cycle and in Us: Psychological, Political, and Spiritual Parallels

Frank Ostaseski—Being a Compassionate Companion (End of Life Conversations Series)

Sarah Hobson—Working with Women in Sub-Saharan Africa

Steve Heilig—The Modern Evolution of Death (End of Life Conversations Series)

U.S. Poet Laureate W.S. Merwin—Reading and Conversation with Eric Karpeles

Gregory Orr—The Blessing: Poetry as Survival

Dr. Margaret Kripke—Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk

Dr. Stuart Lord—East-West Contemplative Education at Naropa University

Peter Kingsley—The Great Taboo: A Story Waiting to Pierce You



# Building Spec Houses for Penguins on the Equator

by Burr Heneman, Director, Oceans Program



The newest project of the Oceans Program includes doing just that: creating “condos” that we hope Galapagos penguins will move into.

Galapagos penguins—the only tropical penguin—is the rarest of the penguin species with a population between 1500 and 4500. The population has been declining for at least 60 years, and climate change appears to be the main cause. The population falls during severe El Niños, which have become more frequent. Highly productive La Niña years, when the penguin population can recover, have become relatively less frequent.

Dee Boersma, who leads our three-person team, had a hunch about how to help the population recover based on her long, intimate experience with this species. Her reasoning was that:

- There is a shortage of shaded natural nest sites,
- The penguins could successfully raise more young in the good years if they had more high-quality nest sites, especially if the sites were bunched together so that the penguins could be more colonial, like other penguin species, and
- It would be relatively easy to construct nest sites for them.

Dee is a great conservation biologist whom I’ve had the privilege of knowing since the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. She rules an empire of penguin research and conservation projects from the University of Washington (<http://mesh.biology.washington.edu/penguinProject/>).

In 1970, Dee was a 22-year old, camping out alone for three months at a time on uninhabited Fernandina Island studying the Galapagos penguin for her doctoral research. She met Godfrey Merlen then, the third member of our team who had arrived in the islands from England in 1970 and has lived there since.

When Dee told me her idea for an experiment with the Galapagos penguins, I realized that if it worked, it would be a remarkably simple and cost-effective intervention that might prevent the extinction of a species. I was helping the David and Lucile Packard Foundation design and launch a global seabird conservation program at the time, and the Foundation gave Dee the start-up funding she needed to test the idea. She invited Godfrey and me to help. The Galapagos National Park recognized the potential of the project and became our partner.

Last fall, the three of us spent two weeks in cramped quarters on Godfrey’s

40-foot boat catching, tagging, and measuring penguins and taking blood samples. We also created 120 nests, some constructed of lava rock, some excavated with hand tools. This is rugged, physically demanding work in an unforgiving lava landscape. Our days began at 5AM, and we spent much of each day either on islands moving blocks of lava and digging burrows or in the 14-foot dinghy, catching, tagging, measuring, and weighing penguins. We also took blood samples to test for toxoplasmosis—a disease that can be spread by feral cats in the islands—and avian malaria. In the evening, our goal was to eat, write our notes, record data, and try to stay awake till 8PM. Then we (average age 67) repeated all that for 14 days. And we repeated that twice—another two weeks each in February and July.

This year has been an example of how the penguins may face additional anomalous climate problems. In February, there was still a moderate La Niña throughout the rest of the Pacific.

When Dee told me her idea for an experiment with the Galapagos penguins, I realized that if it worked, it would be a remarkably simple and cost-effective intervention that might prevent the extinction of a species.

We expected to find penguins breeding and water temperatures of 65° to 70°F. Instead, there was no breeding in natural nests or our condos and water temperatures sometimes were close to 80°. And instead of being dry, this year was one of the wettest in the Galapagos since 1980—the local conditions were more like an El Niño than a La Niña. And in spite of traveling almost 5,000 miles each way, we still did not have the answer to our big question: would the penguins use the houses we had created for them?

Our visit in July began much like our February trip: the water was still warm, and we found no birds nesting in natural nests or our condos in the two areas of Fernandina Island where we had built nests. But when we got to the three tiny Marielas islets next to Isabela Island, we found that a few birds had begun to breed. A nest that Dee knows has been used at least since 1970 had eggs in it. One of our nests had eggs in it. And a burrow that I had chipped out of the scoria last fall had an adult and an egg that had pipped the day we got there.

The chick had hatched by the time we checked the next day—a 46-gram thrill for the three of us. Very gratifying: though few birds were nesting yet, those that were favored our nests at least as much as natural nest sites. We finally had an indication that, for at least this one species threatened by climate change, there may be a simple and low-cost conservation strategy to help keep them on the planet. □

*The seabird conservation projects of the Oceans Program have received support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.*



Our nest with eggs

# Regenerative Design Institute at Commonweal Garden

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

Autumn was a time for slowing down and laying much of Commonweal Garden to rest after the busy summer season. The fog that enveloped the garden the previous months subsided and we experienced warmer sun-filled days and the glorious sunsets that mark autumn here in West Marin.

A highlight of this summer's programs was hosting a two-day Bay Area Permaculture Convergence. Over 100 people convened for two days of deep conversations and sharing on "Our Relationship to Responsibility & Our Responsibility to Relationship"—along with good food, music, and merriment. We are blessed to live in an area where so many people are dedicated to creating a more resilient and regenerative way of living on this planet—and inspired to know that RDI is a springboard for so many on this path.

Along with the established orchard and food crops, we are excited to be expanding the medicinal plant collection at Commonweal Garden. To deepen her knowledge, Penny has been traveling to Germany to apprentice with Suzanne Fischer-Rizzi, an alchemist and holder of the deep wisdom and traditions of plant medicine. We hope to soon have a full garden pharmacopoeia.

We said farewell to our site manager, Erin Campbell, at the end of August, but not before James and Erin's heroic efforts transformed the greenhouse into a multi-functional greenhouse and classroom space. A big thanks to Erin, the Morning Glory Foundation, and individual donors who made the transformation possible. □



Please join us in welcoming Uma, a new spring addition to our goat herd.

*The Regenerative Design Institute is located at Commonweal Garden, a 17-acre farm on the Commonweal site. RDI offers a new model of ecological education and training that creates multi-disciplinary practitioners skilled in the art and science of regenerative design. Please go to [www.regenerativedesign.org](http://www.regenerativedesign.org) for more information about RDI.*

*The Regenerative Design Institute is supported through grants from the Esna Fund, Kalliopeia Foundation, Morning Glory Family Foundation, Stinson-Bolinas Community Fund, Jenifer Altman Foundation, Wollenberg Foundation, Barbara Smith Fund, Marin County Board of Supervisors, Muriel Murch Full Circle Endowment Fund, and many other generous individuals and foundations.*

# Saving California Juvenile Justice Funds— A Close Call in 2011


by David Steinhart, Director

This has been a stunning year for the California economy and for the state budget. Stunning—as in painful. A prime objective of the Commonwealth Juvenile Justice Program has been to protect \$350 million worth of juvenile justice programs and services supported by state revenue streams that we helped to create and sustain over the years. These grants include the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act, the Juvenile Probation Camp Fund, and the Youthful Offender Block Grant fund. All faced extinction in 2011 as Republicans and Democrats wrangled over deficits, taxes, and spending cuts. The outcome, coming only days before the July 1<sup>st</sup> budget deadline, was positive. These youth program dollars were included in a larger public safety Realignment Plan that moved \$6 billion in state-funded operations to local control in California. Counties will now draw from sales tax and vehicle license fees to assume full fiscal responsibility for shifted caseloads—including 30,000 adult prisoners moved to local jails, all foster care cases, child welfare services, community mental health, and other realigned caseloads. The fund shift is highly complex and the Legislature has yet to prescribe the rules on how counties can allocate realignment dollars among program areas. That’s a task high on the legislative agenda for 2012.

For those tracking what’s happened at the state Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the bottom line is that there was no further DJJ realignment in 2011. A Jerry Brown proposal to close what remains of DJJ and send all inmates back to counties with state funds was taken off the table in May after counties rebelled against the plan as a threat to public safety. Still, the days of DJJ may well be numbered. All but three of the state’s former 11 youth prison facilities will be closed by the end of 2012. The youth inmate population has dwindled to less than 1200 serious juvenile offenders. Even though DJJ realignment was removed from the larger realignment plan, we fully expect the issue to be aired again when the legislature reconvenes, with high prospects for cutting more cases and cost from this shrinking state entity.

Many of our co-advocates were disappointed that SB 9—Senator Leland Yee’s bill to provide relief for juvenile Life Without Parole (LWOP) prisoners—suffered yet another defeat on the floor of the Assembly in September. The bill would allow juvenile LWOP prisoners who meet rehabilitation criteria to petition the court for re-sentencing with a possible release date. Right now there are about 275 LWOP inmates who will spend the rest of their lives in prison for crimes committed before they turned 18. The bill gained impetus from the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in *Graham v. Florida*. That decision banned LWOP sentences for juveniles in non-homicide cases, largely on the basis that juveniles are developmentally different from adults and should not be subject to the same punishments. SB 9 has stalled in the Assembly, based on victim and

law enforcement opposition. Even so, this is the first year of a two-year legislative session in California, and the bill will come up again for vote next year.

Finally, we note an interesting veto this year by Governor Brown. SB 105 (another Yee bill) would have required children to wear helmets while skiing or snowboarding, with misdemeanor fines for parents. Brown surprised the bill author with a veto message that tells us something about the Governor’s views on the role of government in parenting. The veto message says, “While I appreciate the value of wearing a ski helmet, I am concerned about the continuing and seemingly inexorable transfer of authority from parents to the state. Not every human problem deserves a law. I believe parents have the ability to make good choices for their children.” 

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

The Juvenile Justice Program is grateful for generous support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

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(Those who have donated after 10/7/11 will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.)

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We are deeply gratified that you—our community—continue to support our work. Some of you are participating in fundraising walks; others in fundraising drives at your workplace. Some have asked friends to celebrate their birthdays by donating to Commonweal. Funds have been established in memory of loved ones. And some Commonweal Friends remember Commonweal in their will. Above all, many of you continue to support Commonweal each year with your contributions. We are grateful to each and every one of you for your support. We could not do our work without you.

Please use the enclosed enveloped to contribute what you can!

With love and gratitude,

Susan Braun, Executive Director  
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