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# COMMONWEAL

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

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## *Advocates and Healers*

by Susan Braun

Four months. Much can be done in four months. A house built, a thesis written, a habit broken, a tiger pup conceived and born. At this writing, I am entering my fourth month as Executive Director at Commonweal. And I've done many things—from washing the dishes to helping integrate scientific information into policy. I've learned many things, and I'm still learning. At the deepest level, I have realized many things, central to which is a better sense of answers to "What is Commonweal?"

Listening to staff, to program participants, to funders, I realize that Commonweal is the people, it is the programs, and it is the place that houses our work. A common purpose guides our work and interactions. No single component can be separated out in describing Commonweal; each is integral to what makes us the community that we are.

**People** By function, Commonweal staff members are program directors and managers, accountants and receptionists, facility keepers and teachers, database administrators and gallery curators. Interacting, they are kind and generous. Most of the people who have become my colleagues at Commonweal have

been together for a very long time—a decade; two; three. In that time, they have encountered each others' strengths and weaknesses and accepted them. With this, they have grown individually and in their field of expertise. They care for those they serve and for one another. They exemplify family.

**Place** The Commonweal site itself draws people. Breathtakingly perched at the Pacific shore, we share 100 acres within vast lands that comprise the Point Reyes National Seashore. Our early twentieth century buildings have been renovated but retain the charm of structures built barely beyond the advent of publicly available electricity. Our administrative building houses not only offices, but a remarkable library and the evocative Commonweal Gallery. Our retreat houses allow guests a place to learn and explore and heal; they are far from luxury yet within them, guests uncover a sense of belonging. The small chapel near the cliff was once a warming hut, and now is sacred simplicity. The land is windswept mesas with wild daf-

fodils and Douglas iris and deep dark groves of pine and eucalyptis. It is cliffs and beaches with dramatic vistas. It is a garden providing permaculture in training and practice. I've heard now so very often from others the same words I used during my first visit to Commonweal—coming here feels like coming home.

**Programs** Our work encompasses Juvenile Justice, Health and the Environment, Healing for Individuals and Professionals, Ocean and Bird Conservation, Life-long Learning. Our programs help children, people with

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Such gardens are not made by singing,  
"Oh, how beautiful" and sitting in the shade.

—Rudyard Kipling





Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.

—Albert Einstein

cancer, health professionals, animals and the land. Our programs provide tools to advocate for policy reform to diminish the deleterious effects of toxins on our health and well-being. In our work we decry injustice and the havoc it wreaks in our society. Our work is quiet, its meaning global. Commonweal is home to not only a constellation of remarkable programs but also a consistent employ of wisdom, healing and strength. One “Wealie” described these programs as beautiful beads that only Michael Lerner could string into a necklace. These beautiful beads are joined by a string of intention—an intention to serve all beings and the earth with

excellence, compassion and integrity. They are beautiful alone, and they are magnificent together.

**Purpose** As people learn more about our work, they often ask, “Is the Commonweal focus one of advocacy or healing?” It is both. As we heal individually, we become better advocates for policies that enhance human and global well-being. Still, as human beings, we often dichotomize and categorize information and experiences into either/or, black/white, yes/no. As we begin to see the integration in life and in ourselves, we see softer lines of gray, of “not only this, but also that.”

So that, perhaps as we advocate for and achieve change in our world, we activate healing in ourselves. Healing can profoundly change our actions. And our actions can profoundly change us individually and collectively. Commonweal engenders and supports both healing and advocacy, through our programs, our people and our place. All of our work is in service to people—our family—and to the planet—our home. ■

*We are grateful to the Compton Foundation and the Jenifer Altman Foundation for their generous core support of Commonweal.*

# Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center

by Sharyle Patton

The Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center (CBRC) and Making Our Milk Safe (MOMS) have launched a website for our Moms and POPs Project (MaPP), a project that catalyzes discussion among researchers, scientists, environmental health advocacy groups and breastmilk advocacy groups about the issues surrounding breastmilk monitoring. MaPP was created in response to the World Health Organization's project to biomonitor breastmilk for persistent organic pollutants (POPs). Breastmilk's fatty content makes it an ideal testing matrix for chemicals such as POPs that are fat-soluble. The MaPP website offers both a forum for discussion as well as resource materials.


[www.momsandPOPsproject.org](http://www.momsandPOPsproject.org)

Biomonitoring breastmilk requires particular sensitivity. Any community biomonitoring project needs to be planned and carried out in consultation with those who volunteer testing samples to ensure that the results will be understood and useful for community and personal goals. CBRC,

working with the International POPs Elimination Network, has conducted a breastmilk biomonitoring project for five young women in Alaska, the Philippines, the Czech Republic, Mexico and Kenya. These first time mothers, all deeply committed to breastfeeding, wanted to learn about toxic chemicals in their bodies, with plans to engage in national campaigns to eliminate POPs chemicals.

Yasher Samah from Kenya, who had not yet received her personal results, reported that, "I am like any mother and fear what might affect the development of my baby. I want her to have the best in her life and to live a full life like her grandparents did. You know, learning what is in your breastmilk is like learning that you are HIV positive. You are very depressed, but finally you end up being a strong advocate for prevention. I think the same will apply to me. I would like to tell every mother about the chemicals."

CBRC is working with El Quinto Sol, the California Department of Public Health's Environmental

Health Investigations Branch, and Pesticide Action Network to conduct air and human monitoring in the California Central Valley. Our chemical of concern is chlorpyrifos. Also, we are joining another team to explore possible exposures to perchlorate in the Imperial Valley. Both of these projects are part of the California Health Tracking Program activities. Once funding is identified to move the program forward, we will be testing biomonitoring protocols intended to inform the California Environmental Contaminants Biomonitoring Program. 

*These CBRC projects have been made possible by the generous funding of the Watson Family Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the John Merck Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and several anonymous donors.*



Learning what is in your breast milk is like learning that you are HIV positive. You are very depressed, but finally you end up being a strong advocate for prevention...I would like to tell every mother about the chemicals."

—Yasher Samah with seven-week-old Jolie

# Cancer Help Program

by Michael Lerner

Three close friends are living with high-risk cancers. As I share their journeys, I am constantly reminded of the endless paradoxes people face as they seek the best integrative cancer care.

Each of my three friends has faced excruciatingly difficult choices involving different combinations of surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation. They also have faced equally perplexing

choices about which herbs, nutritional supplements, and other complementary therapies to take. Then there are choices about diet, exercise, psychotherapy, yoga or Qi Gong, healers and medical intuitives. Finally, there are the existential choices about how to live at the edge between a high-risk cancer and a metastatic cancer—and what to do if you find yourself on the other side of that edge.

Cancer medicine has changed profoundly in the 24 years we have been offering the Cancer Help Program. Mainstream medicine has been transformed by new diagnostic and therapeutic modalities. Complementary medicine has been transformed as its research base deepened and as it has been accepted by mainstream medical institutions.

Recently, Dean Ornish, M.D., my cardiologist and the author of best-selling books on integrative healing, gave the science keynote address at the Bravewell Collaborative's Integrative Medicine Summit at the Institute of Medicine in Washington, D.C. It was a magisterial summary of research in integrative medicine. The bottom line was clear: different people get the same disease for different combinations of reasons, and different people will recover with different combinations of approaches.

Yet with all this variety in genetic heritage, gene expression and environmental influences, certain commonalities remain. Heart disease, breast cancer, diabetes and obesity are, Dean reminded us, at the heart of the Western disease cluster. Diet, exercise, and stress reduction can play a profound role in reducing the incidence of these conditions. If we want to reform health care, the royal path is the path of health promotion and disease prevention.

My three friends are facing the questions we have struggled with for 24 years in the Cancer Help Program. We have come to know nearly 1200 people in over 140 week-long retreats—and shared their versions of the struggles my three friends are facing. We recently completed our 146<sup>th</sup> Cancer Help Program. Eight women gathered from across the country with a deep shared intention to find healing. There were tears, laughter and, at the end of the week, an extraordinary sense of hope, courage and renewal. ■

*The Cancer Help Program is supported by grants from the Jenifer Altman Foundation, the Johnson Family Foundation, the Vermont Community Foundation, the Alberta S. Kimball Foundation and the David L. Klein Jr. Foundation and by many contributions from the public and alumni.*

## The Commonwealth Cancer Help Program includes the following ten experiences:

1. Contemplative practice: Yoga, breathing, meditation and deep relaxation;
2. Group support: A high-quality support group led by a skilled group leader;
3. Healing arts: Journaling and sandtray;
4. Good food: Delicious primarily vegetarian organic whole-food meals cooked with love;
5. Exercise: Walks (or runs, if desired) along high cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean;
6. Massage: Three seventy-five minute massages by a gifted masseuse;
7. Healing Circle: Participants and staff sending prayers or good intentions to each other;
8. Imagery: Tapping into the power of the unconscious to help us heal;
9. Choices: Two evenings discussing choices in healing, in conventional therapies, in complementary therapies, in facing pain or suffering, and in facing death or dying;
10. Individual counseling: Sessions with the psychotherapist/co-leader and other senior staff.



Sandtray is one of the healing arts used in the Cancer Help Program.

# Awestruck at the Crossroads

by Michael Lerner

When we were trying to find a tag line for The New School, we played with many possibilities. My wife and colleague Sharyle Patton had an unorthodox thought. She suggested we use the tag line “Awestruck at the Crossroads.” We laughed, and declined, settling for “Ecology, Culture and the Inner Life.” But Sharyle’s suggestion seems particularly apt these days. We are collectively awestruck at the crossroads—transfixed by world events. The impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people around the world, the melting of the ice caps and glaciers, and the spreading droughts. The battle of fundamentalisms of every variety with the multiple forms of modernisms and postmodernisms and post-post-modernisms. And the silent advance of toxic chemicals, genetically modified organisms, nanomaterials and electromagnetic fields. Tectonic forces are in motion. So how do we live in a world like this? That is—perhaps always has been—the question.

I notice in our town a strong sense of community renewal. Recently The New School partnered with a West Marin community group called MMOB (Mainstreet Moms Organize or Bust). They organized a weekend gathering

at Commonweal called “Exploring the Transition Movement.” The Transition concept, now a worldwide movement, emerged from the work of permaculture designer Rob Hopkins of Totnes, England. Its Wiki site online explains:

A Transition Initiative is a community working together to look peak oil and climate change squarely in the eye and address this BIG question:

*“For all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how do we significantly increase resilience (to mitigate the effects of peak oil) and drastically reduce carbon emissions (to mitigate the effects of climate change)?”*

The community goes through a comprehensive and creative process of:

- awareness raising around peak oil, climate change and the need to undertake a community-led process to rebuild resilience and reduce carbon
- connecting with existing groups in the community
- building bridges to local government
- connecting with other Transition Initiatives

- forming groups to look at all the key areas of life (food, energy, transport, health, heart & soul, economics & livelihoods, etc.)
- kicking off projects aimed at building people’s understanding of resilience and carbon issues and community engagement
- eventually launching a community defined, community implemented “Energy Descent Action Plan” over a 15 to 20 year timescale

This results in a coordinated range of projects across all these areas of life that strives to rebuild the resilience we’ve lost as a result of cheap oil, and reduce the community’s carbon emissions drastically.

The community also recognizes two crucial points:

- that we used immense amounts of creativity, ingenuity and adaptability on the way up the energy upslope, and that there’s no reason for us not to do the same on the downslope
- if we collectively plan and act early enough there’s every likelihood that we can create a way of living that’s significantly more connected, more vibrant and more in touch with our

environment than the oil-addicted treadmill that we find ourselves on today

Just to weave the climate change and peak oil situations together...

- Climate change makes this carbon reduction transition essential.
- Peak oil makes it inevitable.
- Transition Initiatives make it feasible, viable and attractive (as far we can tell so far...)

About 50 West Marin residents gathered at the Transition Movement workshop to explore how to transform West Marin into a Transition Community. There was a strong emphasis on permaculture-based organic gardens and food systems. But

there were also suggestions for initiatives in many other areas of community life including one of my favorites—an alternative currency system that provides local liquidity at a time when dollars may be scarce. The proof will be in the pudding. We will see whether this famously anarchic set of small towns strung like beads along the Pacific Coast can actually collaborate to strengthen local resilience and model a response to peak oil and climate change. But if nothing else, the Transition Movement gathering at Commonweal, co-sponsored by The New School and the Regenerative Design Institute/Commonweal Garden, was a brave and ambitious start.

We have had about seventy conversations and events over these first years of

the experiment we call The New School. It remains a remarkably interesting experience. Check out all that The New School has to offer—including links to its netcasts and iTunes at [www.commonweal.org/new-school/index.html](http://www.commonweal.org/new-school/index.html)

*New School Coordinator Jacquie Mallegni, audio engineer Ken Adams and I are grateful for all the wonderful feedback and support we are receiving for Commonweal's youngest program. We are deeply indebted to our current funders, the Bet Lev Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Whitman Institute, as well as to the Kalliopeia Foundation for the seed support that made it possible for us to imagine The New School. We are also grateful for contributions from many individuals.* ■

## Recently at The New School

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### Terry Tempest

**Williams**, longtime Commonweal friend, talked with us about her new book, *Finding Beauty in a Broken World*. (We know Terry through her close friend Jenepher Stowell, Director of the Commonweal Retreat Center.) I was really stunned by the power of her writing as I reviewed a half dozen of her books before our conversation. Check out *Refuge*, *Red*, *Desert Quartet* and *Leap*.



### James Gordon, M.D.,

another longtime Commonweal friend, founded the influential Cancer Guides training program, sponsors the premier Food as Medicine training, and conducts Healing the Wounds of War trainings in Israel, Gaza and other



conflict zones. We talked with Jim about “Life Lessons in Healing: Cancer, Trauma, and Mind-Body Medicine” and his new book *Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey Out of Depression*.

### Mark Gerzon

, also a longtime Commonweal friend, is widely considered one of the best group leaders facilitating social change in the country today. Mark has worked with the U.S. Congress, with Palestinian-Israeli groups, and with spiritual leaders, corporate leaders and civil society organizations. Our conversation with Mark was about *Decision-Making as if Consciousness Matters*. Mark is trying to create an actual physical center, or set of centers, where decisions of global significance would be explored under optimal conditions.



### Julia Brody, Ph.D.,

Commonweal friend and Director of Silent Spring Institute in Massachusetts, presented findings on a study of indoor and outdoor air quality in homes in Bolinas and Richmond, CA. Sharyle Patton of the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center assisted with the study. The bottom line is that while outdoor exposures vary significantly between industrial Richmond and coastal Bolinas, indoor pollution—which contributes the most to our chemical exposures—is quite similar in both places. Julia and her team are well-known pioneers in exploring linkages between toxic chemical exposures and breast cancer, prompted by the high incidence of breast cancer in Cape Cod.



## Cindy Sage and Nancy Evans,

both Commonweal friends, gave a fascinating and troubling report on the impact of cell phones, cell towers and numerous other sources of amplified electromagnetic fields (EMF) on our health. Cindy is the organizer and co-founder of *The Bionitiative Report*, the leading summary review of the state of the science on EMF, fiscally sponsored by Commonweal. Nancy is a science writer who for many years produced The Breast Cancer Fund's *State of the Evidence* report on chemicals, EMF and breast cancer.



By telephone from Paris, we interviewed Commonweal friend **David Servan-Schreiber, M.D.**, author of *Healing without Freud or Prozac* and his



recent book, *Anticancer: A New Way of Life*. David is a clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine of Lyon. *Anticancer* is an extraordinary resource for cancer patients and is selling briskly in the United States. I recommend it highly. David also has a beautiful description in the book of his experience in our Smith Farm Cancer Help Program, and how a conversation with me was a turning point in his decision to start writing what has turned out to be two international best-sellers.

These conversations are recorded for radio broadcast every other Thursday on KWMR in Point Reyes, CA and are available as podcasts and MP3 downloads on the Audio Archives page of the Commonweal website: [www.commonweal.org/new-school](http://www.commonweal.org/new-school).

# News from Commonweal Garden and the Regenerative Design Institute

by James Stark and Penny Livingston-Stark

Commonweal Garden is bursting. This spring's pattern of rains followed by warm sunshine is creating enormous abundance. Everywhere you look a flower is blooming and leaves are sprouting. Such immense wealth—it stands in contrast to the daily news. In our world here at the Garden, everything is growing, and our new farm manager, Tammy Davis, oversees it all with great aplomb. Helping her are our interns, some of whom have been here for almost a year, while others started just weeks ago. New chickens have also arrived and are growing fast, and thanks to the generosity of the Morning Glory Family Foundation and Scott Braun's creativity, the goats now have a beautiful new home.

We have many new residents, and we also have had to say some good-byes this spring. Matt and Rachel Berry who contributed so much to these gardens over the last four years are now putting down roots in the Sierras, raising their little daughter Amara and extending the reach of our community for all of us here.

We've also had the joy of having many visitors come through the garden throughout the seasons. Children love watching the "chicken channel" and the baby goats are becoming

adults. They will be old enough to have their own babies this year. We caught a new bee swarm this spring and now have a new beehive. It is still early and there may be more. We at the Commonweal Garden are constantly amazed at the return of spring and the generosity of the land and all the plants and the animals.

Visitors can witness for themselves the sublime balance and ecological health that this garden farm expresses. We use no chemicals or toxins of any kind—the only things we import are food scraps from the Station House Café, straw and woodchips for mulch and some supplemental animal feed. We are learning how to live within the capacity of the land and the local bio-region here.

While we sit in the midst of some of the greatest economic and environmental crises our world has ever faced, the garden is blooming and reflecting boundless abundance—a gentle and vibrant reminder of all that is possible.



Happy goats: thanks to funding from the Morning Glory Family Foundation, goats at the Commonweal Garden farm now have a beautiful new home.

*The Regenerative Design Institute at Commonweal Garden is supported by grants from the Randy Weil Fund, Tides Foundation, Jenifer Altman Foundation, Morning Glory Family Foundation, Barbara Smith Fund, Marin County Board of Supervisors, Murial Murch Full Circle Endowment Fund and many other generous individuals and foundations.*

# Environmental Health Program Updates

by Davis Baltz

## Chemical Policy Reform in California

California is taking nation-leading steps to improve public safety by limiting our exposure to toxic chemicals. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has tasked CalEPA's Department of Toxics Substances Control (DTSC) with the development of California's Green Chemistry Initiative (GCI). In particular, DTSC is now actively soliciting stakeholder input on how to implement two early planks of the GCI, outlined in two bills signed by the Governor in 2008: AB 1879 and SB 509. These bills call for the creation of an alternatives assessment process for problematic chemicals in commerce, and for an online database that provides needed information about chemical traits and safety information. The bills are quite aspirational—which is encouraging—but at the same time they are vague on many details.

Commonweal is the co-chair of the Policy workgroup for the coalition of California NGOs called Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE). CHANGE was formed to develop comprehensive chemical policy reform proposals for California and to organize popular support for them. CHANGE has actively provided input to DTSC since the launch of the GCI, and is recognized as an important stakeholder. It is more important than ever that public interest organizations maintain their involvement as a wide range of chemically-based industries are now engaged in a concerted way.

## Health Care Without Harm

Founded at Commonweal in 1996, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) has matured into one of the most respected and influential voices for the greening of the health care sector. In 2009, Commonweal serves as the facilitator of HCWH's Steering Committee and keeper of its agenda. In addition, Commonweal is the co-coordinator for HCWH's annual CleanMed conference, which has become one of the health care industry's key gatherings on environmental sustainability. The CleanMed conference was held May 18-20, 2009 in Chicago.

## California Biomonitoring Program

Now in its second year of funding, California's state biomonitoring program continues to develop, albeit more slowly than originally anticipated. The program was created by Senate Bill 1379 in 2006, sponsored by Commonweal and the Breast Cancer Fund.

California's budget crisis has impacted its biomonitoring program along with virtually every other state program. The fiscal health of California remains uncertain as the economic downturn hits here very hard. Nevertheless, the program's excellent staff continues to build technical capacity, both in the lab and in human resources. The program's Scientific Guidance Panel meets regularly, and has recommended a list of chemicals for inclusion in biomonitoring efforts as well as some that should be prioritized.

Commonweal remains committed to actively supporting this important public health initiative, a scientifically-based data gathering program that will inform health and environment decision-making in the state with potential for substantially reduced health care costs and environmental remediation. ■

*We are grateful to The San Francisco Foundation, Health Care Without Harm and an anonymous foundation for their support of chemical policy reform, greening the health care industry and increasing the profile of biomonitoring and its contribution to public health.*

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# The Collaborative on Health and the Environment

by Elise Miller

In early March, as the new Director of CHE, I received an unexpected and gratifying e-mail from CHE member, Toni Lineberry. An excerpt:

“I wish to express just how wonderful it is to be a CHE partner as a concerned citizen. I was first introduced to the great work of your organization reading...the ground breaking study *Girl, Disrupted*. As one who has been on a personal quest to understand my own reproductive issues and what I could do to help myself, your work has been absolutely life changing for me...I wanted to ask if there was any way I could help you spread the word about your great studies...I thought that it would be wrong not to offer, considering how much you have helped me already. Thank you again for the privilege of being a part of CHE.”

To me, Toni’s note captures how CHE’s efforts to bring uncompromised environmental health science to lay constituencies can benefit those far beyond our immediate and known circles. *Girl, Disrupted: Hormone Disruptors and Women’s Reproductive Health*, published in February 2009, has in fact received extremely positive responses from medical professionals and patient advocates alike. This lay report is based on the seminal research findings presented at the Women’s Reproductive Environmental Health Workshop, which was co-sponsored by CHE in January 2008. For more information, see [www.healthandenvironment.org/articles/](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/articles/)

doc/5492. In addition, the CHE Fertility and Reproductive Health Working Group is partnering with reproductive health professional societies and academic institutions to develop additional educational materials for professionals and the general public and to press for appropriations for further reproductive environmental health research.

CHE’s Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative (LDDI) also took some significant steps this winter when one of its leading members was invited to provide Congressional testimony. Maureen Swanson, director of the Healthy Children Project of the Learning Disabilities Association of

America, was the only representative of a health-affected group asked to speak at a House Committee hearing focused on the need for chemical policy reform to protect children from exposures to environmental contaminants. This opportunity came in the aftermath of LDDI’s first environmental health policy training, held in January 2009, for national and state learning and developmental disabilities organizations.

In addition, LDDI established a new working group on Mental Health and the Environment, which is being chaired by CHE Partner organization, the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed. The focus of this group is to review emerging scientific studies on environmental contributors to mental health problems and discern what kinds of actions might be taken to address these concerns.

Members of the CHE Cancer Working Group recently welcomed a major advance in Europe—namely the French National Cancer Plan—which will address environmental cancers with “particular vigilance.” The plan, which was announced at the end of March and will be presented to the French President Sarkozy in June, emphasizes a focus on pesticides and cancer and mentions using a precautionary approach.

CHE Cancer first learned of French plans to address environmental contribu-

tors to cancer when the previous French President Chirac called for attention to environmental cancers in one of his final addresses to the nation. Now the promise that France would move in this direction appears about to be fulfilled. In doing so, France will join Canada in the forefront of major Western powers recognizing the significance of environmental contributors to cancer. In addition, the Chinese government has expressed direct concern with the role of environmental factors in Chinese “cancer towns.”

In the U.S., the President’s Cancer Panel recently completed a year of national hearings on environmental contributors to cancer. CHE Partner scientists played a critical role in providing testimony for the President’s Cancer Panel. The report to President Obama is due this year.

In another arena, the CHE Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) Working Group continues to play an influential role in developing and publicizing research and reports on the human health risks that EMFs may impose. Based in large part on the scientific evidence compiled in the *Biomonitoring*

*Report*, the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety overwhelmingly adopted a Resolution in early March urging the European Commission to recognize growing public and scientific concern over health risks from electromagnetic fields. The Resolution is expected to pass the full Parliament this spring.

Members of the CHE EMF Working Group are also garnering greater interest in research on EMFs and human health in the U.S. Along these lines, the *Journal of Pathophysiology* published a special issue in March focused on the public health concerns and scientific evidence for risks from cell phones and other wireless devices. Research professor and *Journal* editor Martin Blank, PhD, Associate Professor, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, wrote, “This issue of *Pathophysiology* is about the human body’s sensitivity to EMF signals in the environment, e.g., EMF effects on DNA, effects on the brain from cell phone radiation, and how EMFs in the environment may lead to Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and breast

cancer. The scientific evidence tells us that our safety standards are inadequate, and that we must protect ourselves from exposure to EMFs due to power lines, cell phones and the like.”

These are just a few compelling highlights of CHE’s recent activities. As Spring emerges and I settle into my new role with CHE, I am truly grateful not only to have a paid job in this increasingly stark economy, but a job that is deeply meaningful and colleagues who are wise, dedicated and inspiring. In the months ahead, I welcome the opportunity to work with CHE’s breadth of partners to develop ever more effective, creative ways to improve and sustain human and ecological health. ■

*The Collaborative on Health and the Environment is grateful for the generous support from following funders: the Beldon Fund, the Cedar Tree Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Johnson Family Foundation, the John Merck Fund, the Passport Foundation, the Wallace Genetic Fund and several foundations that prefer anonymity.*



Environmental health leaders in Washington, D.C. before meeting with President-elect Obama’s Transition Team. Participants include Elise Miller, Collaborative on Health and the Environment (front row, third from left) and Sharyle Patton, Commonwealth Biomonitoring Resource Center (back row, fifth from left).

# The Healer's Art Extends Its Reach to Nurses, Pharmacists, Chaplains & Cats

by Rachel Naomi Remen, MD

The *Healer's Art*, ISHI's 17-year-old medical school course which enables first and second year medical school students throughout the U.S. and the world to explore the essential meaning and service values of their work in medicine, continues to reach an ever widening circle of others in the healing professions. A few years ago, pharmacy faculty at UCSF launched a pilot modeled after the *Healer's Art* and the course continues to be offered to UCSF pharmacy students each year. The *Healer's Art* course for medical students at UCSF now includes chaplaincy students, and this year we are piloting a program for nursing students that is based on the *Healer's Art*.

But one of the most exciting developments is the *Healer's Art* expansion into veterinary schools. This past summer, Dr. Jane Shaw, Assistant Professor at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences—one of the leading schools of veterinary medicine in the country—was the first veterinarian to attend the *Healer's Art* Faculty Development Training. Jane is a nationally recognized pioneer in the emerging field of veterinarian-client-patient communication and the human-animal bond. She designs and implements the communication curriculum for veterinary students and teaches how to provide compassionate care for the family as well as their pet, and was honored for this pioneering

work with the Leo K. Bustad Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year Award in 2008. Dr. Shaw will be incorporating the *Healer's Art* course into the curriculum at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and

Biomedical Sciences. She recently published her experiences at the *Healer's Art* Faculty Development Training in the *American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians Newsletter*. Following are excerpts from Jane's article:

## Can you guess which cat belongs with which ISHI employee?

(For the answer, see ISHI's Cats on Page 12.)



This past year, I was reminded of an important lesson—when I am connected to the heart of my work, I become more insightful, my work is richer and deeper, and creative energies flow boundlessly. I started to wonder how I could teach that one of the greatest sources of fulfillment in the veterinary profession is connecting with clients and their pets. Daily, veterinary practice can become rote and routine and these special relationships are at the heart of our work—they create meaning and rejuvenate one’s soul.

My journey to answer this question began with attending the “*Healer’s Art Faculty Development Workshop*,” a short course presenting the teachings of Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, at the International Conference on Communication in Healthcare... What appealed to me was the focus on self-care through reflections on the meaning of medicine, something I could put into practice for myself and in teaching students. Often students on the first day of senior rotation state that they are worried about getting emotionally involved or attached to their clients and patients. This concerns me because creating distance could potentiate compassion fatigue and associated burnout and turnover.

Fortuitously, three months later, a colleague sent me a copy of Rachel Naomi Remen’s book, *My Grandfather’s Blessings*. The note attached simply stated, “These stories reflect your teachings to veterinarians, in creating space for clients to share their story.” This collection of short narratives shares the joys and challenges of physicians and patients directly mirroring those of veterinarians and clients. These lessons of resilience, healing, and compassion deeply resounded with me. For months I read a story a day.

Hungry to learn more, I discovered the “*Healer’s Art Faculty Development Training*.” I wondered whether they would accept a veterinarian to this course designed for physicians. My query arrived at the time that Rachel’s beloved cat, Putty, was in his final days of life. From our conversations, it was apparent that she recognized that those who care for our animal companions share the same mission of service as physicians. I was the first veterinarian to be extended an invitation to the *Healer’s Art Faculty Development Training*.

United as a group of 16 medical educators and clinicians, we experienced the course first as students and then as educators. The *Healer’s Art* curriculum, offered to first and second year medical students, creates a safe learning environment to explore the time-honored values of service, relationship, commitment, and calling that are at the heart of the practice

of medicine. This course enables students to maintain and strengthen their service intention and perspective as they meet the pressures and demands of medical training.

It was a transformative experience to say the least. Through small group interactions, I rediscovered my calling to veterinary medicine and my deep bond with dogs in particular. I uncovered some of my own wounds, and tended to them, enabling me to be an even more compassionate and empathetic healer. I affirmed the importance of the work I do in veterinary communication, taking a personal oath to fully embrace this work with the utmost dedication. These teachings have brought a greater sense of accomplishment, source of inspiration, and enhanced meaning to my daily work...

With the college’s support, we plan to offer the first *Healer’s Art* course at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science.

Coincidentally, this week I received pictures of Rachel’s newly adopted cat, Yuffy, a beautiful lynx point ragdoll, whose poses confirmed that he is right at home. I was reminded of one of Rachel’s lessons that people and animals are drawn to us for who we are and what is inside of us. They are attracted to our care and compassion, imperfections as human beings, as well as our broader life experiences and hobbies—our whole self—mind, body, heart, and spirit.

The physicians at the *Healer’s Art Faculty Development Training* loved meeting this new colleague and envied her relationships with her patients, as summed up in Sharon Kunin’s poem, “*Could It Be?*” about the pet/human bond:

Maybe,  
a little  
like meeting God  
through feather, fur or fluttery thing.  
To be judged not by words  
but for the timbre of my voice.  
Not by ability

but for gentleness of my touch.  
And not for knowledge,  
but by the Light that shines from my eyes.  
To be loved  
for the nature of my heart.

*The Institute for the Study of Health and Illness is supported by grants from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and other foundations that prefers anonymity.*

## ISHI’s Cats

Rachel belongs to Yuffy, Patricia belongs to Minnie, Kathy belongs to Yogi, Dianne belongs to Snoopy, Christina belongs to Max, Corrie belongs to Menno, and Jenny belongs to all the flowers in her garden!

# JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAM

## Bernie Madoff Ends a Good Year on a Sour Note

by David Steinhart

The Juvenile Justice Program had an extremely successful year in 2008. In California, we worked on the implementation of SB 81, the landmark juvenile justice reform measure that we helped to design in 2007. SB 81 bans future commitments of non-violent youth to the deeply troubled state youth prison system (formerly the Youth Authority, now called the Division of Juvenile Facilities). Under this reform, counties get nearly \$100 million per year (state-wide total) to keep non-violent offenders in local programs and facilities that operate more effectively and at lower cost than the state youth prison system.

At the year-and-a-half mark, the “realignment” reform law seems to be working well. It has provided relief to the state youth prison system, dropping its population from 3,000 to 1,600 inmates. Counties have benefited from SB 81 grant funds, using them to start new programs for juvenile offenders. There are some wrinkles (e.g., rising local juvenile hall commitments) and some questionable county expenditures. We are working with legislative leaders now, weighing amendments to SB 81 that would add more accountability for how counties spend their state juvenile offender funds.

If there is one major success theme running through the Commonwealth Juvenile Justice Program over the last 15 years, it is our role in helping to create major state funding streams for local youth programs—most notably, the Schiff Cardenas Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) in 2000, and the Juvenile Justice Realignment Reform (Block Grant) in 2007. Together these state subsidies supply counties with

nearly \$200 million each year—for youth placements, counseling, mental health treatment, wraparound, after-school and other services. Buoyed by a coalition of law enforcement and youth service agencies, these state funds have survived through all budget deficit years. In fiscal year 09/10, the JJCPA appropriation will actually increase over last year’s amount to \$107 million statewide, while Youthful Offender Block Grant funds (SB 81) will rise to \$92 million.

In November 2008, we celebrated the defeat of Proposition 6. California voters rejected this regressive crime initiative, funded by right-wing interest groups to capture nearly \$1 billion per year in taxpayer funds for a wish list of law enforcement programs. Sold as a crackdown on gangs, the measure was really a raid on the state treasury, earmarking state funds in perpetuity for law enforcement programs without any real accountability. We worked with the California Teachers Association, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the Loyola Children’s Law Center, furnishing information that helped voters recognize the flaws in Prop 6 and reject it by a 70-30 margin.

On the national front, the Juvenile Justice Program continues to be a pillar of support for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The Casey initiative is dedicated to reducing unnecessary detention, improving case processing and eliminating racial bias in juvenile justice systems. The JDAI operates now at 80 sites in 22 states. As the JDAI designated expert on detention risk assessment, I wrote the national Practice Guide on detention risk assessment

published by Casey in 2006. It’s not resort travel, but I logged in some serious air miles in 2007-08, training judges, probation personnel, law enforcement officers and others at JDAI sites including Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Texas. The next training, set for June ’09, will be (whew!) in Honolulu.

Finally: about Bernie Madoff. Funding for Commonwealth’s California juvenile justice work over the last four years has come from four sources—the JEHT Foundation (based in New York), the Wallace A. Gerbode and Van Loben Sels Foundations (in San Francisco) and the California Wellness Foundation. Our \$100,000 JEHT grant was up for renewal in January 2009. In December 2008, we received an e-alert that the JEHT Foundation had collapsed overnight. The cause: all JEHT funds came from an East Coast family whose wealth was managed by Bernard Madoff, the now-jailed manipulator whose Ponzi scheme bilked an alleged \$50 billion from investors. The damage to non-profits across the nation was widespread. The damage for Commonwealth was loss of an anticipated renewal of \$100,000 for two years of California juvenile justice work. This was all regrettable, but it was not JEHT’s fault. JEHT did not control its source funds; instead, they were forwarded annually by their chief donor. JEHT was an oasis of support for progressive juvenile and criminal justice reform projects throughout the nation. Their staff—all of whom lost their jobs—are to be commended for an admirable track record of important human rights and civil justice projects over many years. While we are saddened by JEHT’s demise, the Commonwealth Juvenile Justice Program forges ahead in 2009. We are advised by other funders that they have no current plans to cut support in these tough economic times. ■

*The Juvenile Justice Program is supported by grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the van Loben Sels/RembeRock Foundation and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation. Recent past support has come from the JEHT Foundation and the Haigh-Scatena Foundation.*

# No More Toxic Tub: Children's Bath Products are Contaminated with Formaldehyde, 1,4-Dioxane

by Heather Sarantis

Despite marketing claims like “gentle” and “pure,” dozens of top-selling children's bath products are contaminated with the cancer-causing chemicals formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane, according to the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics' latest report, “No More Toxic Tub.”

The report, released in March by Commonweal and other members of the Campaign, describes the results for product tests done on dozens of popular children's bath products. The majority of all products—including baby shampoo, baby lotion, bubble bath and other products—contained at least one of these contaminants, and 61 percent of the products tested contained both formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane.

Formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane are known to cause cancer in animals and are listed as probable human carcinogens by the Environmental Protection Agency. Formaldehyde can also trigger skin rashes in some children. The chemicals were not disclosed on product labels because contaminants are exempt from labeling laws.

Contrary to industry statements, there are no regulatory standards that limit formaldehyde, 1,4-dioxane or most other toxic chemicals in person-

al care products sold in the United States. Other nations have stricter standards. Formaldehyde is banned from personal care products in Japan and Sweden. The European Union bans 1,4-dioxane from personal care products and has recalled products found to contain the chemical.

The Toxic Tub report has prompted considerable response. Key Congressional leaders have expressed their outrage, with Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA), Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) all calling for greater regulation of the cosmetics industry in response to this report. Hundreds of articles and blog posts have been published (see [www.safecosmetics.org/newsroom](http://www.safecosmetics.org/newsroom)). Nevertheless, representatives of the cosmetics industry deny that there is any problem.

Although using these bath products once is not likely to cause harm, they are used in combination with



many other products at bath time and throughout the day. There is no need to knowingly expose anyone—especially babies and children—to ingredients known to increase risk for health problems. Commonweal supports efforts to create Federal regulations to ensure that all cosmetics and personal care products are free of harmful chemicals.

The full results of the study can be found in the report, “No More Toxic Tub” at [www.safecosmetics.org/toxictub](http://www.safecosmetics.org/toxictub). ■

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# WITH GRATITUDE

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We are grateful to all of the people and organizations who are our partners and friends in the work we do. We need your continued support in every way—your financial contributions, your volunteer help and your good thoughts and prayers. May the months ahead be filled with grace for us all.

## Art Exhibits at the Commonweal Gallery

In 2009, the Commonweal Gallery presented a series of art exhibits consisting primarily of local and Bay Area artists. We began in April with Arthur Okamura and his New School Drawing Class student show, *Fun/No Mind Drawing*. Arthur, a longtime Commonweal Board Member emeritus and distinguished California artist, holds a New School drawing class every Tuesday at Commonweal. Featured here is a drawing from the exhibition by Dianne Finland, a longtime student of Arthur's.

In May through the end of June, Michael Sell exhibited *Body Work*, an exquisite series of figurative oil pastel drawings on canvas. In Michael's words, "Each work is an attempt to face my fears of life's termination while embracing the passions that define human existence." Shown here is a piece from the exhibition, "Blue Tayman."



Dianne Finland: "Young Man and Woman," detail, graphite on paper



Michael Sell: "Blue Tayman," oil pastel