

EarthMatters™

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Local vs. Organic: Exploring the Controversy

by Tim LaSalle

What we eat affects our health and impacts the health of the planet. Since we eat at least three times a day, almost nothing we do has a greater affect on our personal health, and that of all species and life systems. There are consequences—some positive, most negative—to our current food-growing practices in farms and gardens, food processing, and transportation.

I know, as a responsible Earth steward, you already have more instructions on going green than you can use. But hear me out. Let me tell you why food choices matter more than you imagined, and why the concocted “local vs. organic” tension is really not a controversy at all.

It should be local *and* organic, for some different reasons. Let’s first unpack what’s good about local.

Local Food

A “buy local” commitment is a deep investment in your neighborhood’s food economy. It means developing relationships with the people who produce and supply your food as the foundation for building a healthy community at many levels. Developing relationships tied to your place builds

local food security (assuring an adequate supply of sufficient quality for local needs). Furthermore, local food has a better opportunity to be the freshest and most nutritious available.



For all these great benefits, however, local does not necessarily provide the reduced environmental impact that one might expect. Depending on a lot of factors, it may actually have a larger carbon footprint of total greenhouse gases than food shipped from Chile. Calculating the complete carbon footprint of a food item is a more complex matter than finding the shortest distance between you and a pound of potatoes. An ocean freighter or large truck can transport large quantities of food with less carbon dioxide per calorie of food than shorter hauls in smaller vehicles.

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NWEI NEWS

NWEI OUTREACH FOCUS EXPANDS

Under NWEI’s new strategic plan, the outreach team in Portland is refining its focus to include new areas of outreach. The increasing number of participants in NWEI discussion courses during the past several years has spurred the inspiration to reach new participants through organizational partnerships, in the business community, within higher education, and at the city level.

Allison Hartlage, Director of Small Business Partnerships and Community Development, will be focusing on building relationships with small businesses wishing to engage employees in NWEI programs, while also working closely with NWEI local organizers. Athena Ehnot, Director of Government and Higher Education Outreach, will be focusing outreach efforts on city partnerships and colleges and universities, while also continuing to work closely with local volunteers and Northwest communities. Martin Tull, Director of Organizational and Government Partnerships, will focus efforts on national organizational partnerships as well as larger city government partnerships. Deb McNamara, Director of Business Partnerships, will be working closely with the business community in offering NWEI programs.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

INVITATION TO ACTION

I've been a Los Angeles Lakers basketball fan for 40 years. I was a big fan in the 70's, mid 80's and early 2000's. Why the ebbs and flows you ask? It's simple: results. While I am enamored with Laker's history and the on-court skill of players like Wilt, Mr. Clutch, Kareem, Magic and Kobe, I hadn't given my team much thought over the last five years. Why? Because they didn't do the one thing a professional sports team is supposed to do. Win. Ok, call me a weak, spoiled or maybe a shallow fan. They may all be true, but still, I have high expectations.

The stakes are high, and they are getting higher by the moment. No, not whether the Lakers win or lose the next championship. The stakes I am referring to concern the health of this planet we all call home. We, and future generations, need results on all fronts and we need to ramp up the rate of change. So how do we "inspire people to take responsibility for Earth" and how can we do it even more effectively and rapidly?

Action emanating from our course work was a centerpiece of conversation during two recent events—a staff retreat and a local volunteer gathering. When the topic of explicitly integrating action into the discussion course conversations arose, it was met with a mix of "it's about time," and skepticism. Honestly, some of the skepticism proffered at the staff retreat was shared by me. I have held onto the notion, and still do, that change is achieved through intentional and varied practices determined by informed citizens. In other words, our work is inspirational, not prescriptive. We don't encourage participants to check off items from a list of "50 things you can do to save the world." Yet, our mission states, "Inspiring people to take responsibility for Earth." You simply can't demonstrate responsibility without conscious action.

After a period of discussion, it became apparent that we could more effectively achieve greater levels of inspiration and action with some slight adjustments in our process. Will we measure the results of specific actions? Not likely. Will we

more clearly invite people to state their intentions for action? Absolutely. Earth is clearly calling for a greater number of inspired citizens to act and lead within the realms they can control and influence.

Let's play ball (because this work is supposed to be fun, too) and win one for the planet and all its inhabitants!

With warm regards,
Mike Mercer, Executive Director
(503) 227-2807 x101
mike@nwei.org

I've always believed that
if you put in the work,
the results will come.

- Micheal Jordan -

WELCOME NEW AND RENEWING NWEI MEMBERS!

During the past three months, the following individuals and businesses became new or renewing NWEI members.

Please join the NWEI staff and board in welcoming them.

Gilly Adkins	Lesley Cox and Ron Ennis	Shikha Gottfried	Leigh Knox	Aaron McGregor	David Schreffler	Verna Triller
Stan Amy and Christy Eugenis	Gary Crouth	Kevin M. Green	Ingrid Koch-Adler	and Molly Stebbins	Margaret	Jennifer and Mark Trumbo
Beth Andersen	John Crowley	Helen and Kees Kolff	Ricki McIlwraith	Ricki McIlwraith	and Fred Schwender	Justin and Janette Tull
Janey Anderson	Dan and Michelle Cutugno	Thomas and Karen Gritzka	Dave and Joyce Mercer	Dave and Joyce Mercer	Cindy Scott	UnitarianUniversalist
Julie Archibald	Kirk deFord	Michael Gundlach	Natalie Mietzner	Natalie Mietzner	and Al Hemmingson	Church of Davis
Denny Arter	Matthew and Britta Dinsmore	Bernt Hansen	Don and Kathy Morris	Don and Kathy Morris	Janet Senior	CoCo and Peter Valle
Allison Baglio	Peter DuBois	Karen Harding	Michael Morrissey	Michael Morrissey	Richard Sessions	Karin Van Vlack
Terry Baker	and Ingrid Dankmeyer	Elaine Harger	Kirsten Murray	Kirsten Murray	and Julia Surtshin	and Scott Redmond
Margaret Bakker	Erik Durfey	Gina Harris	Rachel Myron and Steve Lewis	Rachel Myron and Steve Lewis	Brian Setzler	Kevin Votava
Ganesh Balamurugan	Kimberly A. Earp	Kathleen Hawn	Judy Newman	Judy Newman	Nancy Severson	Rebecca and Darryl Walters
Cathy Ballensky	Bramble Berry, Inc.	W. David Holden	Tamara Olcott	Tamara Olcott	John Shaw	Lisa Weidman
Jeff and Lynn Barber	Lori Faris	Debra Holliday	Kathryn Olney	Kathryn Olney	Steve Shostek	Judith West
Andrea Basque and Jeff Gamer	Dale Farley	Janet Holmgren	Judy Olsen	Judy Olsen	Dwight Sims	Wheatland Earth Institute
Dick Benner	Nan Feagin	Kim Hughes	Kathleen O'Neill	Kathleen O'Neill	and Cathie Haynes	Ruth Whitney
Duncan and Melany Berry	Erik Fisher	Pat and David Hundhausen	Penny Palmer and Jan Becker	Penny Palmer and Jan Becker	Linda Smith	Terry Wiggins
Nancy Bishop	Christy Foilger	Mike and Carol Huntington	Helen and Martin Payne	Helen and Martin Payne	Patricia Smith	Dan Wilson
Kay Blouke	Loyce Forsgren	Linda Irvine	Will Perry	Will Perry	and Jaap Romijn	Michael and Darcy Winslow
Judy Bluehorse Skelton	Analese Forster	Jack Istok	Rod Lundberg	Ahriana Platten	Ray Smitke	Elaine Winslow
Bruce Bolme and Zoe Campbell	Gina Foster	Howie Janapol	Paul and Helen Lyons	Shane Plaxton	Alice Sperling	Barbara Woodford
Maureen Bolton	David and Theresa Frazer	Colleen and Andrew Jenkins	Suzanne MacDonald	H. Christine Pratt	Brian Stahl	Dave Woolsey
Therese Bovee McKelvey	Kathy and Ted Fuller	Elizabeth Johnson	Jacquelyn Madarang	Mark Proia	Karen Starin	Corinne Wright
Vin and Vinnie Burns	Eric and Kristen Gabrielsen	Karen Josephson	Richard Magyar	John and Erin Provost	Paul and Linette Studebaker	Nancy Yuill
Scott R. Cameron	Jeffrey Gallant	and Peter Stoel	Kerry Martin	Linda Rhines	Paul Sunderland	and Andy Sztatowski
Claire Carder	Valerie Garst	Martha Kazlo	Sally Martin	Esther Ricco	Bill Swindells	Kathy Zak
Kari Carlson	Erin Gately and Will Hertling	Barbara Kelley	Jon and Margie Masterson	Douglas Rich	Priscilla Taylor	Morgan and George Zantua
Steve and Patsy Carrow	Elaine Giraud	Neil Kelly Company	Steven Maxwell	Kathy Richards	George Taylor	Jack Zeiger
Jeanette Coil	Marci Glenn	Rejuvenation	J.C. May	Wayne Rifer	Lee Ann Thompson	
Cherida Collins Smith	Brian Goldstein	Carol Killingsworth	Michael McCaffrey	Ross Roberts	and Elizabeth Katz	
Gretchen Colonius	Kevin Gorman	Jeffrey Kilmer	Phyllis McCall	Sally Russell	Roger and Patrick Thorson	
Mick Cowles and Patty Munday	and Michelle Kinsella	Jeanette Kloos	Colette and Steve McClaire	Mary Ryan-Hotchkiss	Carl Toland	

LOCAL VS. ORGANIC (cont. from page 1)

Processing and packaging food is usually the most carbon-intensive aspect of our current food system. As so well delineated by Michael Pollan in his latest book *In Defense of Food*, packaged and processed food is typically much less healthy for you than eating fresh, whole foods with their much lighter carbon footprint.

The second most carbon-intensive piece—outside of driving to the store and putting the food in your refrigerator—is the farming method used. How food is grown greatly influences how much carbon dioxide is created and released into the atmosphere. Fertilizers and pesticides are predominantly fossil-fuel based and can account for up to half of the carbon dioxide released in farming. Conventional chemical-based agriculture is a net emitter of carbon dioxide. Coupled with commercial processing and transportation, it contributes up to 20 percent of our total greenhouse gases here in the U.S.A.



Organic Food

Now let's look at the benefits of organically produced food—and all the good things it contains.

Toxins used in conventional agriculture remain a crucial concern for humans and other species, and are accumulating in our environment at an

alarming rate. Agricultural chemicals are much more insidious than what the FDA or EPA—our federal “watchdogs” for food quality—have been letting on. More studies are verifying serious developmental concerns showing up in humans from some of these chemicals and at exposure rates at very low levels: in parts per *trillion*, not the parts per *billion* traditionally used in a poison-dose, or toxicological, risk assessment.

What has not been looked at very deeply by our government agencies are the hormone disrupting factors that are affecting vulnerable amphibians, such as frogs and alligators, with gender-confusing characteristics—at times to the point that they are unable to reproduce. Similar types of affects are showing up in humans from the same farm and yard chemicals. One simple example is that human male sperm count is currently 50 percent lower than it was in 1936, as shown in a summary of global studies.

Dr. Warren Porter [<http://www.zoology.wisc.edu/faculty/Porter/Porter.html>], from University of Wisconsin, shares a graph that depicts human sperm count falling below the level of possible fertility if current trends continue for another two generations. These gender-bending disruptors are present not just in the foods we eat, but in our aquifers and therefore much of our drinking water, bottled or unbottled. These ultra-low-level residues are causing earlier signs of sexual maturity and at times causing the feminization of boys and masculinization of girls.

Dr. Porter's findings should galvanize us to demand immediate change in federal water and food quality standards to protect our families. While we press for safe food and water for everyone, we

can make individual and family decisions about what we buy to make sure our food is not contaminated and our water (bottled or tap) is pure.



Pesticide Action

Provincial leaders in Ontario have recognized the health hazards of pesticides and have moved to ban chemical yard products. Common nitrogen fertilizer compounds that make corn tall and lawns green have found their way into our water, as has atrazine, Roundup, and crop and yard pesticides that can cause disease and disrupt hormones. As someone recently said, we must get the “cides” out of our homes and yards, because our current practice is suicide.

To bring this point home, one of the most disturbing studies I have seen is research reported 10 years ago on a Yaqui indigenous population in Mexico by Dr. Elizabeth Guillet [<http://www.mindfully.org/Pesticide/Preschool-Exposed-Mexico-Guillette.htm>] This community had separated into two groups in the late 1940s—one that chose to work on a new farm using pesticides established in a valley of their traditional

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Want more information on how you can become a member of the Earth Institute community?
Call (503) 227-2807 and become a catalyst for grassroots change.

LOCAL VS. ORGANIC *(cont. from page 3)*

land, and the balance of the group who chose not to work with the farm and to live in the hills above the valley. By the time of Guillette's assessment in 1990, the farmworker children had serious neurological damage, while those of the community not involved in the commercial farming had normal development.

This neurological damage related to pesticides has also been replicated in Dr. Porter's labs in mice. The connection is actually quite "bio-logical." Since pesticides are designed as neurotoxins to disable insects, they also have the ability to damage us in disturbing ways.



Organic foods are raised without synthetic pesticides, greatly reducing pesticide exposure. Additionally, beyond frequently including anti-aging antioxidants, organic foods often contain a higher level of minerals per unit of crop. When studying the biology of soils, it becomes more clear why organic food would be more "nutrient dense." As one small example, the mycorrhizal fungi that flourishes in organically enriched soils connects to root hairs of plants and extends their reach perhaps a thousand fold out into the soil, picking up more micronutrients and moisture to make a more healthy plant.

Eating Organic Foods and Saving the Planet.

A much-unappreciated contribution of organic farming is its capacity to sequester carbon, i.e. to pull carbon

dioxide right out of the atmosphere and hold it in the soil for decades. As a matter of fact, research at Rodale Institute [www.rodaleinstitute.org] replicated at many other land grant universities, shows that more 3.5 tons of CO₂ per year can be sequestered on well-managed organic soils using compost and no chemical inputs.

Nature's capacity to accomplish this phenomenal task is assisted by the mycorrhizal fungi mentioned above that helps plants pull extra nutrients and water from the soil as it creates more soil organic matter. Even though it lives off the plant's root, it also feeds the plant in a symbiotic way. It encases itself in a hard carbon covering, thereby sequestering this carbon for decades. Synthetic fertilizers and pesticides inhibit the development of these fungi and degrade the soil biology, adding to the long-term destruction of soils.

When we feed these fungi and other soil biological life in regenerative organic farming systems, we lock up lots of carbon. If we converted all tillable acres globally to this practice, we could sequester 40 percent of all the world's emissions. This is the most effective strategy for mitigating carbon dioxide we have without creating new technology or using untried systems. There is nothing larger or more significant to help us in our crisis with climate!

In the United States alone, it would be equivalent to taking 216,000,000 automobiles off the road, cutting out 25 percent of our country's CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels. This is not just capping and-trading carbon credits—a dubious process intended to reduce emissions by doling out the right to emit greenhouse gases—it is a way to begin to take back the carbon we have already released into the atmosphere, burying it in the ground, while at the same time building much healthier soils.

Healthy soil isn't just better than dead soil. Rodale Institute has found through decades of research that building soil's organic matter greatly reduces erosion and makes it more permeable (significantly reducing the threat of flooding). In times of drought the increased organic matter increases water storage in soil to give organic soils the ability to out-produce conventional chemical based farming up to 30 percent.



The Truly Green Revolution

Regenerative organic agriculture is the truly green revolution. It thrives in normal years and excels during years of extra water and too little water. The myth that organics cannot feed the world is promoted by groups who want industrial agriculture to survive, but research and practice on the multiple benefits and resilience of organic farming clearly show that organic deficiency is a myth that is easily debunked. The chemical-fertilizer and pesticide-based approach to food production is only making farmers and soils much less sustainable, while leaving toxins in our water and food.

For all these reasons, it's clear that Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), producer-only farmers' markets, on-farm markets, farm-to-school sales, farmer-controlled food networks or even urban agriculture brings the best food to the table when it is organically grown and processed as little as possible.

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MENU FOR THE FUTURE Invites Dialogue and Change

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If prices are sometimes higher in these venues, consider what you are really buying. It's not just a carrot, it's a local, organic carrot. We are paying the grower the full value for fresh and nutrient-dense food, grown for us while he or she sequesters carbon to offset our carbon emission excesses created from our commutes, air-conditioning, clothes washing and the "necessary" purchases that have just been shipped in from off-shore. In the production of organic food, there are no hidden long-term ecological costs that will have to be paid by our descendants.

As eaters, you can ask for organic when you don't see it, buy organic when it's offered and find creative ways to support organic farmers and businesses. Tell your local, state and federal government officials to change the way they look at farming. Tell them to favor agriculture that sustains soil, life and communities without depending on toxins and synthetic fertilizers. We can take all these direct actions *now* to mitigate climate crisis, clean up our waterways, build soils for future generations, encourage more farmers to farm well and at the same time we will be eating healthier food.

Tim LaSalle is the CEO of the Rodale Institute, Kutztown, Pennsylvania. Tim is the former Executive Director of NWEI.

“Food is a central activity
of humankind
and one of the single most
significant trademarks
of a culture.”

*Mark Kurlansky,
'Choice Cuts' (2002)*

Since the launch of NWEI's newest discussion course in April of this year, thousands of individuals have gathered to address both the pleasures and confusions of eating, while also discussing ways to support healthier food systems through individual food choices and actions. In Shelburne, Vermont, Shelburne Farm's *Menu for the Future* group created a group blog to share resources and ideas generated during the course. One participant wrote, "I learned that along with a menu for our own good bodily health we must recognize the urgent need for immediate and continuing action to avoid depleting the earth which provides us with that menu!"

Blog moderator Phoebe Garfinkel, Food Systems Coordinator at Shelburne Farms, writes the words of Michael Pollan on the blog, a reminder to each of us of the importance of healthy food communities: "There can be no healthy people without a healthy diet. There can be no healthy diet without healthy agriculture." She continues, "Healthy food and farming practices was the focus of last week's reading, and we began to delve into the text by answering the question 'What does the term "farm" or "farmer" evoke for you?' ...Many folks remembered back to the farms or farmers of their youth, whether neighboring farms or farmer-relatives."

Conversations such as this have been fueling lifestyle shifts, while also providing opportunities to gather in community and share potluck meals, visit farmers markets and celebrate local foods. An Evergreen, Colorado participant noted his plan to "alter food buying and growing habits based on my understanding of the written materials." Another participant cites being more aware of the importance of buying local, while another plans to "ask more questions about the food we are eating, such as 'where is it from? Is it organic?'" Yet another cites renewed plans to "make weekly visits to the farmer's market."



*Menu For the Future discussion group members Jeff and Kari Anne Holcomb planting Siberian pea shrub for the chickens.
Photo courtesy of Pat Rasmussen, Terra Commons, Olympia, Washington.*

For a New York participant, the course "reinforces to us that food choices not only impact our personal health but also impact the environment and the economy. We will choose more carefully." May we each continue to choose more carefully, more consciously and more intentionally as we create together a more sustainable future!

Haven't yet participated in NWEI's newest discussion course on food choices and sustainability? Email contact@nwei.org or call 503.227.2807 to get started today.

KNOWING YOUR PLACE

PADDLING ROSS ISLAND

No piece of real estate so captures the imagination of Portland's citizens and visitors, yet is less understood, than the Ross Island archipelago. Fortunately, getting to know the islands is an easy, scenic, and wildlife-rich three-mile paddle around Hardtack, East, Ross and diminutive Toe Island.

Early mornings are best. At dawn, before I-5's background hum picks up it's hard to believe you're less than two miles from the downtown core as you glide on the Channel's glass smooth surface. Herons skulk along the bank or follow your progress from high atop the ash and cottonwood trees. Osprey have taken up residence in a starkly beautiful dead cottonwood on East Island—the parents perched high atop the snag while their young scream to be fed from inside a massive stick nest below. Cyclists and walkers stream silently by on the Springwater-on-the-Willamette trail to the right.

About a mile downstream is the now-huge lagoon, directly across from Ross Island Sand and Gravel boat dock. On the lagoon's west side, high up in the black cottonwood grove, young and adult eagles can be seen in and around their gigantic stick nest from late spring to mid-summer. If the winter's mild you can expect to see eagles year around. Once home to fifty-five Great Blue Heron nests, the cottonwood stand has been the sole domain of the eagles for the past five years. After the eagles moved in the herons packed up and relocated first to East Island and more recently to Ross Island's downstream tip where two small colonies occupy the cottonwoods on either side of the newly erected Pacific Power electrical tower. The eagle nest sits on the southern end of city's newly acquired 45-acre nature park, which was donated by Ross Island Sand and Gravel in the fall of 2007.

Sitting in the middle of the lagoon it's hard to imagine that, prior to gravel extraction, which started in 1926, Ross and Hardtack islands occupied virtually the entire lagoon, with only a very narrow channel between them. Today, looking south across the 130-acre lagoon you can see the dirt from the city's "big pipe" project that is being used to create shallow water, wetland and upland forest habitat. On the northern tip of Hardtack island sits the conveyor belts and hoppers of the rambling processing plant that continues to sort sand and gravel from the raw materials that are barged from up the Columbia Gorge.



Aerial view of the Ross Island Archipelago. Photo courtesy of Mike Houck

As you re-enter the Holgate Channel and continue downstream, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and the downtown skyline come into view. Rounding the northern tip of Ross Island, heron nests are scattered among the black cottonwood trees. As you skirt along Ross Island's west bank, keep an eye peeled for nesting Red-tailed Hawks, newly fledged herons, Spotted Sandpipers and Belted Kingfishers which nest in their excavated holes in the island's steep cut banks. Continue paddling upstream to miniscule Toe Island, which is also owned by the city, and then cut diagonally, southwest across the river back to Willamette Park. If you decide on an afternoon paddle, a pint or two can be had at McMenam's Fulton Pub and Brewery across SW Macadam.

Mike Houck is the Executive Director of the Urban Greenspaces Institute in Portland, OR.

NETWORK NEWS

MENU FOR THE FUTURE INSPIRES EDIBLE FOREST GARDEN IN OLYMPIA, WA

Olympia's first *Menu for the Future* discussion group took the course's message to heart and decided to plant an Edible Forest Garden in NWEI Olympia Course Coordinator Cy Englert's yard during the fifth week of the course. Neighbors and community members were invited to help plant fruit and nut trees and berry bushes in June during two days of working together while learning how to create Edible Forest Gardens.

Edible Forest Gardens consist of three main layers, with fruit and nut trees as the upper canopy, berries and other edible bushes as the middle layer and perennial vegetables and fruits as the ground cover. Edible Forest Gardens mirror natural food forests and are a terrific source of local and organic, no-till foods. The trees and deep-rooted plants pull up water so that after a few years they need no watering and are self-sustaining like the natural forest. Trees, plants and soils soak up and hold carbon to slow global warming, and storm water is held and used rather than rushing lawn toxins into rivers, lakes and streams.

The group also planted Siberian Pea Shrub as food for Cy's chickens. Apples, plums, hazelnuts, serviceberries, elderberries, blueberries, raspberries, currants, hardy kiwi, fig, green tea, pawpaw, persimmon, strawberries and rosa rugosa will provide food for Cy and ten neighbor families he is inviting to plant raised beds adjacent to the forest garden. Perennial vegetables such as spinach Good King Henry, corn salad, asparagus and Jerusalem artichokes are also in the garden plans. For more information on how you too could replace your lawn with an Edible Forest Garden, contact Olympia non-profit Terra Commons at www.terracommons.us.

Pat Rasmussen, Terra Commons, Edible Forest Garden Program

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE VALUE OF SUSTAINABILITY

NWEI Course at The Standard Sparks Corporate Green Team

The Standard, a leader in the insurance and financial services sector, was founded in Portland, Ore., in 1906. The company has grown considerably over the years, now conducting business in 50 states and employing more than 3,400 people. The Standard has a long history of supporting the communities where its employees live and work and increasingly, the company is finding that focusing on sustainability is a good value for the community AND for business.

The all-employee, all-volunteer Green Team is, in many ways, directly responsible for that shift in thinking. The impetus for the creation of the Green Team grew out of a NWEI discussion course. In 2004, nine employees signed up for the *Choices for Sustainable Living* course; when it ended after nine weeks, they opted to keep meeting and the Green Team was born. Now, four years later, the team has 54 members and helps shape an ambitious sustainability agenda for the company and its employees.

The fledgling group received support and a charter from management. A Steering Committee was convened—comprised of top executives and others—to provide support and guidance. Later, in what would be one of the Green Team's most important recommendations, a sustainability coordinator position was created to unify efforts throughout the company.

The sustainability coordinator, working in conjunction with and supported by the Green Team, implemented some remarkable changes in the company including:

- a paper reduction initiative and a companywide switch to recycled paper
- developing corporate metrics to track and further refine sustainability efforts

- the launch of a recycling awareness campaign aimed at approaching zero waste
- working with their Real Estate department to pursue LEED green building certification at a new construction site and several existing buildings
- reduced resource consumption (water and electricity) in the home offices
- an exploration of alternative transportation options for employees.

In addition to supporting and shaping these efforts, the Green Team also takes on a direct grassroots advocacy role. They host well-attended “Green Bag” lunch lectures for employees, sharing hands-on information about a variety of topics. They're also launching a “Green Ambassador” program that will allow interested employees to connect directly with team members functioning as subject matter experts to answer sustainability-related questions.

As the influence of the Green Team continues to expand, The Standard is learning that doing what's right for the environment can also produce good business results. For example, reducing resource consumption translates into long-term cost savings, a plus for any business. Effective sustainability strategies also make it easier to attract and retain employees who—increasingly—value such commitments.

Honoring their roots, the Green Team continues to host a variety of NWEI courses each year. Since March 2007—when The Standard began covering the costs of participation and better records were available—251 participants (202 employees) have attended a NWEI course. In 2008, by mid-July the Green Team will have hosted eight courses

attended by more than 103 participants (87 employees); 74 percent say they never before attended a NWEI discussion course. Highlighting the team's growing influence, The Standard's South Portland, Maine, office is the site of a July NWEI course.

NWEI has proven an invaluable ally for the Green Team as they continue to build a companywide foundation for valuing sustainability. As The Standard continues to grow, so too will the impact of the passionate, committed members of the Green Team.

Protect the Earth Through Public Speaking

So many issues, so little time. It is not always easy to find the best way to have our message heard and we're grateful that you have answered the call. For a number of years, NWEI has been able to reach a broader audience through our membership in Earth Share of Oregon. And we could use your help this year. Earth Share of Oregon is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with businesses and public agencies to enable their employees to support 71 environmental groups through workplace giving campaigns. Last year, more than 4,000 Oregonians supported Earth Share through giving campaigns in 100+ workplaces. NWEI was able to use the funds raised through Earth Share to broaden outreach nationally, engaging over 12,000 individuals in dialogue around sustainability and lifestyle choices.

In order to get the word out to their employees about the giving options available, many workplaces invite Earth Share members to give brief presentations about their projects. If you have a passion for NWEI's work, a small amount of time to volunteer to make a 5-10 minute presentation, and a willingness to overcome stage fright about public speaking, let us know! We'd love to have you represent us as only you can do it as a generous and committed supporter.

If you'd like to learn more about Earth Share and about their business partners in your area, you can visit the Earth Share website at www.earthshare-oregon.org. To join the team of speakers for the 2008 Fall Charitable Giving Campaign, please contact Meghan Humphreys: (503) 223-9015 or meghan@earthshare-oregon.org.





Northwest Earth Institute

317 SW Alder, Suite 1050
Portland, Oregon 97204

503.227.2807
www.nwei.org

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*"We believe it is essential to talk with one other about what is happening in our food system. The impacts of domestic agribusiness and a globalized food system affect us all. Relationships are powerful. Conversations are powerful. Talking with people we trust gives us the strength to change our minds and our behavior. We recommend [Menu for the Future](http://www.localharvest.org), as an excellent starting place for these conversations." – Local Harvest, resources for the local foods movement:
www.localharvest.org*

Help NWEI save resources! Contact Jane Turville at jane@nwei.org to receive *EarthMatters* electronically.

I'd like to become a member of the Northwest Earth Institute

Membership includes a one-year subscription to *EarthMatters*.

Name _____
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(Tax deductible) Sustainer \$250 Patron \$500 Founder's Circle \$1,000

I'm already a member - here's an additional gift of: \$ _____

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Northwest Earth Institute, a 501 (c) (3) charitable foundation, was founded to be a resource for citizens who wish to accept greater personal responsibility for the future of the Earth.



Newsletter Staff

Managing Editor
Jane Turville

Editorial Committee

Deb McNamara
Mike Mercer
Jane Turville

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