



ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH
STRATEGY CENTER

**Thank you for caring about our
healthy future!**

Toxic-free and climate-friendly, with environmental
justice for all.

2019 Action and Gratitude Report

The **Environmental Health Strategy Center** works to ensure that all people are healthy and thriving in a safe environment. We protect public health by working for equal access to safe food and water, and healthier products that are toxic-free and climate-friendly. We bring the best science and authentic voices to the table to persuade government and industry to embrace common sense solutions with environmental justice for all, in your community and across the nation.

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With You, We Will Prevail

What wins victories for a safe, toxic-free environment? Your positive energy, your grassroots activism, and your demand for responsible leadership.

In this report, you'll read about action made possible last year and this year because of you—all of it to ensure that Americans of all races, origins, and income levels have access to safe food and water, toxic-free products, and good climate-friendly jobs that can help keep families and communities healthy.

To prevent diseases, disabilities, and early death, individuals and communities must refuse to accept decisions and systems that protect petrochemical industry profits more than the health and safety of children and the planet.

We can prevail by working alongside moms and dads, doctors and nurses, scientists and educators, workers and business leaders, elected officials, and attorneys who fight for public health through the courts.

Let's stick together for a healthy future with decreasing rates of autism, learning disabilities, asthma, allergies, infertility, and cancer. When common-sense solutions can protect us, there is no reason our babies, families, or communities should be at risk.

Onward, for health and justice,



Michael E. Belliveau
President and Executive Director



LEFT: Dr. Ami Zota, our 2018 Celebration keynote speaker, and Mike Belliveau, Strategy Center executive director. Dr. Zota, assistant professor at the George Washington University Milken School of Health, is recognized for her research on toxic chemicals in food and her environmental justice science. RIGHT: Ginger Jordan-Hillier, who received our 2018 Frank Hatch Environmental Health Leader Award.

Thank you for your work, 2018 Leadership Award winners!

Frank Hatch Environmental Health

Leader Award: *Ginger Jordan-Hillier*

Grassroots Leadership Award:

Mano en Mano

Bettie Kettell Outstanding Health Professional Award:

Leonardo Trasande, M.D., M.P.P.

Sustainable Business Award:

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Gifts and grant awards for the period December 1, 2017-December 31, 2018. **We are grateful for support at all levels, and regret that limited space does not allow us to print all of your names.**



Safe Drinking Water in Rural Maine

Let's slash exposure to arsenic, lead, and other toxic pollutants in residential drinking wells, and ensure access to safe drinking water for all Mainers.

When our organizer Sergio Cahueque, traveled to the rural town of Milbridge, Maine, he met a close-knit immigrant community where families look out for one another. But there was a hidden danger they didn't know to look out for: arsenic in well water.

In Sergio's bilingual English-Spanish presentation in partnership with the Downeast Maine-based service organization Mano en Mano, he explained that arsenic is linked to learning disabilities and cancer, and seeps from bedrock into well water. It's colorless and odorless, so the only way to know it's there is to test the water. He strongly encouraged participants to do that: *Hazle un examen a tu agua!*

That day, Sergio provided participants with a free comprehensive water test kit—and it revealed that the well water Julianna Vasquez and her two children were drinking had dangerous levels of arsenic. Maine law the Strategy Center helped pass in 2017 makes modest funding for water treatment available for qualifying families, and Sergio helped Julianna apply.

After Julianna's filtering system was installed, Sergio coached her to help others learn and share safe drinking water information.

This is at the heart of our mission: developing community leaders to become health advocates for their friends, families, and neighbors.

"I planted a seed of awareness, so that knowledge about safe drinking water could grow from its roots." – Sergio Cahueque
Strategy Center organizer

Strategy Center Organizer Sergio Cahueque and Ian Yaffe, executive director of Mano en Mano, the recipient of our 2018 Grassroots Leadership Award.



Dave Dostie

It's critical to test drinking water from wells in Maine for arsenic and other contaminants.

Thanks to You:

- In English and Spanish, we reached more than 1,300 residents in 2018 with information about safe drinking water and resources.
- Partnering with a community organization, school, and health center, we also supported an additional 369 rural Maine families in obtaining arsenic tests and identifying treatment options.

Action Now:

- We're working with grassroots community leaders in arsenic hotspots to help them help their neighbors learn about well-water testing and water treatment assistance.
- We're looking at lead, too, as a source of drinking water contamination. Resulting from pump and pipe corrosion, lead has been found in well water with surprising frequency in other states, but is rarely tested for in Maine.
- We'll work with Governor Janet Mills' administration to promote residential drinking water protections and watchdog implementation of the safe drinking water laws we led passage of in 2017.

Food Fight Nationwide

We're working to get rid of toxic chemicals in your food.



Because the broken federal safety system doesn't keep toxic chemicals from coming into contact with food, consumers *must* demand that companies make changes and states ban health-harming chemicals such as phthalates (THAL-eights) and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

Commonly used in a range of products, phthalates are linked to asthma and allergies, learning disabilities, and infertility and other reproductive harms. They get into food during processing, packaging and preparation from plastic tubing, rubber parts, conveyor belts, gaskets in bottle caps and jar lids, printing inks and adhesives, and plastic disposable gloves.

PFAS gets into food because they're used in grease-resistant packaging such as microwaves popcorn bags, bakery and deli paper, take-out containers, and fast food wrappers. People are exposed to PFAS in their food, and when these items are produced and discarded, PFAS can contaminate ground and drinking water, sewage sludge used as fertilizer (see below), and even compost.

PFAS last so persistently in human bodies and the environment, they're called "forever chemicals." Over decades, the chemical industry has spent untold millions to cover up how PFAS are linked to kidney and testicular cancer, liver toxicity, hormone disruption, harm to the immune system, and reduced birth weight.

Alarmed? You should be. Nearly all babies now born in America have PFAS, phthalates, or both in their blood.

PFAS on the Farm

Unsafe levels of PFAS chemicals have been found in cow's milk, drinking water, and hay fields since 2016 at Stoneridge Farm in Arundel, Maine. One, known as PFOS, was found at the highest level reported in milk, anywhere.

What's believed to be the source of PFAS contamination that has ruined a family farm? Toxic sludge—also called "biosolids"—authorized by the state to be spread as fertilizer, beginning in the 1980s, from a paper mill and sewage treatment plants.

All 50 states practice land spreading of sewage sludge, which is produced in every community that has a sewage treatment plant to process wastewater from homes, schools, businesses, and industry.

We're calling on Maine to lead the nation in testing farm fields where sludge has been spread, making the chemical industry pay for investigating and cleaning up PFAS pollution, and phasing out all PFAS still used in farm fields and agricultural products.

Thanks to You:

- Company doors opened after the widely reported news that our tests found phthalates in macaroni and cheese powder and other cheeses in 2017. Last year, our national Food Fight! coalition met with major conventional and organic food brands, pushing them to identify and eliminate sources of phthalates in their supply chains.

- We released first-of-its-kind research on dairy farm equipment, to help identify how phthalates leach into some milk and cheese. The goal is a switch to safer alternatives.

Action Now:

- We're working with Maine legislators for a law to phase out phthalates and PFAS chemicals from food packaging. Washington state now has a similar law, other states on working for the same, and Maine can demonstrate its own strong leadership.

- We're phthalate-testing a product that food handlers across the country use, and we'll announce findings this year, as part of the Food Fight! campaign.



Farmer Fred Stone, owner of his family's Stoneridge Farm, with one of his cows, Lida Rose.

Thanks to You:

- We helped persuade 13 major retailers with more than 30,000 stores to end their sale of paint strippers containing the deadly chemicals methylene chloride and NMP, starting with Lowe's.
- We co-authored the third annual Retailer Report Card, which graded 40 companies, including six restaurant chains, on their safer chemical policies and practices. (See back cover.)
- With our lawsuit against the EPA pending, we filed Freedom of Information Act requests for information the agency is keeping secret, and we submitted over 1,500 pages critiquing agency actions against public health.
- We mobilized Mainers who helped prevent Michael Dourson, the chemical industry's go-to guy for pseudo-science, from becoming EPA's leader of its office in charge of chemical safety.

Action Now:

- We're fighting in the courts, through public comments, behind the scenes, and by organizing public pressure to demand the EPA follows the law and bans the toxic chemicals its own scientists say are the most dangerous in the marketplace.
- We are organizing consumers to demand that retailers and restaurant chains take action where the EPA won't, and refuse to sell products with dangerous chemicals, including PFAS and phthalates, when safer alternatives are available.

Products that Don't Kill

In the market place, we're demanding retailers replace the most dangerous, toxic products with safer alternatives.

Drew Wynne died in Charleston, S.C., while resurfacing a walk-in freezer floor, using a widely available paint stripper. It contained methylene chloride, a deadly chemical that converts to carbon monoxide in the blood stream, cutting off oxygen to the heart.

Drew's grieving brother Brian asked, "How is it that you can buy something like that, just off the shelf, and it will kill you instantly?"

More than 50 families across the country have lost loved ones to methylene chloride.

"My brother didn't need to die," says Brian Wynne.

As a partner in the national Mind the Store campaign of Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, we organized consumer protests and worked with company executives for safer chemical policies.

In court, we're fighting to make sure the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency restricts the most dangerous chemicals on the market.

On the list is lung-poisoning asbestos, which kills an estimated 40,000 Americans each year, yet the Trump EPA refuses to properly evaluate and ban. A Russian asbestos producer has publicly hailed President Trump as "on our side."

On the list is HBCD, a chemical flame retardant that escapes from everyday electronics and building materials into household dust, then ends up on children's hands and in their mouths.

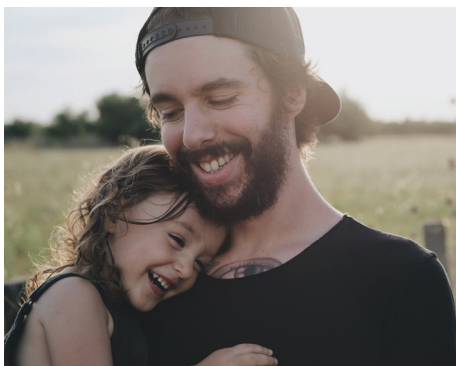
On the list is trichloroethylene, a cancer-linked toxic chemical that for more than 30 years contaminated the drinking and bathing water of hundreds of thousands of service members and their families at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

And that's just a start. We can't let the EPA forget that its job is to protect Americans' health, not chemical industry profits.



Climate-Friendly Rural Jobs

Within ten years, Maine could attract more than \$1 billion in investment in forest bioproducts, create and retain nearly 1,500 jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 500,000 tons.



Our Sustainable Economy program advances the biobased manufacturing industry that uses plant-based raw material, instead of oil and gas, to make products. Switching to biobased products made from renewable materials will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, compared to petroleum-based products.

Plus, the high-paying jobs biobased manufacturing creates can boost rural economic development in Maine and thereby help keep families and communities healthy.

Investment in forest-based biobased manufacturing, especially, makes good sense for Maine, the most forested of the United States. Commercial scale technologies can convert sustainably harvested second-generation forest residuals into biobased chemicals, bioplastics, advanced biofuels, nanocellulose, and other high-value materials.



Kai Smith of Maine Coasters & Bio Boards with Biobased Maine Executive Director Charlotte Mace. Last year, the Strategy Center presented Kai with our Sustainable Business Award, and the Maine Development Foundation recognized Charlotte as its Champion of Economic Development for Innovation.

Case Study: Maine Coasters & Bio-Boards

With Maine's beer businesses growing rapidly and its forest industry seeking new opportunities, Falmouth native and entrepreneur Kai Smith knew his business idea was a good one: manufacture biobased, biodegradable drink coasters made from Maine softwood pulp and leftover or "spent" hops from Maine breweries.

Then Biobased Maine advised Kai, and we're proud to report that Maine Coasters & Bio-Boards won \$25,000 in seed funding from the Maine Technology Institute. Kai's now fielding order requests from major brands.

Biobased Maine is a trade organization the Strategy Center helped found to serve leaders of business, research, and government working to attract investment in biobased manufacturing in Maine. See Biobased Maine's full list of member businesses, organizations, and educational institutions at biobasedmaine.org

Thanks to You:

We worked with Biobased Maine to:

- Promote Maine's assets for biobased investment, at major trade conferences in the U.S. and abroad.
- Connect Maine's forest industry to emerging, biobased technologies, such as manufacturing chemicals and products from wood.
- Reach out to legislative and gubernatorial candidates in Maine with information about how elected leaders can help make our state attractive to the rapidly growing biobased industry.
- Biobased Maine also played a key leadership role in developing the Forest Opportunity Roadmap/Maine (FOR/Maine), and won a contract with the Maine Technology Institute to elevate new manufacturing technologies that can help diversify Maine's forest products industry.

Action Now:

- With business leaders, workers, and other advocates, we're supporting legislative leaders who are working for common-sense production tax credits for biobased manufacturing to incentivize the industry's growth in Maine, on par with other states.



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Summer interns? Yes please!



From left, Grace Chamberlin, Isa Berzansky, Caroline Jacoby, Izzy Gray, Riley Janeway, Riena Harker. These summer of 2018 interns came from Bowdoin College, Colby College, Williams College, and Lehigh University.

Our interns cross the state, and covered nearly 7,000 miles last year. They met with all kinds of people to help us win common-sense policies in Maine that are models for the nation. For info about our intern program, please call (207) 699-5799.

Thank you for working for safe, toxic-free food, drinking water, and products, plus climate-friendly green jobs and products that help keep families and communities healthy.



Check Out the Latest Retailer Report Card

We are lead partners in the national Mind the Store campaign that challenges big retailers to eliminate toxic chemicals and substitute them with safer alternatives. The annual Retailer Report Card we co-author grades retailers—including grocery and fast food chains—on their safer chemical policies.

Check out the grades for more than 40 retailers at retailerreportcard.org. Then think about where you may want to shop and eat.



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- Our monthly eNews and mailed updates.
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The most important reward? Knowing you're investing in a healthy, toxic-free future.

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