

## Spring Cleaning

Let's face it: few of us are as good of a housekeeper as we aspire to be. A new study, however, suggests that all that dust in our houses may be more than just unsightly. Researchers found that the dust in Oregon households, in particular,

(see pg. 4). Our Business page (pg. 5) highlights a few companies that offer cleaning services and products that are less toxic. And we hope you'll sign up for our April 19-20 events in Eugene and Portland on *Childproofing for Toxics: Some Practical Advice*, featuring Dr. Ted Schettler (see pg. 7).



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has much higher levels of certain toxic flame retardants and pesticides. The article on page 2 of this issue will tell you more.

You'll also find information on two new Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) projects that are helping Oregonians keep our kids healthier by keeping our homes and childcare centers free of environmental hazards

Last but not least, be sure to check out the Legislative Update on the back page to find out how OEC is doing its own spring cleaning down in Salem. Our legislative agenda, which focuses on reducing toxic pollution, is making good progress through the State Legislature and if passed into law, will help make it much easier for you to keep your home, and your loved ones, healthy.

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# New Study Shows High Levels of Toxins in Household Dust

If guilt weren't enough, here's another reason to keep those floors and household knick-knacks clean: a new nationwide study shows that household dust is a magnet for toxic household pollutants. Oregon homes, in particular, had especially high levels of certain pesticides and toxic flame retardants in dust samples taken earlier this year.

How does ordinary dust get to be toxic?

"Toxic chemicals are brought into our homes through ordinary consumer products including electronic products, vinyl flooring, plastic materials, foam cushions, pest control products and other everyday products that many people wrongfully assume are safe," said Laura Weiss, OEC Program Director and Oregon study coordinator. "Through

normal wear and tear, the chemicals in these products escape and tend to accumulate in household dust."

The pesticides detected by the study – permethrins – are a type of chemical widely used in sprays to treat our homes and pets for fleas. Even if flea powders or ointments are applied, the chemicals don't stay on your cat and dog – they also end up on rugs, furniture and other places where dust collects.

Likewise, the flame retardants that were found are ones that are used in a wide range of household products, including electronic equipment, foam cushions and other items. They too eventually end up in household dust. Recent studies have found high levels of flame retardants in the breast milk

of Northwest women; taken together, both studies suggest that dust may be one of the main avenues of exposure.

OEC is currently advocating for legislation in Salem (see back page) that would ban some of the most toxic flame retardants, following the lead of at least five other states. Some product manufacturers, including Apple, Epson and Panasonic, have already eliminated the worst flame retardants in favor of ones that are less toxic but equally effective.

Dealing with pesticides can be trickier. As any Northwest pet

owner knows, fleas are no stranger here, and few of us are willing to tolerate them in our homes. If combing your pet to remove fleas doesn't do the job, the best advice is to keep pets outside for a while, if possible, after applying flea treatments. Then, be sure to thoroughly and regularly vacuum or mop areas of the house where pets tend to hang out to remove dust and dander that might harbor pesticides.

OEC is also advocating in Salem for legislation that would implement a state pesticide "right to know" law passed in 1999. Under that law, commercial pest control companies that treat your house with pesticides would be required to disclose what they apply.

No home is ever going to be spotless or free of harmful chemicals, but by supporting OEC's work in Salem and taking a few simple steps of your own, you can greatly minimize the degree to which you and your loved ones are exposed to toxins.



# OEC's Cleaner Cars Campaign: A Breath of Fresh Air

With bright days and warmer temperatures, we all want to throw open the windows for a breath of fresh air. OEC is working to make that air fresher and cleaner via our new "Cleaner Cars for Oregon" campaign.

Even though today's vehicles are cleaner than those of 30 years ago, their cumulative impact is still bad news for the environment – and our health.

Cars and trucks are:

- Oregon's largest source of benzene, diesel and formaldehyde emissions that are 10 times higher than health benchmarks in every county in Oregon.
- Oregon's second largest source of the global warming gases, such as carbon dioxide, that are changing our climate.
- Less fuel efficient than 20 years ago, which is driving pressure to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (70% of the gas we Oregonians burn comes via the Alaska pipeline).

With your help, OEC will be pursuing three key goals as part of this campaign:

- Get state lawmakers or the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission to adopt stricter tailpipe standards for all new cars, modeled on ones already in place in California.
- Put 100,000 ultra-clean, fuel-efficient "hybrid" gas-electric cars on the road by 2010.

- Create new incentives for owners of diesel-fueled vehicles, which are especially bad polluters, to switch to cleaner-burning "biodiesel" that can be made from farm crops, such as canola, grown right here in the NW.

These may seem like ambitious goals, but we've already started this campaign. Our bill to promote biodiesel has already been introduced in the 2005 Oregon Legislature, with strong bipartisan support (see back page).

An advisory group appointed by Governor Kulongoski has recommended that Oregon adopt tough standards for auto emissions.

And environmentally minded Oregonians are already snapping up hybrid cars at a rate five times higher than the national average.

You can learn more about hybrid cars and other cleaner car options by requesting a copy of our "Oregonians Love Their Hybrids" brochure. Just call (503) 222-1963 x. 106 to order your free copy.



## Who Benefits?

Cleaner cars will benefit Oregonians in a number of ways:

### Kids with Asthma:

Thousands of them. Less ozone and diesel exhaust in the air will help them breathe easier.

### Kids At Risk of Cancer:

Childhood cancers are, fortunately, still rare, but some forms are increasing at alarming rates. Two recent studies indicate that many childhood cancers are closely related to exposure to toxic air pollutants in the womb.

**The Elderly:** Other recent studies have shown that deaths from respiratory illnesses increase significantly whenever air quality deteriorates.

**All of Us:** Climate change is real, and already happening. Anything we do now to reduce vehicle emissions will minimize the ultimate damage to our health and our environment.

# Two New OEC Projects Benefit Kids Under Five

Kids under five, and especially babies still in the womb, are especially vulnerable to pollution and other health threats. Childhood illnesses, such as asthma, as well as more serious problems such as birth defects and cancer, all have linkages to pollutants found in and around our homes.

That's why the Oregon Environmental Council has developed two new programs to better protect kids' health by creating healthier living environments in the places where young children spent most of their time: at home and in childcare facilities.

## Getting Baby Off to a Healthy Start

Our new "Tiny Footprints" Healthy Baby Shower Toolkit offers expectant parents a guide to making their home eco-safe for children, starting with a healthy baby shower. The toolkit provides ideas for baby gifts and other products that are low or non-toxic, along with suggestions for baby-proofing tips that are simple and easy to do.

The toolkit will be accompanied by a Tiny Footprints website, full of online resources and tools, such as a "Party Page" where expectant parents can keep a baby gift list, share pictures and prepare for the baby shower. The website will also have pre-natal and nursing resources, coupons and other information.

OEC has worked closely with several businesses and agencies, including Hanna Andersson, Nike, Babyworks, county health departments, and the Oregon Department of Human Services, to design the "Tiny Footprints" Healthy Baby Shower project.

For more information, contact OEC Program Director Heidi Sickert at (503) 222-1963 x. 108.

## Eco-Healthy Child Care



Our "Eco-Healthy" Childcare Project also seeks to better protect children's health in Oregon by encouraging childcare facilities to take simple, inexpensive and effective steps to improve the environmental health of their facilities.

To achieve this goal, OEC will be promoting a new statewide program later this year to promote eco-friendly childcare facilities. Interested childcare facilities will be sent a self-assessment checklist of 25 recommended steps childcare providers can take to ensure that their facilities are free of toxins that could adversely affect a child's immediate or long-term health.

Facilities that qualify as "Eco-Healthy" will receive a colorful sticker to place in a prominent location to let

parents and others know of their efforts and demonstrate their commitment to being eco-friendly. OEC and its partners will also publicize a list of all childcare facilities in Oregon that qualify as eco-friendly.

For more information, please contact OEC Program Director Laura Weiss at (503) 222-1963 x. 111.



# Cleaning Up Your Clean-Up

It's a terrible irony, but, sometimes, the very products we use to help clean our house or workspace can themselves be unhealthy. Eager to get the maximum impact, we turn to harsh solvents and other chemicals such as chlorine that may do their job, but which also present health risks of their own.

Fortunately, some companies offer cleaning products and services that are effective, but also low in toxic chemicals.

Right here in Oregon, **TerraClean** is a carpet cleaning service that specializes in low/non-toxic carpet and upholstery cleaning.

Co-founder Jaym Wolfe had worked in a family carpet cleaning business most of his life, but he started TerraClean in 2003 with co-founder Patricia Uber because of health issues he experienced after working around the traditional, toxic, carpet cleaning chemicals. They even use less-polluting biodiesel to fuel

their brightly colored, butterfly-bedecked company vans. To learn more, call (503) 293-5355 or visit [www.terracleanworld.com](http://www.terracleanworld.com).

Just across the Columbia River, **Bi-O-Kleen Industries** in Vancouver makes a line of citrus-based cleaners and enzyme-based stain and odor eliminators that are distributed by Mountain Peoples NW Coop, Babyworks and other retail outlets. Visit [www.bi-o-kleen.com](http://www.bi-o-kleen.com) or call 1-800-477-0188 to learn more.

For commercial and industrial sites, Wilsonville-based **Coastwide Laboratories** offers a "Sustainable Earth" product line of cleansers that has been third-party certified by Green Seal for its environmental advantages. In 2003, they won a City of Portland's "Best"

Award for their efforts. Coastwide has 11 supplier outlets throughout the Northwest. You can call 1-800-775-3289 or visit [www.coastwidelabs.com](http://www.coastwidelabs.com) for more information.

**Seventh Generation** is a Vermont-based company whose products can be found in many Oregon stores. The company's name is based on an Iroquois maxim that every decision we make should consider the impact on the seventh generation after our own.

Instead of chlorine, their cleaning products use hydrogen peroxide, the same stuff that Mom used to put on your cuts to kill bacteria. It's far less toxic than chlorine and breaks down faster in the environment. You can learn more at

[www.seventhgeneration.com](http://www.seventhgeneration.com).

A Wisconsin-based company, **Natural Choices**, offers "Home-Safe" cleaning products that use oxygen-bleaches (soda ash plus oxygen) in lieu of chlorine. Their products can be ordered online at [www.oxyboost.com](http://www.oxyboost.com) or by calling 1-866-OXY-BOOST.

Finally, the **Clean Environment Company**, based in Omaha, has partnered with the National Park Service to use their cleaners made from soy and corn in national parks and other locations. The Children's Health Environmental Coalition promotes their products on its website ([www.chechnet.org](http://www.chechnet.org)) or you can order direct from the company at [www.cleanenvironmentco.com](http://www.cleanenvironmentco.com) or by calling 1-800-266-2353.

It may take a bit of experimentation to find out which products best suit your needs, but with the right products in hand, it's possible to clean up your clean-up, creating a healthier, safer home.

## Clearing the Air on Air Cleaners

Many businesses which promote air cleaners on TV and in catalogs would like you to think that investing in their product will improve your health.

However, independent analysts, including EPA, the American Lung Association and WebMD, send a different message: buyer beware! All agree that there is no solid scientific evidence at this point that HEPA filters, electrostatic precipitators, carbon activated filters, ion generators and other fancy-sounding (and costly!) gadgets make a meaningful difference in protecting your health!

In fact, some – such as ionizers that generate ozone – can themselves be detrimental to your health, since ozone (one of the main components of smog) can be a powerful lung irritant.

Studies that have tried to link the use of air cleaners and filters to reduced asthma have been inconclusive, at best. HEPA filters and electrostatic precipitators **do** remove particles from the air, and carbon filters can absorb gases like formaldehyde – it's just unclear whether they do so effectively enough to make a difference in the incidence of asthma or other illnesses.

With the jury still out on air filters, some still opt to err on the side of precaution and use one anyway. If you do invest in an air cleaner, remember that it is not a primary solution to health problems. You still need to ventilate your house well, dust in all those hard-to-reach places, wash your bedding regularly, and, most effectively of all, look for opportunities to reduce pollutants at their source by buying low or no-toxic household products whenever possible.



# Oregonians Love Cleaner Cars!

Environmentally minded Oregonians are buying cleaner, fuel-efficient "hybrid" gas-electric cars, such as the Toyota Prius, at a rate five times higher than the national average. OEC's Chris Hagerbaumer recently traveled the state to meet with some of them and find out why. Here are just a few short profiles of Oregonians who are doing their part for the environment by driving cleaner, fuel-efficient cars.

## Medford pastor converts others to hybrid ownership



*Reverend Paul Robinson (Medford, Oregon)*

A lot of people stop and ask Reverend Robinson about his Prius. "Most people are very intrigued," he said. "I realize I'm converting some." Given that he drives all day visiting with members of the Medford Congregational Church, Reverend Robinson wanted a fuel-efficient car. And the environment factored high in the decision to purchase a hybrid.

"Air quality is a real issue in the Rogue Valley," said the Reverend. "The fact that the Prius has the lowest polluting engine made was really important to me and my wife. We believe in being caretakers of the environment."

## Bird enthusiast more than doubles mileage with Honda Civic Hybrid

*Anna Slemmer (Roseburg, Oregon)*



Anna Slemmer writes a column titled "For the Birds" for the Roseburg News-Review and builds birdhouses for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that are passed out for free.

Anna's interest in nature has translated into personal actions to protect the environment. Anna realized that one thing she had to do was get rid of her Mercury Sable, a car that achieved at most 19 miles per gallon in the city. Anna's Honda Civic Hybrid averages 44 miles per gallon around town. "My Mercury Sable has terrible mileage," Anna said. "I had to put my money where my mouth was."

## Physician appreciates hybrid's lower emissions

*Charlene Clark, MD (Philomath, Oregon)*



Dr. Charlene Clark, a physician at Good Samaritan and Oregon State University, has seen an increase in asthma cases in recent years, especially among children. Nearly 10% of Oregon's population now has asthma. "Air pollution impacts asthmatics," said Dr. Clark. "They simply don't tolerate dirty air." Concerns about air quality were one of the reasons Dr. Clark chose a Prius, which is designated as a Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle.

Dr. Clark is a self-professed "motor head." Hailing from Michigan, she grew up in a family that worked for car companies. In college she worked on GM's factory line. She's happy to see that an American car company, Ford, has introduced a hybrid. And Dr. Clark's husband thinks the Prius' digital display cured her lead foot because it gives immediate feedback on gas mileage.



## Radio personality touts hybrids on air

*Dana Jeffries (Portland, Oregon)*



Dana Jeffries announces news and traffic on K103's morning show. She commutes to work in her Toyota Prius and has educated her listeners about the benefits of hybrid gas-electric cars. "My listeners write in and ask me about my hybrid," said Dana. "I think Toyota ought to hire me!"

Dana notes, "It's fast, peppy. I can leave everybody in the dirt." One Porsche-owning co-announcer didn't believe the Prius could go 80-90 miles per hour; but recently drove one and has totally changed his tune.

Dana considers her Prius a fine family car. She's delighted that her daughters, age 9 and 11, understand and appreciate that it gets good gas mileage.

If you'd like to learn more about hybrid cars and other clean car alternatives, call us at (503) 222-1963 x. 106 and ask for a free copy of our "Buyer's Guide" to hybrid cars.

# Healthy ENVIRONMENT FORUM SERIES 2005

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# OEC's Speaker Series' Finales

The fourth season of OEC's *Healthy Environment Forum* speaker series concludes on

**April 19th and 20th**, with events in Eugene and Portland, respectively. Dr. Ted Schettler, author of *Generations at Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment*, will outline how parents,



pediatricians and other caregivers can better protect children from environmental health threats, such as toxic pollution in the home. Both events will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., and include heavy hors d'oeuvres.

OEC's *Forum for Business and the Environment* speaker series wraps up its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary season this spring with two events.

On **April 21** in Portland, the Business Forum will focus on the benefits of cleaner cars. Bob Epstein, CEO of Environmental Entrepreneurs, will discuss business support for legislation in California that created the nation's first tailpipe standards to limit greenhouse gas pollution from cars. Deron Lovaas of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) will discuss cutting-edge strategies that businesses can use to "green" their fleets.

A **May 11** Forum event, also in Portland, will examine green marketing strategies. Consumers are increasingly interested in products that are healthy and "natural," and businesses that successfully market to these consumers are booming. Theresa Marquez, Marketing Director for Organic Valley Farms, and Sam Currie, Vice President for Bon Appétit Management Company, will share their experiences, the critical

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Oregon Nurses Association  
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Chapter

partnerships and strategies needed, and the inspiration and values at the core of their companies' business plans.

Both Business Forum events are from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., and include a complimentary breakfast.

Reservations are required for all Forum events. Tickets are \$25 (\$20 for OEC members). Call (503) 222-1963 x. 100 to RSVP.

# Cleaning Up in Salem



In this issue, we've focused on "spring cleaning" and how you can protect yourself and your loved ones from household pollutants. But, ultimately, the best way to clean up is to prevent pollution at its source – and OEC is working hard in the 2005 State Legislature to do that.

OEC's package of seven "biofuels" bills would help reduce toxic diesel air pollution and global warming emissions, while creating new jobs and crop options for Oregon farmers, by encouraging the use of cleaner fuels made from canola and soybeans. The

legislation, which has been spearheaded by Representatives Jeff Kropf (R-Sublimity) and Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland) and Senators Rick Metsger (D-Welches) and David Nelson (R-Pendleton), has brought lawmakers of both parties together, a rare enough feat these days to merit front page coverage in *The Oregonian* and the newspaper's editorial board's blessing. In all, more than a dozen Republican lawmakers have signed on to at least part of the biofuels package, joining Democratic colleagues.

With bipartisan support, OEC also is advancing legislation to ban toxic flame retardants that have been found at alarming levels in the Northwest women. Salem Republican Vicki Berger and Gresham Democrat Laurie Monnes Anderson are chief sponsors of the bill, with a bipartisan group of 10 representatives and senators also adding their names as sponsors.

OEC is also working to secure implementation of Oregon's pesticide "right to know" law, which passed the State Legislature in 1999 by an 88-2 margin. Unfortunately, under heavy pressure from the pesticide industry, state lawmakers have not kept this promise to Oregonians. In the past two sessions, they failed to adequately fund a pesticide use reporting system, even though it would cost the average Oregon taxpayer less than one dollar annually.

As of this writing, hearings have already been held in Salem on some bills, budget drafting is under way, and the pace will pick up dramatically in April. If you'd like to get involved in supporting OEC's efforts in Salem, please call Matt Blevins, OEC's legislative affairs director, at (503) 222-1963 x. 103.

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