Dear Friends,

Toxics Action Center was founded nearly three decades ago out of momentum created around the toxics problem in Woburn, Mass. W.R. Grace and others dumped barrels of chemicals that leached into the community’s water supply and caused a cluster of childhood cancers. Today, our work to clean up legacy pollution from our industrial past continues, yet increasingly, we are also helping communities address pollution threats from dirty and dangerous energy sources.

The reality is that our addiction to fossil fuels and nuclear energy threatens the very fabric of our communities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released their fifth and most sobering report this past fall, saying that the growing risks of climate change are so profound that they could stall or reverse generations of progress against poverty and hunger. The report predicted food shortages, the flooding of major cities and entire island nations, mass extinction of plants and animals, and worse. Climate change is no longer a distant threat, but is being felt all over the world, here and now.

It’s hard to be hopeful given the threats we face. Still, here in New England, we’re making progress in turning things around. In 2014, we worked with neighbors in more than 100 communities to win concrete victories right here in our backyard—all the while building a stronger environmental movement so we can win even bigger victories in the years to come.

The past year was marked by profound wins against dirty energy. We prevented ExxonMobil’s plan to pipe tar sands oil through Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. And with the retirement of the Mount Tom coal-fired power plant, one of the biggest polluters in Western Massachusetts, residents in Holyoke are breathing easier. Still, we’re continuing to work here in our backyard—in more than 100 communities to win concrete victories right here in our backyard—all the while building a stronger environmental movement so we can win even bigger victories in the years to come.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of the thousands who support Toxics Action Center financially every year. I am grateful for you.

Thank you,

Sylvia Broude
Executive Director

To Our Members

“...corporate giant and a formidable advocate for environmental safety...”
— Kristen Nason, Framingham Action Coalition for Environmental Safety

Thank You!

All our supporters’ gifts are greatly appreciated. We would like to especially thank the following individual citizen contributors to Toxics Action Center, Inc. and/or Toxics Action Center Campaigns.

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Individuals who supported our work with contributions of $1,000 or more

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Individuals who supported our work with contributions of $500 - $2,499

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Supporters

Individuals who supported our work with contributions of $250 - $299

Joshua Abrams and Emily Haber • John and Elizabeth Andrews • Kathleen Armstrong • Susan Arwood-Stone • Colleen and Dan Avedikian • Glen Ayers • Ann Backus • Jamie Banks • Elaine Belin • John Bennett • Dave and Benson • Lawrence Bloom • Sari Bodi and Eric Montgomery • Doris Bouwens • Bill and Maggie Bromley • Shirley Brown • Olive Bruce • Paul Burns • Mary Cardin and Michael Taft • Neil Carey • Robert Carey • Diane Carr • Jeffrey and Allyson Carver • Richard Clapp and Paula George • Molly Clark • Vinny and Sean Cleary • Robert Coscia • Linda and William Crow • Eve Curtis • Sharon Cashing • Patricia and Tim Deren • Stephen Dungan • DeAnne Dupont • Christopher Duval and Constance McCabe • Carl Edelen and Julie Peters • Dan Edison • Susan Edwards • Merilyn Elderidge • Allergy and John Erickson • Janet and Mark Fagan • Lloyd Fillion • Kem Flamder • David Fleming • Elaine Fossett Ritterhaus • Priscilla Fox and Steven Klein • Barbara Gay • Janet and David Gie • Michelle Giffin and Diana Perkins • Leslie Githens and Randy Grober • Natalie Grog • Carey Gruber • Linda and Doug Hale • Sonia Hamel • Larry Harris • Berl Hartman • Donald Hatfield and Sarah Marter • Virginia Hattersley • William Hefford • Glenn and Karen Hong • Don and Allison Hooper • Polly Hoppin • Arch Hoyst • Mary Howard and Stephen Mooney • Richard and Mirkled Hutchinsion • Ed Jaros • Kathy and Robert Johnson • Kari Kaza • Steven and Barbara Kemp • William and Kathleen Kerr • Stephen King and Margaret Cag • Richard and Pat Kraus • Sheila Lach • Josh Linder • Bob Lubrick • Sheila MacKinnon • Jack Mayer • Christine and David Melchinger • Andy and Mary Mitchell • Kathleen Moore • Roslin Nadeau • Patricia O'Hagan and Alex Chatfield • Ron Pallisco • Harris Parnell and Meredith Small • Melissa Perley • Ann Marie Pitch • Bonnie Raymond • David Reese • Susan Reid and Martin Schmaltz • Andy Robinson • Thomas Roeber • Glen and Constance Rooski • Kathleen Runyah • Teddy Saunders • Carol Setchik • Alice Shaker • Andrew Sheftel • Patrick Slaney • Brad Stepper • Pamela and Henry Steiner • Stephanie Stewart • Alice Swit • Frederick Tillis • Michael Tobian • Stephanie Tournas and Tim Bass • Robert Ullmann and Patricia Wei • Ted Wade • Robert and Elizabeth Werner • Pam and Pauline White • Elizabeth Wilman • Jim Weight • Cynthia Wyatt
At Toxics Action Center, Inc., we pride ourselves on our ability to get an incredible amount done with limited resources. We are able to maximize our impact by focusing on building the capacity of neighborhood groups for the long run. We are so thankful for your contribution. Together, we are moving toward a New England where everyone can drink clean water, breathe clean air and live in a healthy community.

2014 Financial Information & Supporters

2014 Income

- Grants ................................ 55%
- Members & Donors ............ 44%
- Other .............................. 1%

2014 Expenditures

- Program ........................... 74%
- Fundraising ...................... 17%
- Overhead ......................... 9%

Foundation Support

- Anonymous
- Barr Foundation
- Ben and Jerry’s Foundation
- Boston University Superfund Research Program
- Care Academy Charitable Trust
- The Common Sense Fund
- Energy Foundation
- Harris and Frances Bloch Foundation
- Island Foundation
- John Merck Fund
- Lawson Valentine Foundation
- Lintilhac Foundation
- National Science Foundation
- Orchard Foundation
- Toxics Use Reduction Institute

Ensuring clean air, clean water and healthy New England communities for future generations

Toxics Action Center, Inc. and Toxics Action Center Campaigns, Inc. gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities, to help keep New England neighborhoods healthy far into the future.

For information, call (617) 747-4407, or email plannedgiving@toxicsaction.org

Preventing and Cleaning Up Pollution

More than 30 years after the tragedies of Love Canal and Woburn, many of New England’s communities still live near hazardous waste sites, which often threaten drinking water supplies. We continue to field calls from residents facing proposals for new polluting facilities in their neighborhoods. While federal funding for toxic cleanups has dwindled, communities are still fighting for and winning cleanups locally and succeeding in preventing new pollution threats. Toxics Action Center is proud to continue to stand by these communities and to be a resource when polluters refuse to take responsibility for their messes.

Neighbors Join Together to Protect the Orono Bog

Last year, residents in Orono, Maine, faced a renewed gravel mining operation right next to the beloved and environmentally-sensitive Orono Bog Boardwalk. Gravel mining can pollute air and water, while the blasting and crushing of rock causes air and noise pollution. This year, we worked with residents to prevent the reopening of the gravel pit, protecting their town and precious wetlands.

Halting Toxic Air Pollution in Western Massachusetts

In Sheffield, members of the No Asphalt Defense Fund (NADF) have worked tirelessly to prevent a polluting hot-mix asphalt plant from being built near their homes by a company already operating a rock-crushing facility. Toxics Action Center community organizers helped NADF raise money, gain media attention, and demonstrate residents’ opposition to town officials. This year, the company agreed to work with residents to improve conditions at their rock-crushing plant and agreed not to build the asphalt plant.

Local Leader Spotlight: Judy Fradin Protects Woodridge Lake

Woodridge Lake is a special place. Nestled in Northwestern Connecticut amidst rolling hills, the lake is a popular destination for swimmers, boaters and anglers. It’s also part of a watershed providing thousands of residents with clean drinking water—a water source threatened last year by a plan to use the toxic pesticide Sonar to kill weeds in the lake. Sonar is linked to numerous health issues and is banned in Europe.

Judy Fradin is a founding member of the Woodridge Lake Conservancy, and she sprung into action to address this threat. Toxics Action Center community organizers worked with Judy and others in the Conservancy to secure the support of community members for non-toxic lake management. In less than a week, nearly half of the town’s residents signed a statement of support for the Woodridge Lake Conservancy. As a result, the lake’s managing board went on record to say that pesticides were “off the table.” Now Judy is working to build a regional movement to protect water resources in Connecticut, helping other neighbors living near lakes threatened by pesticides to stand up for non-toxic solutions.

“When Toxics Action Center joined us and started leading our coalition, we realized we might not lose. We love Toxics Action and don’t know what we would do without them.”

— Mary Martin, Just Power

Judy Fradin Protects Woodridge Lake

Toxics Action Center and Woodridge Lake Conservancy volunteers build support for a non-toxic lake.
Moving Away from Dirty & Dangerous Energy

Toxics Action Center has worked side-by-side for years with residents fighting the pollution that comes from dirty energy sources of the past. From coal-burning power plants belching smog and soot to nuclear power plants operating far beyond their intended retirement date, it is high time we cleared the way for a cleaner energy future in New England.

Closings in on a Coal-Free New England

After seven years of organizing to retire coal-fired power plants in the region, four of the seven remaining plants are closed or closing soon. In July, we celebrated with community leaders from Action for a Healthy Holyoke after news broke that the Mount Tom coal plant would retire in the fall. We continue to work with residents to ensure that the site is cleaned up and repurposed with healthier economic development. Similarly, we continue our work with Coalition for Clean Air South Coast in Somerset, Mass. to ensure that the Brayton Point coal plant is retired on schedule by 2017.

New England’s remaining coal plants show signs of succumbing to citizen and market pressure. Once these antiquated facilities close, we will be the first region of the country to go coal-free. While much of the rest of the country continues to rely heavily on coal for electricity, New England is proving that it is possible to build a safer and more sustainable energy future.

Retiring Aging Nuclear Power Plants on Schedule

New England’s three nuclear power plants have been generating radioactive waste for more than 40 years. Vermont Yankee was one of the oldest nuclear power plants in the country, with a history of environmental violations and plant failures, including the collapse of a cooling tower and radioactive waste leaks into groundwater. In recent years, our staff coordinated the coalition, Safe Power Vermont, orchestrating citizen organizing statewide. After years of work, Vermont Yankee finally powered down at the end of 2014. We continue to watchdog the plant’s decommissioning, including advocating for continued security at the plant and cleanup of its radioactive waste.

No New Dependence on Fossil Fuels

New England already gets nearly half of its electricity from gas, much of it imported from dangerous fracking fields across the country. As the sun sets on coal-fired power plants across the region, the fossil fuel industry has geared up to push for a massive expansion of dirty gas. These six proposed gas-fired power plants and four separate pipeline projects would lock us into even more dirty fossil fuels for the next half century. The influx of new threats has activated new citizen leaders across the region. Together, we’re working to make the case that New England has been a leader in aggressive energy efficiency, reducing global warming pollution, and increasing solar power—and we should keep it that way.

Words cannot express our gratitude to Toxics Action Center. You made it possible for us to close Somerset Station and the result was cleaner air and a healthier environment for our community.

— Pauline Rodrigues, Coalition for Clean Air South Coast

Clearing the Way for a Clean Energy Future

While the communities we assist at Toxics Action Center are often banding together in reaction to a profound pollution problem, our mission is to move them beyond the backward issue that sparked their activism to work toward visionary solutions. This year, we celebrated progress in the fight for clean energy solutions and more sustainability.

Redeveloping Old Coal Plant Sites

Communities with coal-fired power plants are making progress in planning ahead for remediation and redevelopment of coal plant sites. Closed coal plants often leave behind heavy metal-laden soil pollution, and as coal plants retire, communities lose significant streams of tax revenue. This past year, community groups in Holyoke and Somerset, Mass. helped secure state grant money to hire consultants to perform environmental assessments for local coal plant sites. These consultants will engage the public in a conversation about what types of development could bring good green jobs to their cities. Somerset is being explored as a site for offshore wind transmission and Holyoke for a solar farm.

Local Energy Activists Join Together for Solar

Toxics Action Center is working with community leaders across Massachusetts who are fighting dirty energy on many fronts—coal, biomass, nuclear and fracked gas. This fall, we joined together to learn, network and get behind clean energy solutions. In a daylong retreat in Arlington, Mass., more than 40 citizen leaders gathered for briefings on our energy grid, energy efficiency, and potential clean energy solutions. Coming out of the retreat, the group cemented their dedication to stopping dirty energy in their own communities and decided to work together to convince Massachusetts’ new governor to support vastly expanding solar power in the upcoming year.

The Bridgeport City Council in Connecticut followed suit by passing a resolution calling for redevelopment of the coal plant in their city. Our partners, including Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, are working closely with us to launch this exciting process and ensure that Bridgeport has options as it gets closer to the inevitable closure of the coal plant.

Tackling Climate Change City by City

In Springfield, Mass., community leader Michalena Bessee and Arise for Social Justice took on climate justice. Toxics Action Center Campaigns collaborated with Arise and their working group, Stop Toxic Insecration in Springfield, to stop the permitting of a construction waste incinerator in the heart of their city. The group continued to push past this victory to work on bigger picture solutions for energy and climate change in Western Massachusetts. This year, we helped them as they campaigned to pass a resolution to require that Springfield make a climate plan, and in the fall, they were successful once again.
More Recycling, Less Waste

Too often, instead of capturing valuable materials before they’re tossed in the trash, we bury these resources in landfills and burn them in incinerators. After years of organizing in communities to stop new landfills and incinerators, we have shifted the conversation to focus on reducing trash, expanding recycling and composting, and moving toward Zero Waste.

Connecticut Aims to Increase Recycling

This spring, the Connecticut state legislature unanimously passed the Governor’s Recycling Bill. This will set a goal of diverting 60 percent of waste from landfills and incinerators by 2024. In the summer, we went door-to-door to educate the public and gather petitions urging the state to push beyond 60 percent waste diversion to Zero Waste. From Norwich to Greenwich, we talked with hundreds who agreed it’s time to make a plan to dramatically decrease our trash. At the same time, we worked with residents in Hartford and Wallingford to retire trash incinerators and support Zero Waste solutions.

Boston Sets a Zero Waste Goal

This year, with a new mayor and a scheduled update of Boston’s Climate Action Plan, Toxics Action Center had a great opportunity to finally increase the city’s embarrassingly low recycling rate. We brought together a wide array of stakeholders and formed the Zero Waste Task Force to develop policy recommendations for Boston. Next, we launched our effort to build the grassroots support to make Zero Waste a city priority. We tabled at neighborhood festivals and held a community visioning event to bring together neighborhood activists. After a year of organizing, the city committed to launch a Zero Waste planning process within the updated climate plan.

Local Leader Spotlight:
Galen Young Halts a New Landfill

Galen Young raises pigs, chickens and honeybees on his organic farm in Argyle, Maine. When word spread that a company was applying for a permit to build a massive landfill in town, many were concerned. Residents feared that a new landfill would jeopardize their clean water and air. Galen had the most at stake of anyone. A right-of-way would have brought dozens of diesel trash trucks through his farm everyday.

Galen quickly became an admired spokesperson in opposition to the proposal. People from all over central Maine recognize his Moses-like beard from media coverage, and the residents of Argyle know him for providing the farm-raised pork enjoyed by all at community meetings—including the meeting where we came up with the winning strategy that eventually halted the landfill and protected Argyle.

“I have never met a more enthusiastic, motivated and worthwhile group of people! What they are able to achieve is truly amazing. I trust them to keep a watchful eye on what’s happening in our communities and keep me informed.”

— Lori Mazarelli, Toxics Action Center member for 25 years

Local Leaders for a Better Energy Future

Karen Vale grew up in Westport, Mass. and has always been interested in the ocean. She even earned degrees in wildlife and environmental biology. That’s why when she heard about the work that Cape Cod Bay Watch was doing to protect the Bay from Pilgrim Nuclear Station’s pollution, she decided to get involved. Living in Plymouth, Karen is part of a diverse and extremely passionate movement of folks working to decommission Pilgrim and get its radioactive waste stored safely as possible. Toxics Action Center helped connect Karen to the citizen science non-profit, Public Lab for Open Technology and Science (PLOTS), and together they are mapping impacts of Pilgrim’s heated water discharge in the bay.

Crystal Goodrich got her introduction to the world of local politics as president of the South Portland Dog Owners Group. She helped run a successful city-wide campaign against a strict dog-walking ordinance. But that fight was small potatoes compared to the battle to keep tar sands out of South Portland. Crystal is committed to keeping her city beautiful and fighting to stop a fossil fuel that is so dangerous for the planet. Despite early campaign setbacks, Crystal kept the group in high spirits with her humor, and her knowledge of the local political scene was integral to Protect South Portland’s ultimate victory.

Mary Martin, Just Power

When land agents of Vermont Gas Systems showed up at Mary’s door asking for rights to survey her land, Mary didn’t know what natural gas was, but she did know that she had to stop this pipeline from tearing up her family’s farmland. Mary joined Just Power and quickly learned about climate change and Vermont’s reliance on fossil fuels. Working with Toxics Action Center, her group turned out more than 600 people to critical hearings on the pipeline’s permits. At town meeting day, Mary’s town successfully passed a resolution against the pipeline. This summer, when it was announced that the pipeline’s costs were skyrocketing, grandmothers from around Vermont, including Mary, staged a knit-in to protest at the company’s offices.

Kathy Martley, Burrillville Against Spectra Expansion

Kathy lives next to the Spectra gas compressor station in Rhode Island. For decades, the station has released toxins into air and water and subjected its neighbors to devastating noise pollution. Now, Spectra wants to expand the compressor station so that more gas can pass through the pipeline, exacerbating existing pollution and noise problems and increasing the risk of explosions. Kathy formed Burrillville Against Spectra Expansion (BASE), and has been fighting back by knocking on doors, meeting with elected officials, and working within a growing multi-state coalition to stop the project.
Crystal, Maine: Protecting Precious Drinking Water
Cindy was horrified to learn of a waste company’s plans to spray sewage sludge across a neighboring field. Septage can contain pathogens and would threaten the underlying aquifer. When Cindy reached out for help, Toxics Action Center Campaigns, our C4 arm, trained Cindy and her neighbors to come up with a plan to fight back and linked her up with legal help. Now, the group is working to pass a local ordinance that would permanently protect their water.

Lamoine, Maine: Restoring Local Democracy
Residents in Lamoine were tired of watching out-of-state industry haul away their town one truck-load at a time. Local town leaders had become beholden to big gravel companies, the town was covered in gravel pits and blasting, and it was turning Lamoine into a lunar landscape. This year, Toxics Action Center worked with Kathy Gaianguest and Friends of Lamoine to put democracy back into the hands of local residents to call for the cleanup that the community deserves.

Bow and Portsmouth, N.H.: Retiring Coal Burning coal for electricity contributes to global warming and threatens host communities with air pollution. Toxics Action Center is working with the Citizens Against Landfills in Bow and Portsmouth, N.H. to retire Northern New England’s last coal plants. This year more than 100 local businesses and 1,000 companies, the town was covered in gravel pits and blasting, and it was turning Lamoine into a lunar landscape. This year, Toxics Action Center worked with Kathy Gaianguest and Friends of Lamoine to put democracy back into the hands of local residents to call for the cleanup that the community deserves.

Milton, N.H.: Keeping Our Farms Safe
Eric Knapp called Toxics Action Center when he heard a proposal and construction and demolition waste landfill was to be built right next to his family’s farm. Right away, Toxics Action Center staff went to work training Eric and his neighbors how to build public support and win a community vote. At the first town meeting, Citizens Against Landfills in Milton overwhelmingly won the debate, and we’ll continue to work with Eric to win a town vote and stop the landfill once and for all.

Lake Champlain, Vt.: Protecting Lake Champlain
Lake Champlain is not only beautiful, it’s a treasured resource, providing drinking water and recreational opportunities for thousands. Unfortunately, excessive pollution and run-off fuel algae blooms, cause beach closures from bacteria, and make many of the fish too toxic to eat. Toxics Action Center is working to support community groups upstream to hold polluters accountable for their practices. The work of these watershed, community and industry watchdogs will help clean up both Lake Champlain and all of Vermont’s water resources.

Vermont, Vt.: Time for a Cleanup
After a many-year campaign and continued safety violations, Vermont Yankee finally retired this winter, but the work continues. There are more radioactive spent fuel rods than can be safely stored on-site. We’re working with the Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Oversight Authority to ensure the cleanup process. We need to ensure that Entergy completes a full cleanup with all necessary precautions and safety measures in place.

New Bedford, Mass.: Cleaning Up Our Toxic Legacy
For years, manufacturers dumped waste with the now-banned toxic chemical PCBs into the Acushnet River. Now, New Bedford’s harbor is one of the most polluted waters in the nation. The EPA’s cleanup plan doesn’t go far enough, leaving much of the pollution in the river. We’re working with local residents to call for the cleanup that the community deserves.

Pittsfield, Mass.: Calling for Full Cleanups
For more than 50 years, the General Electric Company (GE) in Pittsfield, Mass. used PCBs, a man-made toxic chemical, in the manufacture of its transformers. In the process, GE dumped PCB-laden waste all over Pittsfield. This year, we continued our long-term work with residents to demand a full cleanup that restores the health of the community and the Hoosatonic River.

Somerset, Mass.: Redeveloping Old Coal Sites
Last year, South Coast residents celebrated the announcement that the largest air polluter in all of New England, the Brayton Point coal-fired power plant, would retire in 2017. Toxics Action Center continues its work with the Coalition for Clean Air South Coast to advocate for redeveloping the sites with clean energy, clean tech, or other healthier economic development. This year, the community secured state grant money to hire planners to research reuse options for the state’s last coal plants.

Westfield, Mass.: Preventing More Fossil Fuels
It’s clear New England should be moving beyond reliance on dirty fossil fuels. In Westfield, Toxics Action Center staff have worked with residents like Maryann Babinski to stop plans for an unnecessary oil- and gas-fired power plant in an area already over-burdened by air pollution.

Charlestown, R.I.: Safeguarding Our Neighborhoods
Across town borders, neighbors have come together to fight COPAR Quarries, a corrupt and dangerous strip mining operation interfering with quality of life. In addition to deleterious noise, residents consistently deal with layers of dust and dirt covering homes and yards, discolored water, and houses shaking from blasting. With the help of Toxics Action Center, the Concerned Citizens of Bradford and Charlestown are working to bring media attention to the issue to encourage regulatory action, and pursuing legal avenues to shut down the operation based on illegal zoning.

Bridgeport and Oxford, Conn.: Moving Beyond Fossil Fuels
In New England, we have the potential to be getting far more of our energy from clean, renewable sources, but some developers are proposing to increase Connecticut’s dependence on fossil fuels. Bridgeport already has a coal-fired power plant, and developers in Bridgeport and Oxford want to build new gas plants as well. Now, activists in Oxford and Bridgeport are standing up for the air quality of their community and Toxics Action Center organizers are helping them lead the fight.

North Branford, Conn.: Preventing Dangerously Sited Industry
North Branford Citizens Against Bulk Propane formed to protect their community from a propane storage facility planned next to houses and a nursing home, putting numerous lives at risk. Three towns nearby had already denied the company’s plans, and North Branford’s town zoning explicitly banned this type of dangerous facility. To get around this, the company rewrote the zoning laws. In response, the community got organized to prevent this threat.
2014 Campaigns: Cleaning Up And Preventing Pollution Throughout New England

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Galen Young Halts a New Landfill

Galen Young raises pigs, chickens and honeybees on his organic farm in Argyle, Maine. When word spread that a company was applying for a permit to build a massive landfill in town, many were concerned. Residents feared that a new landfill would jeopardize their clean water and air. Galen had the most at stake of anyone. A right-of-way would have brought dozens of diesel trash trucks through his farm everyday.

Galen quickly became an admired spokesperson in opposition to the proposal. People from all over central Maine recognize his Moses-like beard from media coverage, and the residents of Argyle know him for providing the farm-raised pork enjoyed by all at community meetings— including the meeting where we came up with the winning strategy that eventually halted the landfill and protected Argyle.

“I have never met a more enthusiastic, motivated and worthwhile group of people! What they are able to achieve is truly amazing. I trust them to keep a watchful eye on what’s happening in our communities and keep me informed.”

— Lori Mazzarelli, Toxics Action Center member for 25 years

Crystal Goodrich, Protect South Portland

Crystal Goodrich got her introduction to the world of local politics as president of the South Portland Dog Owners Group. She helped run a successful city-wide campaign against a strict dog-walking ordinance. But that fight was small potatoes compared to the battle to keep tar sands out of South Portland. Crystal is committed to keeping her city beautiful and fighting to stop a fossil fuel that is so dangerous for the planet. Despite early campaign setbacks, Crystal kept the group in high spirits with her humor, and her knowledge of the local political scene was integral to Protect South Portland’s ultimate victory.

Mary Martin, Just Power

When land agents of Vermont Gas Systems showed up at Mary’s door asking for rights to survey her land, Mary didn’t know what natural gas was, but she did know that she had to stop this pipeline from tearing up her family’s farmland. Mary joined Just Power and quickly learned about climate change and Vermont’s reliance on fossil fuels. Working with Toxics Action Center, her group turned out more than 600 people to critical hearings on the pipeline’s permits. At town meeting day, Mary’s town successfully passed a resolution against the pipeline. This summer, when it was announced that the pipeline’s costs were skyrocketing, grandchildren from around Vermont, including Mary, staged a knit-in to protest at the company’s offices.

Kathy Martley, Burrillville Against Spectra Expansion

Kathy lives next to the Spectra gas compressor station in Rhode Island. For decades, the station has released toxins into air and water and subjected its neighbors to devastating noise pollution. Now, Spectra wants to expand the compressor station so that more gas can pass through the pipeline, exacerbating existing pollution and noise problems and increasing the risk of explosions. Kathy formed Burrillville Against Spectra Expansion (BASE), and has been fighting back by knocking on doors, meeting with elected officials, and working within a growing multi-state coalition to stop the project.
Moving Away from Dirty & Dangerous Energy

Toxics Action Center has worked side-by-side for years with residents fighting the pollution that comes from dirty energy sources of the past. From coal-burning power plants belching smog and soot to nuclear power plants operating far beyond their intended retirement date, it is high time we cleared the way for a cleaner energy future in New England.

Closing in on a Coal-Free New England

After seven years of organizing to retire coal-fired power plants in the region, four of the seven remaining plants are closed or closing soon. In July, we celebrated with community leaders from Action for a Healthy Holyoke after news broke that the Mount Tom coal plant would retire in the fall. We continue to work with residents to ensure that the site is cleaned up and repurposed with healthier economic development. Similarly, we continue our work with Coalition for Clean Air South Coast in Somerset, Mass. to ensure that the Brayton Point coal plant is retired on schedule by 2017.

New England’s remaining coal plants show signs of succumbing to citizen and market pressure. Once these antiquated facilities close, we will be the first region of the country to go coal-free. While much of the rest of the country continues to rely heavily on coal for electricity, New England is proving that it is possible to build a safer and more sustainable energy future.

Retiring Aging Nuclear Power Plants on Schedule

New England’s three nuclear power plants have been generating radioactive waste for more than 40 years. Vermont Yankee was one of the oldest nuclear power plants in the country, with a history of environmental violations and plant failures, including the collapse of a cooling tower and radioactive waste leaks into groundwater. In recent years, our staff coordinated the coalition, Safe Power Vermont, orchestrating citizen organizing statewide. After years of work, Vermont Yankee finally powered down at the end of 2014. We continue to watchdog the plant’s decommissioning, including advocating for continued security at the plant and cleanup of its radioactive waste.

No New Dependence on Fossil Fuels

New England already gets nearly half of its electricity from gas, much of it imported from dangerous fracking fields across the country. As the sun sets on coal-fired power plants across the region, the fossil fuel industry has geared up to push for a massive expansion of dirty gas. These six proposed gas-fired power plants and four separate pipeline projects would lock us into even more dirty fossil fuels for the next half century. The influx of new threats has activated new citizen leaders in Holyoke and Somerset, Mass. to help secure state grant money to hire consultants to spearhead reuse assessments for local coal plant sites. These consultants will engage the public in a conversation about what types of development could bring good green jobs to their cities. Somerset is being explored as a site for offshore wind transmission and Holyoke for a solar farm.

Clearing the Way for a Clean Energy Future

While the communities we assist at Toxics Action Center are often banding together in reaction to a profound pollution problem, our mission is to move them beyond the backward issue that sparked their activism to work toward visionary solutions. This year, we celebrated progress in the fight for clean energy solutions and more sustainability.

Redeveloping Old Coal Plant Sites

Communities with coal-fired power plants are making progress in planning ahead for remediation and redevelopment of coal plant sites. Closed coal plants often leave behind heavy metal-laden soil pollution, and as coal plants retire, communities lose significant streams of tax revenue. This past year, community groups in Holyoke and Somerset, Mass. helped secure state funds to hire consultants to spearhead reuse assessments for local coal plant sites. These consultants will engage the public in a conversation about what types of development could bring good green jobs to their cities. Somerset is being explored as a site for offshore wind transmission and Holyoke for a solar farm.

Local Energy Activists Join Together for Solar

Toxics Action Center is working with community leaders across Massachusetts who are fighting dirty energy on many fronts—coal, biomass, nuclear and fracked gas. This fall, we joined together to learn, network and get behind clean energy solutions. In a daylong retreat in Arlington, Mass., more than 40 citizen leaders gathered for briefings on our energy grid, energy efficiency, and potential clean energy solutions. Coming out of the retreat, the group cemented their dedication to stepping dirty energy in their own communities and decided to work together to convince Massachusetts' new governor to support vastly expanding solar power in the upcoming year.
When Toxics Action Center joined us and started leading our coalition, we realized we might not lose. We love Toxics Action and don’t know what we would do without them.”
— Mary Martin, Just Power

More than 30 years after the tragedies of Love Canal and Woburn, many of New England’s communities still live near hazardous waste sites, which often threaten drinking water supplies. We continue to field calls from residents facing proposals for new polluting facilities in their neighborhoods. While federal funding for toxic cleanups has dwindled, communities are still fighting for and winning cleanups locally and succeeding in preventing new pollution threats. Toxics Action Center is proud to continue to stand by these communities and to be a resource when polluters refuse to take responsibility for their messes.

Neighbors Join Together to Protect the Orono Bog

Last year, residents in Orono, Maine, faced a renewed gravel mining operation right next to the beloved and environmentally-sensitive Orono Bog Boardwalk. Gravel mining can pollute air and water, while the blasting and crushing of rock causes air and noise pollution. This year, we worked with residents to prevent the reopening of the gravel pit, protecting their town and precious wetlands.

Halting Toxic Air Pollution in Western Massachusetts

In Sheffield, members of the No Asphalt Defense Fund (NADF) have worked tirelessly to prevent a polluting hot-mix asphalt plant from being built near their homes by a company already operating a rock-crushing facility. Toxics Action Center community organizers helped NADF raise money, gain media attention, and demonstrate residents’ opposition to town officials. This year, the company agreed to work with residents to improve conditions at their rock-crushing plant and agreed not to build the asphalt plant.

Local Leader Spotlight: Judy Fradin Protects Woodridge Lake

Woodridge Lake is a special place. Nestled in Northwestern Connecticut amidst rolling hills, the lake is a popular destination for swimmers, boaters and anglers. It’s also part of a watershed providing thousands of residents with clean drinking water—a water source threatened last year by a plan to use the toxic pesticide Sonar to kill weeds in the lake. Sonar is linked to numerous health issues and is banned in Europe.

Judy Fradin is a founding member of the Woodridge Lake Conservancy, and she sprung into action to address this threat. Toxics Action Center community organizers worked with Judy and others in the Conservancy to secure the support of community members for non-toxic lake management. In less than a week, nearly half of the town’s residents signed a statement of support for the Woodridge Lake Conservancy. As a result, the lake’s managing board went on record to say that pesticides were “off the table.” Now Judy is working to build a regional movement to protect water resources in Connecticut, helping other neighbors living near lakes threatened by pesticides to stand up for nontoxic solutions.
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2014 Annual Report

ORGANIZING WITH RESIDENTS TO CLEAN UP AND PREVENT POLLUTION IN NEW ENGLAND SINCE 1987