

CONA

Citizens Offering New Alternatives
www.conamaine.com

PO Box 649, Newcastle, ME 04553
FALL 2009

LA Climate Action Club Gets National Recognition

On October 16 CONA and the Lincoln Academy Climate Action Club hosted the world premiere of the "Communities" episode of the Sundance Channel's Season 3 of "Big Ideas for a Small Planet" that features our work. Students and townspeople came to celebrate the occasion. We watched the big screen together in shared pride: the halls at school, our picturesque town, CAC-ers introducing our reusable bag campaign to merchants. Everyone agreed that school and town have changed irreversibly. There is a new awareness and commitment to the environment. The CAC's bags are everywhere. We felt excited, gratified, and powerful.

I looked back on our experiences with the Sundance crew. They came all the way from California to film the CAC in action. It was a very big deal for the CAC: we had been working together for only one year, and already our work was being recognized on a national scale. Each one of us had the opportunity to talk about our mission, our dreams, and our goals. We were in the spotlight. We were inspiring others. This all started with a few students and one big idea: first here, then everywhere.

The Climate Action Club's campaigns for the current year (our third year) are exciting and powerful.



CAC members present the world premiere of Sundance Channel's "Big Ideas for a Small Planet" episode that featured them, their work, and our town Damariscotta. Right to left they are Alex Hadik, Sloane Fossett, Jeanette Schaible, Chloe Maxmin.

We began a "Weekly Green Tip" in school. We put a green tip in the daily announcements and then give out a reusable bag to the person who recites the fact at our weekly assembly. We will install a vending-miser, an infra-red laser device that shuts down the vending machine when there is no movement around. We are working with CONA to extend the school's NO IDLING policy into the community and local schools. Lastly, we are preparing to buy the next installment of reusable bags. The first order is nearly sold out. The next round will sustain the community through the winter until the next tourist season.

Our current campaigns reflect our commitment to community- and school-based activism. We are learning how to collaborate with local organizations to achieve even bigger goals. This is how we grow and change the world.

Chloe Maxmin, Founder
First Here, Then Everywhere
www.firstheretheneverywhere.org

The L.A. Climate Action Club was also one of only five nominees for Natural Resources Council of Maine's People's Choice Award.

CONA's August Planning Retreat

In August the CONA board gathered at Alayne McLeod's lovely home on Pemaquid Pond around a tasty potluck supper to discuss how our programming could best fulfill our mission statement in the coming year. We want to continue to address local and global issues of peace and social justice, and to encourage civic participation through our programs and our three annual celebratory community events: Potluck and Poetry in the fall, New Beginnings and Potluck on New Year's Day, and Green Beginnings in the spring.

Our retreat started with introductions all around go to "CONA August Planning..." on page 2

CONA August Planningcont'd from page 1

since we have two new members, Betsy Heminway, a resident of Damariscotta, and Chloe Maxmin, of Nobleboro, a senior at Lincoln Academy. The board expressed delight that Chloe agreed to be CONA's coordinator with local schools, as we very much want to reach out to younger members of the community.

We explored a number of ideas for programs, including ones on foreign policy, the environment, population growth, medical issues and treatment of animals.

One of our board members suggested setting up a group to work on ways to make the community aware of the negative impact to the environment of letting vehicles idle. (Joe Brennan, Millie Baggs and Chloe Maxmin have already launched this effort).

We discussed setting up study circles, holding debates on topical issues, and drawing on the expertise of persons living in the state, as well as using the expertise found at local educational institutions such as Unity College and the Muskie School of Public Service.

We decided to be flexible in our programming to take advantage of opportunities that arise, as when a special film is made available to us, or a speaker on tour comes to town. We decided as well to vary the times of our programs, holding some in the daytime and some in the evening, with most of the winter events in daylight hours to avoid having to drive on dark, icy roads.

Please contact Kay Liss 549-3731 (kaytliss1@myfairpoint.com) or Wendy Ross Eichler 549-3969 (wsross@erols.com) if you have ideas and suggestions for programs and activities of interest.



CONA Board at their 2009 Planning Retreat
Front row: George Van Deventer, Alayne Mcleod, Kay Liss, Joe Brennan
Middle: Betsy Heminway, Wendy Ross Eichler, Doris Balant,
Back: Rosie Bensen, Millie Baggs, Chloe Maxmin

Edgecomb Nurse Working in Africa

In CONA's September program Helen Weld, RN, MPH of Edgecomb talked about her work in Sierra Leone with the West Africa Institute (WAI) and the West Africa Fistula Foundation (WAFF). WAI is dedicated to empowering the people of Sierra Leone and West Africa to be healthy, economically secure and autonomous. It creates and implements programs that promote healthcare, micro-credit financing, appropriate technologies and sustainable agriculture.

WAFF, WAI's original and still largest program, strives to end the cycle of preventable infant and maternal morbidity and mortality prevalent in Sierra Leone and across West Africa. In Sierra Leone, one woman in eight dies during childbirth. Throughout Africa it is estimated that two to three million women suffer from obstetric fistula, a condition often resulting from labor complications. For the past year and a half, Weld has worked with these organizations as a nurse, program development director and volunteer coordinator. To see Helen Weld's work, look at her blogspot: www.hwph.blogspot.com. For more information or to contribute go to Fistula Foundation.org



Helen Weld, RN, MPH of Edgecomb, surrounded by women treated at a center for fistula patients in West Africa.



The CONA newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

CONANEWS Editor: Doris Balant
Design and prepress: Moonlighter Graphics

A Book Suggestion: *The Case for God* by Karen Armstrong

Published by Alfred A. Knopf

In her latest book, Karen Armstrong traces not so much the "History of God," as she did in her earlier and, probably best-known book by that name, but rather the history of our attempts to define God. In Armstrong's view, both believers and atheists today see religion primarily as a set of propositions to be agreed to, or a list of specific facts about the nature of God.

In the early Christian past, in fact even before Christianity, the search for the "All" led to a realization that words are incapable of describing what is ineffable, beyond language.

In ancient India, for example, Brahmin priests would hold a Brahmadeya competition in which each participant was to define Brahman, the All. The winning contestant was the one who was unable to find words and fell silent. In this silence Brahman was present.

For centuries, this apophatic, mythic approach was common to the great religions. Religion was considered a practice, not a dogmatic system. But with the development of scientific research and discovery by scientists like Newton, the belief grew that "the natural laws that scientists had discovered in the universe were tangible demonstrations of God's providential care", until gradually Western Christians abandoned the apophatic, mythic approach to faith and searched instead for empirical "proof" of God's existence through science. The absence of such proof, in the opinion of theorists and writers like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, is therefore proof that God does not exist.

In an NPR interview Armstrong said that the search for proof of God's existence can lead to either fundamentalism or atheism. I found the book particularly interesting because it presents the historic background to the polarization in religion, and in politics, between fundamentalism and atheism that we see today.

Doris Balant

Potluck and Poetry

On Sunday, November 29, CONA will present Potluck and Poetry, our annual celebration of the "beautiful-voiced" Calliope, Muse of Poetry. CONA's own poet laureate, George VanDeventer, has planned an exciting program. Dancer Shana Bloomstein will interpret excerpts from poets Langston Hughes, John Clare, George Van Deventer and Czeslaw Milosz, read by four readers. Language and movement will come together for a deeper understanding of the works. After the program we'll have Open Mike for reading poetry, yours or from your favorite poet.

Shana Bloomstein is a performer, choreographer and teacher, as well as a full-time physical therapist assistant, licensed massage therapist, and yoga/dance instructor. Originally from Freedom, Maine, she has danced with Arthur Hall and the Celebration Dancers, and as a member of a small modern dance company, Stella Dance. Shana was also an original member of Nia Love's Blacksmith's Daughter Dance Theatre Company in New York City. She spent four years performing and training in NYC and traveling the world, including travel to Senegal, West Africa.

Potluck and Poetry will again be held at the Second Congregational Church in Newcastle, with supper at 6 pm and poetry beginning at 7. The program is free and open to everyone.

FMI: dbalant@roadrunner.com, 563-1216.



Dancer Shana Bloomstein who will perform at this year's Potluck and Poetry.

Don't forget to look at CONA's website—YOUR website—from time to time for information about programs and activities. We're planning also to post Julia Meyers' history of CONA in the near future. It's www.conamaine.com.

Peaceful Beginnings and Potluck 2010

Join us to make a peaceful, joyous beginning to the New Year. Everyone, of all ages, is invited to attend CONA's annual Peaceful Beginnings celebration of community on New Year's Day, 12 noon to 3 pm at Skidompha Library. The first Peaceful Beginnings was organized during the first Gulf War more than a decade ago as a way to bring people together to reflect, create, foster kindness, get to know our neighbors and focus on the joyful.

Years later, our country is still engaged in military action around the globe, and during Peaceful Beginnings, on this first day of the New Year, we can come together to affirm the peaceful aspects of our society through poetry, music, art, food and conversation.

Everyone is encouraged to bring finger food to share during the informal potluck throughout the afternoon. Check with local newspapers for a complete listing of the events and musicians at the end of December. If you would like to help out in any way, call Jenny Begin at 563-3781. We hope to see you all on New Year's Day. Invite your friends; bring your children!



CONA Events bring our community together

Stay Connected !

Many of you have received emails announcing our program and other events of interest through our listserv, but we know the list needs updating. We recently sent out an announcement of the November 19th film "Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives", and about Potluck and Poetry, coming November 29th. **If you did not receive an email message about these two events, please send your current email address to dbalant@roadrunner.com.** Thank you!

CONA's mission is to provide opportunities to address the evolving problems of peace and social justice locally and globally. Our programs include education, discussion, and celebration to encourage the community to become active, involved citizens. We work in collaboration with other regional organizations sharing concerns for pressing issues such as poverty, overpopulation, war, and environmental protection.

America Grew Fat

the majority of us have family trees
rooted in farms and fields.

Ronald Blythe, from his essay,
"Clare's Two-Hundredth Birthday, 13 July 1993"

In the early days of America
nearly all the land was covered with trees;
everyone had an ax to grind
and used it felling oak and spruce.

America grew fat
without a predator in sight.

It grew off trees,
some the size of fortresses,
beautifully exposed like monuments of another time.

There are no boundaries in a forest.

Families rooted in farms and fields
became an army
uprooting a once-in-a-lifetime harvest.

Like soldiers deserting their ranks,
settlers staked claim to where they were
while fresh recruits pushed up river
pond after pond.

George Van Deventer



At the crest of a hill

At the crest of a hill,
along the edge of a field,
a line of trees blaze brilliant
fired in October's glaze.
A road drops way to the valley floor
where the land gives birth to the sky.

This poem is based on a painting by Diane Cannon,
Chadds Ford, PA., "Before Development – 2007"

George Van Deventer

CONA Board of Directors 2009-2010

Millie Baggs, Secretary
Doris Balant, Leadership Committee, Newsletter.
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Joe Brennan
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It's renewal time! It's joining time! **CONA 2010 MEMBERSHIP** Keep CONA strong.

Your support will expand our activities.

- I am/we are renewing CONA membership for 2010
 I/we would like to join CONA

Suggested contribution: \$5 student; \$15 individual;
\$25 family; \$50-\$100 patron; or what you can afford.
\$ _____

Your additional contribution to the Julia Myers Speakers
Fund allows us to bring important speakers from farther
away. \$ _____

Total Tax Deductible Contribution \$ _____

Please include your e-mail address: it's the fastest, least costly
way we can keep you informed of CONA events and other
community activities of interest.

Name _____

e-mail _____

phone _____

Address _____

May we call on you to help with a mailing? YES!

...to help set up a program? YES!

Please suggest program topics or speakers.

**Please make check to CONA and mail to
CONA, PO Box 649, Newcastle, ME 04553**



CITIZENS OFFERING NEW ALTERNATIVES

PO BOX 649

Newcastle, ME 04553

The date on your label indicates the calendar year in which you last renewed your membership. Keep CONA strong. Please renew for 2010. Thank you!

- LA Climate Action Club Gets National Recognition
- Edgecomb Nurse Working in Africa
- CONA's August Planning Retreat
- Potluck and Poetry
- Peaceful Beginnings and Potluck 2010

Be sure to visit our website www.conamaine.com