Speaking with One Voice for the Environment and Reproductive Health

By Gayle Loeffler

On April 20th, the Sierra Club’s Global Population and Environment Program invited Elvis Tillett, a community health educator and activist from Belize, to speak at an event called “Empowering Youth & Protecting the Environment in Belize” held at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC. Elvis discussed the reproductive health and environmental challenges facing Belize, and why it is critical—on Earth Day, and every day—to recognize the intersections among human population growth, global health, poverty, reproductive health and environmental protection. Elvis was also among the first cohort of Belizean youth to be selected to participate in a Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, called GOJoven. GOJoven works to foster the next generation of leaders in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Quintana Roo, Mexico. Elvis’s presentation was the kick-off event for the second annual One Voice: Population & Reproductive Health Summit in Washington, D.C., that took place from April 20th-23rd. Co-sponsors of the Summit were Sierra Club, Advocates for Youth, SI ECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States), and Population Connection. The Summit attracted over 120 youth and adult activists from across the U.S.

Educational workshop and seminar topics included links between population and the environment, politics of sex education, international family planning, global water challenges, and the effect of population growth on climate change. Participants gained organizing and advocacy skills necessary to be effective leaders on these issues on their campuses and in their communities.

Why does the Sierra Club care about human population growth? The size of the human population in Belize affects virtually every environmental condition facing our planet. The Sierra Club recognizes that all of our environmental successes may be short lived if they don’t include efforts to address population growth. As population has increased, people have progressively consumed greater amounts of fossil fuel and engaged in more activities that produce carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases. There is broad agreement in the scientific community that greenhouse gases, especially in the U.S., have accelerated in step with human population growth since 1950.

In his book Earth in the Balance, Al Gore states that “five strategic goals must direct and inform our efforts to save the global environment…the first goal should be the stabilizing of world population growth.” He also states “with world population projected to double in less than a century, all of the potential reduction in greenhouse gases would be completely wiped out, even with extraordinary advances in technology.” Energized and well versed on the issues, participants in the Summit charged up to Capitol Hill the following Monday morning to talk with decision-makers about why increasing funding for international family planning programs is critical to ensuring a healthy environment and healthy communities.

If you’re interested in protecting the environment you can take action. Increasing funding for international family planning programs ensure healthier communities around the world and a healthier environment. Find out who your representative is at www.house.gov. Find out who your Senators are at www.senate.gov. Encourage their support of the REAL Act and the Global Democracy Promotion Act.

The Responsible Education About Life Act
The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act (S. 972, H.R. 1653) would dedicate federal funding, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for comprehensive sexuality education that is age-appropriate, medically accurate, stresses abstinence, and also educates youth about contraception. Programs by the REAL Act would also stress family communication, responsible decision-making, and negotiation skills. The REAL Act was introduced in Congress by Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) and in the Senate by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ).

The Global Democracy Promotion Act
The Global Democracy Promotion Act (“GDPA”); H.R. 619) would essentially repeal the Mexico City Policy (a.k.a. the “Global Gag Rule”), which was imposed in January 2001. The policy forces overseas family-planning clinics to agree not to use their own separate funds for pro-choice services or counseling, or even to take a position on the issue. If they refuse on free speech or medical-ethics grounds, they lose all of their U.S. funding. Congress should repeal the gag rule because it forces organizations to choose between vital U.S. support and their right to advocate and provide for the reproductive health care of the women and men they serve in their countries with their own private funds. Such a restriction would be unconstitutional if imposed in the United States. The GDPA Act was introduced in Congress by Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY).

If you’re interested in attending the One Voice Summit next spring, contact Cassie Gardener at cassie.gardener@sierrclub.org.

To learn more about the Sierra Club’s Global Population and Environment Program, visit www.sierrclub.org/population, or contact Gayle Loeffler, member of the Global Population & Environment Program, and Population Chair, Dallas Chapter, at GLoeffler@iwu.edu.
Urban Wildlife: Tuesday, June 12 at 7 pm

In June, we are very pleased to have Brett Johnson, an Urban Wildlife Biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, give us a presentation on Mammals of the Blackland Prairie. Before the Anglo settlement here in the North Texas area, over 15 million acres of Blackland Prairie habitat was available to an abundant diversity of mammal wildlife species. Today, the total Blackland Prairie area under protection as either parkland or conservation areas totals a little over 4,000 acres! With such a small amount of native habitat left, you might be wondering which mammals survived, which mammals successfully coexist with humans, and what the future holds for the remaining mammals among us? Brett Johnson will take us on an exploration of the changing suite of mammals found in the Blackland Prairie. We will be looking at what was here pre-Anglo settlement, and the forces that have determined what we see today. By understanding the changes that have occurred on this Prairie, we will gain a better understanding of how we got to where we are, and potential challenges and opportunities for mammals in the future.

Brett Johnson grew up in Irving, TX. His interest in conservation started in the Boy Scouts, where he earned an Eagle Scout award. He ended up spending a total of 10 summers working for local scout camps and the Philmont Scout Ranch. Brett is a graduate of Texas A&M, with a bachelor of science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. He also has a masters of science degree from Texas Tech, where he studied white-tailed deer and red imported fire ants. After graduation Brett spent time in the Florida Keys researching the endangered Florida Key deer. He also spent time in New Mexico as a bear biologist (bears are his passion), and doing forest fire rehabilitation work. He has been in his current position as an Urban Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for about three and a half years. Since there are no bears in Dallas/Ft. Worth, he is now learning all he can about urban coyotes and bobcats.

STEP IT UP 2007

Dallas area residents rally to urge Congress to "Step It Up!" and hear from speakers on the need for and how to take action.

Two hundred Dallas/Ft. Worth residents braved the uncharacteristic cold and high winds today to send Congress the message “Cut Carbon 80% by 2050!”. Attendees heard from speakers about the need for and how to take action on the issue of climate change, signed letters for state representatives, enjoyed music, viewed the film Killowatt Ours, visited with green related exhibitors, shopped with local artisans and kids enjoyed fun activities.

For more information on the Step It Up Campaign, go to the project web site, http://stepitup2007.org/.

Dallas area children supporting the Step It Up campaign.
LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Your Support Matters

"I never knew one person or a small group could make such a difference in one day."
- Inner City Outings service project participant, age 13

From the mouths of babes come gems of wisdom. This youngster’s remark came at the end of an ICO service day last month at Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area. It’s an inspiration to all of the volunteers who work tirelessly in service of our mission, a reminder that our efforts do make a difference. And it’s all made possible by the generosity of our donors.

The year since our last letter to you has been full, with coal-fired power plants in the news and increased public concern about global warming. We have responded with the most active Cool Cities campaign in the state, a large rally in Austin against coal-fired power plants and legal challenges to coal plant permits. We’ve been lobbying legislators, educating mayors, and talking to Sunday School audiences.

We are particularly excited about the launch of our new Young Sierrans group that’s bringing more people in their 20s and 30s into active participation in the club. And our Outings program continues to be one of the Club’s strongest, with trips for all types of interests and skill levels.

This year our goal is $16,000 – 50% of our 2007 budget. Please help us meet that goal by sending in your gift with the contribution form below. Thank you for your support!

Ann Drumm
Dallas Sierra Club Chair

Don’t forget to vote!
Run off elections for local offices are June 16.

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THE COMPASS
JUNE 2007
JUN 1 (FR) DEADLINE for submission of outings to be listed in the June Outings List and July newsletter. Contact: Bill Green 817-984-1761/H or wgren@verizon.net

JUN 3 (SUN) SUSTAINABLE SUNDAY LUNCH Thai plant-based buffet at Thai Jasmine, (817)258-8229, 3104 Harwood at Hwy 121, SW corner, Bedford. This all-you-can-eat buffet is served from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm, $8 for adults, $4 for children. Separate Sierras Singles table. Organizer: Terry Jensen 972-988-8667 ext 3101(W) or earth1@dfnemail.com

JUN 9 (SAT) WHITE ROCK LAKE CLEANUP Walk and talk while helping to pick up trash and recyclables at the Sierra Club’s adopted section of White Rock Lake Park. Meet at 8:15 AM at the Love of the Lake office on the Northeast corner of Garland Rd. and Buckner Blvd. Look for a crowd of people drinking free juice and coffee, gloves, trash bags, etc. provided. Our area includes one of the wonderful pristine restoration areas, so there are always birds and wildflowers to enjoy. The lake and your karma will thank you. Brunch afterwards. Leader: Carol Nash 214-824-0244(H) or crash@ Dallasisd.org

JUN 20 (WED) OUTINGS COMMITTEE MEETING Meet in the upstairs program room at REI (on north side of LBJ between Midway and Welch), at 7:00 PM. Bring your ideas for the Dallas Sierra Club Outings program. We will be planning local outings and bus trips. All outings leaders, future outings leaders, and interested Sierrans welcome. Contact: Bill Green 817-984-1761/H or wgren@verizon.net

JUN 29-JUL 5 (FR-SUN) FOURTH OF JULY BUS TRIP TO SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS IN COLORADO — UPDATED! (Hold date) This easy summer outing to the High Rockies is for backpackers to escape the heat of Dallas. We leave Friday afternoon and return early on the morning after the July 4th holiday. Since the holiday falls on Wednesday this year we get 5 days in the mountains! There will be five trips available rated from moderate to strenuous. Some trips will use the extra day for an easy first day to allow time to acclimate to the altitude and enjoy the mountains. Many of the trips will camp above 11,000 feet. Peak bagging and high country exploration of streams, lakes, and magnificent scenery are highlights. Contact: Laura Kimberly kimberlywalks@yahoo.com

JUL 1 (SUN) SUSTAINABLE SUNDAY LUNCH Thai plant-based buffet at Thai Jasmine, (817)258-8229, 3104 Harwood at Hwy 121, SW corner, Bedford. This all-you-can-eat buffet is served from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm, $8 for adults, $4 for children. Separate Sierras Singles table. Organizer: Terry Jensen 972-988-8667 ext 3101(W) or earth1@dfnemail.com

JUL 14 (SAT) WHITE ROCK LAKE CLEANUP Walk and talk while helping to pick up trash and recyclables at the Sierra Club’s adopted section of White Rock Lake Park. Meet at 8:15 AM at the Love of the Lake office on the Northeast corner of Garland Rd. and Buckner Blvd. Look for a crowd of people drinking free juice and coffee, gloves, trash bags, etc. provided. Our area includes one of the wonderful pristine restoration areas, so there are always birds and wildflowers to enjoy. The lake and your karma will thank you. Brunch afterwards. Leader: Carol Nash 214-824-0244(H) or crash@ Dallasisd.org

AUG 11 (SAT) WHITE ROCK LAKE CLEANUP Walk and talk while helping to pick up trash and recyclables at the Sierra Club’s adopted section of White Rock Lake Park. Meet at 8:15 AM at the Love of the Lake office on the Northeast corner of Garland Rd. and Buckner Blvd. Look for a crowd of people drinking free juice and coffee, gloves, trash bags, etc. provided. Our area includes one of the wonderful pristine restoration areas, so there are always birds and wildflowers to enjoy. The lake and your karma will thank you. Brunch afterwards. Leader: Carol Nash 214-824-0244(H) or crash@ Dallasisd.org

AUG 20-SEP 4 (THU-TUE) LABOR DAY BUS TRIP TO THE WENNICHE WILDERNESS IN COLORADO. Escape the Texas heat this Labor Day weekend and join us for our trip to the cool Colorado mountains of the Wenniche Wilderness. This trip includes nature says, lakes, streams, and valleys. Trips will range from car camping with day hikes to strenuous long hikes. The Wenniche Wilderness offers a great diversity and all invites you to hike. It is a hidden jewel and one of our most popular trips. Submitting the Rio Grande Pyramid and the Window are highlights on two of the trips.

HOW THE OUTING PROGRAM WORKS

Dallas Sierra Club Outings are open to members and non-members. Some trips may require special qualifications and capabilities. The leaders of Sierra Club outings are serving in a volunteer capacity and assume no responsibility above that of trip organizer. If you have a medical problem, it is your responsibility to inform the leader before the outing. Outing leaders are encouraged to participate in training and classes to increase their skills, but they are not paid professionals. They will assist you within their limitations. It is the responsibility of the participant to be aware of any personal limitations before going on an outing.

Radios and firearms are prohibited from all outings. Pets are not allowed unless specifically stated. All outings officially begin at the trail head or outing start point. Leaders cannot assign carpools, but may coordinate ride sharing for energy conservation and to promote fellowship. All non-commercial transportation is the responsibility of the individual. Car-pooling is SOLELY voluntary, but the costs are shared. The usual method of sharing transportation cost is for all riders in the car, including the driver, to divide the cost of transportation equally. Before leaving, be sure this or some other method is agreed upon. Reservations are necessary for outlying areas noted in the outing description. To participate in an outing, contact the leader. The leader will decide if the trip you are interested is suitable for you based on your capabilities and the demands of the trip. There is a limit to the number of people allowed on a given outing. If you must cancel, inform the leader as soon as possible so that someone else can go in your place. Please reserve the wishes of all other club members who have volunteered for the trip. The leader has the right to cancel the outing if the number of participants is not adequate for the trip. If you have any questions, or are interested in becoming a leader, contact either the appropriate Outings Committee Coordinator or listed in the newsletter back page.

Celebrate July 4th in Sangre de Cristo Mountains

This is a great year to travel with the Dallas Group on the July 4th holiday bus trip to Colorado’s Sangre de Cristo Mountains. An extra day makes it easy to acclimatize to the altitude and walk up one or two panoramic peaks. The bus leaves Dallas after work on June 29 and returns before work on July 5. For more information contact Laura Kimberly, kimberlywalks@yahoo.com. The sign up form is on the web site, www.dallassierracub.org.

Notice: to receive the outings list monthly via email, visit www.dallassierracub.org/subscribe

THE COMPASS A Publication of the Dallas Sierra Club

JUNE 2007
Do people have fun on Sierra Club outings or is it all serious environmental talk and tough exercise?

We'll let the photos answer the question this month. Enjoying the environment is a vital part of protecting the environment.

“Explore, enjoy and protect the planet.”

Eating hard boiled eggs on Bastille Day

Time for reading on the Ouachita Trail

Mud bath on the Red River, Annual Bastille Day Canoe Trip

Lunching and napping in the Pecos Wilderness
Sam Houston Elementary and ICO are Winners

by Pryor Lawson

In March, Liz Wheelan got a surprise email from Sam Houston Elementary in Dallas. Lynn Brink, one of the teachers at Sam Houston, had emailed the news that Sam Houston was donating money to the Inner City Outings (ICO) program in the amount of $1,276.81. The money came from students’ participation in a “Penny Harvest” fund-raiser under the auspices of an organization called “Common Cents.” There would be a ceremony on March 20, Ms. Brink explained, and would Liz please attend?

Liz, our chair for the local ICO, was thrilled but dumbfounded. Penny Harvest? Common Cents? What did it all mean?

Common Cents, a non-profit organization based in New York City, creates and manages service-learning programs for young people. It began in 1991, when four-year-old Nora Gross asked her father, Teddy Gross, what she could do to help the homeless. A few weeks later, Teddy, noticing an old jar full of pennies sitting on a neighbor’s counter, asked the neighbor a hypothetical question: Would she be willing to donate those pennies to the homeless? The neighbor, for whom the penny jar had become a nuisance, thrust the jar into Teddy’s hands, and thus created the seed that would germinate into Common Cents.

Today, Common Cents has programs in several cities across America. The Penny Harvest (DISD kids call it “Pennies from the Heart”) is simple: each school’s children collect pennies—they probably wouldn’t kick out any nickels, dimes, or quarters, either—from families and neighbors. The children donate the money collected, in the form of a grant, to a local charity or non-profit organization that the kids deem worthy. The class in each school that raises the most money—in Sam Houston Elementary’s case, Ms. Brink’s third-graders—gets to choose which local organization receives the grant from that school. This year, DISD classes raised nearly $55,000 for local organizations, donating to such causes as The Family Place, MADD, Promise House, and the Red Cross.

The third-graders at Sam Houston chose ICO, thanks in part to Ms. Brink’s interest in the program. Her class had been working on a unit called “Urban Animals,” studying the difference between urban and rural animals. “The majority of what they knew about animals and ‘wildness’ came from watching TV or movies,” said Ms. Brink. She got on the internet, looking for field trip opportunities, and found ICO. When it came time to decide on a worthy cause for the Common Cents program, Ms. Brink and her class decided that ICO was a perfect fit. “They only had two weeks to raise the money,” said Ms. Brink, but, when the school’s final tally came in, the third graders had won—and so had ICO.

So, on March 20, Liz Wheelan attended an award ceremony held at the Communities Foundation of Texas and accepted the grant on behalf of ICO. In attendance were children from all over the city, teachers and administrators, Teddy Gross himself, and, representing Sam Houston Elementary, Rosa Carrero and Joanna Verduzo, two jubilantly proud third-graders who stepped to the microphone and announced the award to ICO. Liz beamed (and choked up, just a little).

This summer, some sixth graders from Sam Houston will go on an ICO outing for the first time, beneficiaries of their school’s and community’s largesse. One good turn deserves another!