



WVE **WOMEN'S VOICES
FOR THE EARTH**

2004 ANNUAL REPORT



Celebrating 10 years of
working to create an
ecologically sustainable
and socially just society.

What started out as a group of young women concerned about wilderness has grown into one of our nation's strongest voices for sane public health policies and an environment free of pollutants that endanger all of us.



~ Professor Tom Roy
University of Montana



WOMEN'S VOICES FOR THE EARTH

Women's Voices for the Earth is a grassroots environmental justice organization. Our mission is to empower women, who historically have had little power in affecting environmental policy, to create an ecologically sustainable and socially just society.

With offices in Bozeman and Missoula, WVE works regionally and nationally to eliminate and/or substantially reduce environmental toxics impacting human health, and to increase women's participation in environmental decision making.



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



In 1995, a group of women activists from across the spectrum joined forces to create Women's Voices for the Earth (WVE, pronounced "weave"). The goal was to create a model organization that would more positively address leading environmental issues while empowering women to become more active in the environmental movement. WVE was born.

Today, Women's Voices for the Earth has honed in to work on the environmental pollution most intimately impacting women's lives and the lives of our families—the causes of breast cancer, birth defects, children's asthma, women's reproductive health, learning disabilities, children's cancers and other illnesses.

As women, we carry a tremendous sense of responsibility for the well-being of our families. More and more, we are burdened with having to protect ourselves from risks that should be a societal responsibility. At WVE, we believe it should be the responsibility of manufacturers and corporations to prove that their products are safe, and our government to ensure that industries do not have a negative impact on our health and our planet. Women's Voices for the Earth is engaging women to use our social, political and consumer power to hold our government and corporate leaders accountable to this end.

Please read on for the campaigns and projects that we are currently leading—and we need your help on—to protect our health and create a better world for us all. In the decade since WVE's inception, much has changed. Our mission has not.

Sincerely,

Aimee Boulanger
Executive Director



WVE HISTORY

Women's Voices for the Earth was founded in Missoula, Montana, in 1995 to provide a voice for women whose environmental concerns were not being addressed by existing organizations.



Since its inception, WVE has focused attention on the environmental issues that directly impact and concern women.

One of WVE's first major victories was their campaign to eliminate chlorine bleaching at the Smurfit-Stone Container pulp and paper plant, formerly a major source of dioxin and other toxics entering western Montana's scenic Clark Fork River. The success of this campaign was the first of many to validate WVE's democratic and pragmatic approach to environmental activism.

"As a new mom, I can't imagine more important work than the issues WVE takes on. It's more than one harmful pesticide or flame retardant—it's the health of our children. The well-being we create for them will decide the world we will all have."

~ Leeann Culbreath
WVE Member
Tifton, Georgia

Other successful WVE efforts include:

- ◆ Closing four of the five medical waste incinerators and the only municipal waste incinerator in the State of Montana, and ensuring safer disposal methods for these communities;
- ◆ Leading the highly successful *Mine Your Jewelry Box* Campaign which helped raise awareness of and prevent the development of a cyanide heap leach mine on the Blackfoot River;
- ◆ Initiating a monthly forum for labor union members and environmentalists to discuss issues of common interest;
- ◆ Hosting four annual Breast Cancer Conferences for women, families and health care professionals throughout the Northwest;

◆ Leading five years of innovative, outdoor/adventure and self-esteem programming for teenage girls through Girls Using Their Strengths! (GUTS!).

In addition to its continued commitment to regional advocacy, WVE has expanded its vision and strategic planning to include campaigns of national scope. National coalition work such as *Coming Clean* and the *Campaign for Safe Cosmetics* has enabled the organization to begin to bring its unique vision to women across the country.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

The guiding principle behind all of WVE's programming is two-fold:

To measurably reduce toxic chemicals linked to breast cancer, learning disabilities, endometriosis, birth defects, reproductive impairments, children's cancers, and other human health impacts;

To increase women's leadership and effectiveness to influence policy, corporate practices and consumer choices to protect community environmental health.

The primary emphasis of our work is to increase public awareness of the connection between human health and the health of the environment. Specifically, we focus on persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals (or PBTs) such as dioxin, and heavy metals such as mercury and lead. These chemicals are known for their toxicity to both humans and wildlife, their resistance to natural degradation in the environment, and their ability to "bioaccumulate," to travel up the food chain and remain in our bodies over our lifetime. While some are linked to cancers, others are linked to birth defects, reduced fertility, immune disorders and other negative health impacts.

Women's Voices for the Earth focuses attention on the environmental issues directly affecting women. By reaching out to economically, racially, and politically diverse communities and providing them with direct support to engage in environmental decision-making, we bring a wider range of perspectives to today's environmental advocacy. This strengthens the environmental movement and furthers our collective goals overall.

2004: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE COSMETICS

The *Campaign for Safe Cosmetics* is a coalition of health, education, faith, labor, women's, environmental and consumer groups, of which Women's Voices for the Earth is a founding member. The Campaign seeks to protect the health of consumers by pressuring the cosmetics



industry to phase out the use of toxic chemicals. Since then, three of the world's largest cosmetics companies have taken an important first step. L'Oreal and Revlon have agreed to reformulate all of their products to meet new standards set by the European Union's Cosmetics Directive, not just their products sold in the EU. Unilever has agreed to remove phthalates (reproductive toxins) from all their products. In addition, 88 other companies have signed the Campaign's Safe Cosmetics pledge. WVE continues to pressure other companies to remove chemicals known or suspected of causing cancer, birth defects, and other health effects—in the US and around the world.

LIVINGSTON INCINERATOR

On January 20, 2004, commissioners from Park County, Montana, with support from Women's Voices for the Earth and Park County Environmental Council,



announced their decision to shut down the Park County Refuse incinerator and build a transfer station to send their waste to a landfill. This

was a landmark decision for the state of Montana as Park County was the last county in the state still burning its household garbage. The decision is also great news for public health. Estimates show that the Park County incinerator was the largest single industrial source of airborne lead emissions and the second largest industrial source of mercury and dioxin emissions in the state. This change will help reduce the distribution of toxic pollutants into our air and water where they can enter our food chain.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN LABS

In summer of 2004, Women's Voices for the Earth scored a major victory with citizens groups in Hamilton, Montana. In coalition with Friends of the



Bitterroot and Coalition for a Safe Lab, WVE filed suit in federal district court against the National Institutes of Health (NIH) when they approved a proposal to expand Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) without addressing public questions about

its safety. The proposed expansion was to facilitate RML's ability to do research on some of the most contagious and deadly diseases, such as ebola and anthrax. On September 27, 2004, the judge ordered mediation. In the agreed upon settlement, RML conceded that more infrastructure and new safety mechanisms were needed to protect the community and took real steps toward making it happen.

WVE'S DREAM TEAM

In June 2004, WVE convened thirty women activists from around the country at the spectacular B-Bar Ranch in Montana's Par-



adise Valley. The *Dream Team*, as it became known, was a diverse group of women—social activists, labor organizers, political strategists, environmentalists, and

private entrepreneurs—who met to discuss how WVE could have the greatest impact in engaging women to effectively protect the environmental health of our communities. Conference participants strongly endorsed WVE’s vision of bringing women into the environmental movement by way of issues they already care deeply about, like family health. They supported WVE’s plans for more meaningful communication and engagement with women from around the country.

GUTS! GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Girls Using Their Strengths! (GUTS!) celebrated its fifth anniversary this year, serving a record number of girls and young women in Western Montana. GUTS! Action Groups now exist in all public middle schools and several high schools in Missoula. This year, GUTS! Summer Leadership Camps were expanded to accommodate a two-year curriculum for first time participants and returning attendees. Based on its success, GUTS! staff developed a curriculum that can be duplicated in communities throughout the Northwest and across the country. Pilot programs are being discussed for other communities in Montana. The curriculum will be available in Summer of 2005.



REVENUES & EXPENSES

FISCAL YEAR JANUARY 1, 2004—
DECEMBER 31, 2004

REVENUE

Grants	\$ 280,000 (76%)
Fees & Services	29,125 (8%)
Membership	29,399 (8%)
Special Events & Trips	18,460 (5%)
GUTS! Programs	8,089 (2%)
Other	2,999 (1%)
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Total Revenue	\$368,072

EXPENSES

Program	\$275,220 (80%)
Administration	39,122 (11%)
Fundraising	29,734 (9%)
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Total Expenses	\$344,076
Difference	\$ 23,996



The soft, persistent force of a strong current is irresistible. Those who compromise women and children's health have learned that when the current of Women's

Voices for the Earth shifts against you, you must change direction. The wave grows and the world benefits; just watch what the next decade of WWE brings!

~ Gloria Flora
Sustainable Obtainable Solutions



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