

**Collaborative on Health and the Environment  
Environmental Health Primary Prevention Training Program  
Testimonials from Past Training Participants**

Below is an overview of the impact our trainings have had since we began the Environmental Health Primary Prevention Training Program in August 2010.

- As a result of our partnership with Making Our Milk Safe (MOMS) in co-hosting the March training, MOMS worked with two trainees to do 60 mercury hair tests in support of efforts to strengthen EPA standards for emissions from coal-fired plants. A ruling on the standards is due later this month.
- A Komen advocate in science has become very active in distributing environmental health information, has become active in several campaigns to reduce toxic exposures, and has become an internal voice at Komen for increasing the emphasis on exploring prevention of breast cancer.
- One childbirth educator has developed an environmental health curriculum, which she uses frequently in public education programs and in her private childbirth training program.
- One participant, who works as a program officer at a breast cancer research foundation, wrote: “I felt pretty comfortable with most of the science, but the variety of presentation approaches and styles helped me think about new ways of distilling and transmitting information, especially to lay audiences... Sometimes I feel removed from the people who are most likely to benefit from the research that we fund, so it was particularly inspiring for me, personally and in my work, to have extended contact with the ‘survivor’ community.”
- Another participant wrote: “As an Executive Director entering the field of breast cancer professionally after years as a patient advocate, the training provided a valuable perspective on the field as well as some of the emerging science on breast cancer and the environment... the scientific grounding provided great context for understanding emerging research and emerging research methodologies. In this way, the training lays an excellent foundation for thinking about the future direction of the field... In addition to benefiting from the content of the training, I appreciate the diverse network I gained through the training and I have continued to engage with other participants over subsequent months on a variety of issues.”
- Another program officer at California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP) said she was able to connect with potential new advocate grant reviewers and California-based advocate observers. In 2012 CBCRP will officially invite the 4–6

identified trainees to participate in the review process. This is a significant number of advocates identified from the trainings, given that each year there are approximately 6–8 slots for CBCRP advocacy-based reviewers.

- One participant, who works at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is working with her students to promote awareness of environmental links to breast cancer. The training was an important educational experience for her development of the group. Her team organized the UMass athletes to sign a 35-foot banner saying, "I pledge to avoid everyday products containing chemicals that contribute to breast cancer, creating a healthier future for all!" The signing was filmed and it played (and the banner was on display) at the UMass-Boston University hockey game—a sold out event with 8,000 people. The students worked with about 30 members of Women in Business, who wore "Protect Our Breasts" (100% organic and chemical-free ink) t-shirts, to sign people up on Facebook and hand out educational materials. Their facebook page is at: <http://www.facebook.com/ProtectOurBreasts>. This same participant is also writing a book about environmental links to breast cancer, and she says the training was instrumental in helping her understand how to write some of the chapters. She concluded, "I will always be indebted to...CHE [Collaborative on Health and the Environment]."
- One participant wrote: "Your environmental health training opened my eyes to the possibility that I might be an advocate for a cleaner, safer world. I felt responsible for the toxins that my grandchildren are now ingesting and wanted to better understand how that was happening. Your training outlined what the implications are for our species being immersed in a toxic soup and it was not pretty. But I felt more empowered by having the language and scientific knowledge so that I could clearly advocate for the environmental health of my family. I have used your training to support the launch of an organization that I believe will improve the environmental health of all of our children and grandchildren. The dedication and devotion of your scientists, Ted Schettler and Sarah Janssen, impelled me to try and take steps to get their message to a larger audience in our culture. Thank you so much for this grounding in the clear reasons behind why we must take responsibility for working to clean up our world—so our mothers' bodies can be healthy first environments and our children will be raised in a safe, non-toxic world." She leads a group called EcoBirth, which is a coalition of organizations and individuals who cherish our beloved babies and Mother Earth, including women who want to consciously change our culture's story to compassion for the environments of Earth and Birth—to impel social change to sustain healthy, caring humans and a healed earth home.

- Another participant who helps lead the newly formed Healthy Cedar Valley Coalition (HCVC) wrote that the training helps her in her efforts to maintain the HCVC website [www.healthycedarvalleycoalition.org](http://www.healthycedarvalleycoalition.org) and in preparing for the 2011 weekly Children’s Booth at downtown Waterloo Farmer’s Market where they educated 1492 children about gardening, recycling, health, physical activity, healthy food, and sustainability. In October, she co-wrote an Op-Ed piece about preventing breast cancer that appeared in the *Cedar Falls Times* and the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*.
- One participant led two workshops for Latino patients at La Clinica about everyday exposures and steps you can take to reduce exposure. One training was with a small group of prenatal patients and the other was with a group of *promotores verdes*—health promoters focused on improving environmental issues in their community. She wrote: “The majority of the content came directly from the knowledge I gained in the moms' training.” She partnered with another participant who is deeply rooted in Latina health education and outreach in the Bay Area to do the training with the *promotores*. “Our partnership was fostered by the unique setting of the moms' training—the ‘retreat’ setting, as opposed to a more traditional ‘conference’ setting, really allowed relationships to form.” She also did another environmental health workshop with Medical Assistants at La Clinica as a volunteer; and she held a green party for her friends, where she had a scavenger hunt throughout her home with little fast facts and tips about things you can do to prevent exposure, along with stations for making your own body scrub and all-purpose house cleaner.
- One participant is planning to use the training in her work with the federal Department of Health and Human Services Equity Councils, which will have a major focus on environmental justice in the coming year. She is also exploring ways to bring elements of the environmental links to breast cancer training to *promotores* she works with throughout the state of Texas.
- One participant testified at a hearing in Sacramento, CA, regarding California’s Safer Consumer Products draft regulations, and brought her four children with her to the stand when she gave her testimony. She brought her children expressly because of what she had learned at the training about early life exposures to toxic substances and their potential harmful effects.
- One participant will delivered a presentation at the John Hopkins Breast Cancer Center in Baltimore, MD, that summarized the content from the training.

- One participant recently published *Little Changes: Tales of a Reluctant Home Eco-Mom's Pioneer*, a guide to making everyday choices to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals. She recently sent a follow up message: “I have spring boarded a long way as an advocate over the last 12 months and I tribute many pieces of my journey to the training at Commonweal. My following has grown from 300 to 1200 on my newsletter and my Facebook has grown to 1100. More important, I am LOVING reaching out and creating awareness from one conference to another and am booked now until October! The last one? The Women’s association at Purdue University. And they LOVED how I shared the message of environmental health. Next week I will be the guest for CHE-Alaska – quite possibly a bigger honor for me than Purdue (but don’t tell them that!). I just want to thank you for the time you invested in me a year ago.” (Note: CHE stands for Collaborative on Health and the Environment)
- One participant has incorporated what she learned into the health classes she teaches in middle school, with a special focus on plastics. She has also given talks about environmental links to breast cancer at Lunafest, a movie festival for and by women that is sponsored by Luna Bar/Cliff Bar. Her talk can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zIPAXkabxA>.
- Another participant who works with the California Health Collaborative in the Central Valley writes, “As a Program Manager/Health Educator for the *Cancer Detection Program: Every Woman Counts* in the Central Valley and the Project Director for 2 Komen grants (Central Valley and Sacramento Valley Affiliates), I recognize the ethical responsibility to provide complete education in the communities that are served. Knowledge is Power! We can only address something when we know something is wrong. Incorporating what I have learned from the Environmental Health and Breast Cancer Training into my curriculum has armed me with the tools to make others aware to be proactive about our/their health as individuals and collectively as a community. Thank you again for the amazing opportunity.”
- Two participants who teach together (one is an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Institute for Health & Aging at the University of California, San Francisco and the other is a medical sociology doctoral student and a graduate student researcher at the Institute for Health & Aging at UCSF) shifted their Sociology of Aging syllabus to include a session on Sociology of Aging & the environment.

- The Policy Director of the Center for Healthy Aging at the National Council on Aging writes “I’ll be putting together a webpage within our Center for Healthy Aging’s website with information for consumers and links to some of the resources identified during the training.”