

Newsletter of the **Center for Sustainability and the Environment** at Wells College.



The Center has often offered what we call “Green Goodie Baskets” for area fundraisers (see more page 4). These popular silent auction items help make more folks aware of Wells and of our Center. They also quietly teach about more sustainable personal care and home cleaning products. What kinds of “green” items are typically included?

- ◆ 100% recycled content paper towels, facial tissue, and toilet paper
- ◆ Unscented shampoo, body wash, deodorant, and hand soap
- ◆ Unscented and dye-free dish soap and laundry detergent
- ◆ Reusable dryer balls
- ◆ Natural sponge scrubbies

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## Fall 2021 Line-up of Sustainability Events

We have programmed a really robust schedule of sustainability-related events for the upcoming Fall semester. Most events, due to COVID, will remain in an online delivery format using the Zoom platform—the exceptions are the two *Sustainability Films*, which will be screened for in-person viewing.

**Sustainability Perspectives** series talks are offered on Mondays from 12:30-1:30PM:

### September 13 **How Can We Partner with the Rest of Nature?**

Kristin Ohlson, author, “The Soil Will Save Us: How Scientists, Farmers and Foodies Are Healing the Soil to Save the Planet”

Most people think plants are rooted in the soil mainly for stability and to siphon up water. Instead, plant roots are surrounded by microorganisms – fungi, bacteria, and many others – all furiously engaged in a dynamic partnership with plants and each other in which they trade carbon, nutrients, water, protective chemicals, and more. Without those partnerships, plants weaken and falter. Partnerships like these are at the heart of nature. They go on inside us humans—our microbiome is like an orchestra of trillions, constantly working together to fine tune our health and function—and everywhere in the landscapes around us. How can we better appreciate those partnerships—and especially, work with them and not disrupt them—as we farm and garden? Zoom #: **883 8148 2407** passcode: **0?zZjA=k**



### September 20 **How do Packaging Engineers View Sustainable Packaging Solutions?**

Dr. Daniel Johnson, Chair, Packaging Science, RIT College of Engineering Technology Professor Johnson will describe how the unique field of packaging science approaches sustainability in an increasingly circular supply chain. Packaging Science is the design, development and testing of packaging solutions for your food pharmaceuticals, beverages, consumer and industrial goods. Biodegradable, recyclable and bio based packaging all have a role to play in sustainability, as well as advances in design and simulation. Research in RIT’s Center for Sustainable Packaging and how it relates to sustainability efforts of industry and governments will be addressed. Zoom #: **827 3462 2619** passcode: **LB7v?9y0**



### September 27 **Human Composting: An ecological death care option**

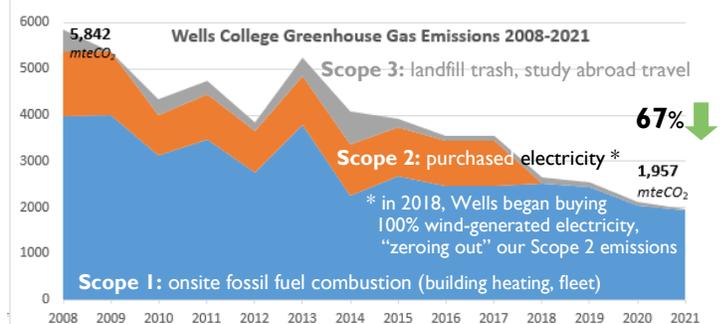
Anna Swenson, customer and communications manager, *Recompose* *Recompose*, an ecological death care company based in Seattle, Washington, is the first full service funeral home to offer the process of natural organic reduction, which gently transforms humans into soil after death. In this presentation, Ms. Swenson will cover the science behind the NOR process, this history of bringing *Recompose* to life, and the importance of greener death care options. Zoom #: **842 4968 7423** passcode: **r3&BEcXe**



*Fall Sustainability Events—continued on page 4*

## How is Wells doing at meeting its Climate Action Plan Goal?

In 2011, then-president Lisa Marsh Ryerson ’81 joined several hundred academic leaders to sign what was then called the *College and University President’s Climate Commitment*, pledging that Wells would actively work to reduce its carbon emissions to zero—the date we chose for our “carbon neutrality” was 2050. In 2008, Wells used a consultant to determine what our carbon emissions impact was—our “baseline” emissions level was calculated as 5,842 metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents (*mteCO<sub>2</sub>*). Part of our climate commitment is to annually measure and publicly report our carbon emissions reduction progress to *Second Nature*, the organization monitoring the progress of signatory institutions. We are pleased to report that we have significantly reduced our emissions, blowing past our two interim milestones (5% by 2015; 10% by 2020) and setting us up to meet our 100% neutrality goal well before 2050. Our FY2021 greenhouse gas emissions profile shows that Wells is **over 2/3s of the way to our zero-emissions goal**, due to focused efforts by our campus community to conserve energy and to make our energy-using systems much more efficient. **Way to go, Wells!**



### Faculty Accomplishments

We unexpectedly had to bid a sad but very fond farewell to long-time environmental science professor **Niamh O'Leary**, who left Wells to move west to accompany her spouse on a new employment adventure. We will sorely miss Niamh, who was one of the original co-visionaries, along with emeritus Psychology professor **Milene Morfei**, for the *Center for Sustainability* and the Sustainability academic program. Niamh contributed most of the Environmental Science courses for our majors and minors. We wish you well, Niamh!



In Spring 2021, the Provost approved the hire of a 2-year Visiting Professor of Sustainability. A search committee was formed, comprised of Laura McClusky, professor of *Sociology & Anthropology* (and current coordinator of the Sustainability academic program), Ernie Olson, professor of *Anthropology & Religion*, Erinn Ryen, associate professor of *Business*, Patti Goebel, assistant professor of *Theatre*, and Marian Brown, director of the *Center for Sustainability*. The search began in May, and the search committee reviewed applications from over 50 national and international candidates. The search committee selected three highly qualified finalists to be interviewed by the campus community—unfortunately, over Zoom, due to the continuing impacts of COVID. The committee recommended the hire of a wonderful new Sustainability colleague, to whom we will introduce you in our Fall Wellspring issue. Given the relatively late start of our search this summer, that new faculty member will not begin teaching new Sustainability courses until Spring 2022.

## Summer Garden Research Project

A summer faculty-student research project team took on the challenge to assess the cultural, social, economic, ecological, religious, and educational contexts for gardening, and its connections to culinary knowledge and practices, within the Southern Cayuga community. The research team was comprised of **Laura McClusky**, professor of *Sociology & Anthropology*, **Ernie Olson**, professor of *Anthropology & Religion*, **Marian Brown**, director of the *Center for Sustainability*, and three students: **Feleesha Jones '23** and **James Stover '22**, Sustainability majors, and **Angie Otterbein '22**, Visual Arts-Studio Arts major. The students conducted semi-structured interviews with over a dozen area gardeners and growers in their gardens, capturing both video and audio, which was later transcribed for inclusion in a research report. Most of the interviewees were identified through their utilization of the *Wells College Seed Exchange* earlier in 2021. In addition to the video interviews, the student researchers took extensive photos of the gardens they visited to showcase some of the glorious plants found in each. All three students learned a great deal about conducting ethnographic studies, and each



Feleesha (center) and Angie (right) interviewing a research study participant in her Aurora garden. Photo by James Stover



Photo by Angie Otterbein

developed valuable videography, photography, and visual and audio editing skills. Many of the results of the interviews—and the insights gleaned about the varied aspects of the research project—are being included in a research blog: <https://gardenkitchen.blog/> In addition to their research work, each of the three students conducted a related summer internship project. Feleesha did more in-depth research to learn about the impacts of climate change in the Finger Lakes region for an Environmental Science internship (for which she plans to double major with Sustainability). James did more work to learn about localized climate change impacts but also to further his GIS capabilities by mapping the surveyed gardens with known geological data to provide new insights about local growing conditions. Angie did a visual arts internship, working to develop new videography and still photography skills, under the guidance of Michael Niman, professor of *Journalism & Critical Media Studies* in the Communications department at Buffalo State College. The research team is still wading through the hours of transcribed audio files and volumes of video and still photography images, to find the best examples to share on the blog. It is hoped that this can be an ongoing research project, with new student team members added, to extend the research, especially into the farm-to-table aspect, with area gardeners showing off their recipes and, for those willing, recording videos of their cooking techniques.

### New faculty, new courses

Welcome to Dr. **Tom Jensen**, assistant professor of Biology. Tom was formerly a senior scientist in Reproductive Sciences for the *San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance*. He brings his many years of experience in animal physiology research to his work at Wells. Tom earned his bachelor's degree in Zoology from University of Northern Arizona and his doctorate in Physiology from the University of Notre Dame. This Fall, Tom will teach *Vertebrate Zoology* and *Introduction to Environmental Science*. Welcome, Tom!



A new topics course being offered this Fall is SOC 385: **Sociology and Human Rights**. This course provides an overview of human rights as seen through the lens of sociology. Topics will include the development of human rights, the enforcement of those rights through the law and societal measures, and in-depth discussions into human rights associated with current events. This course will be taught by lecturer Chelsea Hipkens.



As part of our ongoing collaborations with Hobart-William Smith Colleges (HWS) in Geneva NY (see more below), we have the exciting opportunity to bring Dr. **Lisa Cleckner**, director of the *Finger Lakes Institute (FLI)*, faculty in HWS' Environmental Studies department, and an expert aquatic researcher, to teach our BIOL 325L *Limnology* class this fall. Lisa will be taking labs out on the FLI's research vessel on Seneca Lake. Welcome aboard, Lisa!

**Kevin Miles**, director of the *Sullivan Center for Business and Entrepreneurship*, **Erinn Ryen**, associate professor of Business, and **Marian Brown**, Sustainability center director, have partnered for the past year with Tom Drennen, professor of Economics at HWS, to develop a *Masters in Management* degree program, with sustainability thinking and practice underpinning all the required courses. The program was approved by NYSED and will start this fall with two 2021 Wells graduates in the first program cohort.



### Trash2Treasure results

During our end-of-the-semester moveout collection, we sorted through a half ton of donations. We restocked the two campus reuse areas, *Bargain Basement* (housewares, room furnishings, costumes, craft supplies) and *RUMPUS Room* (school/office supplies). We redirected four boxes of non-perishable food and personal care items to the college Food Pantry. We sent three large bags of jeans to SewGreen for a repurposing project, but other clothing and footwear and other items went to reuse outlets like the Rescue Mission.



### HEBI results

We were invited to participate in the first round of Energy Star's *Higher Education Benchmarking Initiative* (HEBI), to help build a comparative platform for colleges and universities to know how their energy use stacks up. We provided information on our utility use and our square footage. We were pleasantly surprised that among the 14 Baccalaureate institutions participating in this round, Wells scored second lowest in the energy use intensity (EUI) of our spaces (138.5). Our result was well below the median source energy use intensity (165.4) of all the participants. Our energy efficiency efforts paid off!



### Focus on Fleet Efficiency

We were delighted to learn this summer that one of the new campus fleet vehicles purchased is a *Ford Focus* hybrid sedan. The hybrid technology uses a combination of electric and gas-powered drive trains. The electric "boost" from the "regenerative braking" offers 17% more fuel efficiency for the gasoline powered engine. **Good going!**



### PrintRelease report

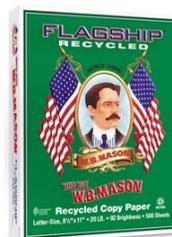
*Print Release*, the reforestation program we access through our *Toshiba* managed print services contract, provided the results of our fiscal year (July '20 - June '21) printing: 75,691 standard pages. *PrintRelease* partners will replant 9.08 trees on our behalf. While we like the idea that the *PrintRelease* folks replant trees to make up for the number of trees harvested to create the amount of copy paper we consumed during this period, what we like even *more* is that we have steadily *reduced* the amount of paper we print. It should also be noted that the college's default standard for office paper for networked printers and multifunction machines has been 30% post-consumer recycled content, so 30% fewer trees were actually cut down to meet our paper needs, so every year, through *PrintRelease*, we have replanted *MORE* trees than we really caused to be harvested:



2017-18	82.16 trees	684,612 pages
2018-19	53.64 trees	446,970 pages
2019-20	20.81 trees	173,322 pages
2020-21	9.08 trees	75,691 pages

### 30% to 100% ...

See what happens when you put us in charge.? As mentioned at left, our default purchasing standard for office paper has been 30% recycled content for many years—this product is available to Wells through the New York State contract system at very favorable pricing. But the NYS contracts *also* offers the option to buy 100% recycled content paper for a little higher price. Because our paper use has gone down so dramatically, and because the Provosts office asked us to "pitch in" during their staffing transition and handle the annual bulk paper in order, we seized the chance to order 100% recycled-content letter-size paper for use in network printers and computer labs. In 2014, we purchased 200 cases of non-recycled-content letter-sized paper for that year's use. This year, we purchased only 60 cases of 100% recycled content paper. Because we still have inventory of 30%RCP in printer areas, it may take awhile before the new 100% recycled paper is in use, but that nice change will be coming to a printer near you.



### Cleaning up our Act

As we continue to work on our AASHE STARS comprehensive sustainability assessment, some interesting data points we collected relate to our annual spending on janitorial cleaners and papers. We receive STARS points for purchasing cleaners that are certified by *Green Seal*, *EcoLogo*, or *EPA Safer Choice*, reputable third party certifiers of more sustainable items. Of the non-COVID-related chemicals we purchased, **58%** were third-party certified to be more sustainable. Of the bathroom and kitchen papers (toilet tissue and paper towels) we bought, **97%** were *EcoLogo* certified and certified by the *Forest Stewardship Council* as having their virgin paper pulp harvested from sustainability managed forests. Overall, Facilities purchased **84%** sustainably certified items. While trash and recycling can liners are not included in the STARS janitorial product review, **97%** of the liners we purchased were *EcoLogo* certified; they use 100% recycled content plastic. (We plan to apply for a STARS Innovation credit for this more sustainable liner purchasing practice.)



### GHGs Calculations

As reported on page 1, our greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) - generated mostly from combusting fossil fuels - are going down. We track utility data (propane, fuel oil, diesel fuel, gasoline, electricity and renewable energy credits purchased) and other relevant statistics. Below are last year's data points and how each contributes to our carbon emissions. We input these data into the *SIMAP* carbon accounting tool, widely accepted as using reliable methodologies, to get our total GHG emissions.



<b>Scope 1 on-site combustion</b> —building heating and fleet fuels		
heating - propane	359,152 gallons	
heating - #2 fuel oil	5,965 gallons	<b>total onsite: 1,870.20 mteCO<sub>2</sub></b>
fleet - diesel	1,720 gallons	
fleet - gasoline	5,470 gallons	<b>total fleet: 64.95 mteCO<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>Scope 2</b> purchased electricity	3,549,406 kWh	
100% wind-generated RECs	- 3.55 Mwhs	<b>0 mteCO<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>Scope 3</b> indirect emissions		
study abroad air travel *	0 air miles	*none in '20-21 due to COVID
landfill trash	107 tons	
paper purchased	4,048 pounds	<b>total scope 3 4.81 mteCO<sub>2</sub></b>
<b>Net GHGE emissions (FY 2020-21):</b>		<b>1,956.74 mteCO<sub>2</sub></b>



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Wells Center for  
Sustainability and  
the Environment



@Wells Sust Center

The Center for Sustainability contributed a Green Golfing basket as a prize for the Wells Open in July. The basket contained recycled golf balls, biodegradable golf tees made from bamboo, a rapidly renewable resource, and a reused green microfiber golf towel (obtained from the *Trash2Treasure* moveout collection). The winning team (from left): security officer Dave Hewitt, van driver Tom Gruver, security officer Dan Nolan, and security officer Bob Giannotta. The Center donated a Green Goodie Basket, filled with more sustainable personal care and home cleaning products, for a raffle fundraiser to support Wells alumna Becky Richards Davis '92, who is battling cancer. Becky is a long-time Spanish and ESL educator (using her Wells degree in Modern Languages) and active supporter of school clubs in the nearby South-ern Cayuga Central School district.



**Sustainability** is a decision-making framework for continuous improvement that mindfully takes into account the social, environmental, and economic impacts of our choices.

## Fall Sustainability Events, continued from page 1

**Sustainability Perspectives** series, continued:

October 4 **Savings Seabirds – Lessons from Puffins about Sustainability**

Dr. Stephen Kress, founder, Project Puffin, *National Audubon Society*

Worldwide, about one-third of all seabird species are now globally threatened because of effects of invasive predatory mammals, marine pollution, coastal development, and climate change. Against this grim background, Dr. Kress's presentation about restoration of Maine seabirds offers hope that people can bring seabirds back to some of their historic nesting places and responsibly manage essential forage fish which seabirds require. The methods used to bring puffins and terns back to Maine islands are now used worldwide and he will share a few of these exciting and hopeful restoration projects that demonstrate how individuals can make a difference locally for global biodiversity. Dr. Kress will also discuss insights about what puffins are telling us about creating sustainable oceans that benefit people and seabirds. Zoom #: **837 9110 3234** passcode: **DN^7n!V2**



October 18 **Introduction to Environmental Justice**

Mariah Davis, senior policy & campaigns manager, *Choose Clean Water Coalition*

Environmental justice is defined as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Ms. Davis will speak about national and more local environmental justice issues and will address what each of us can do to work for environmental justice for all. Zoom #: **882 2566 4824** passcode: **hflg#U\*j**

November 8 **Generating Sustainable Solutions for the Future**

Matt Goodman, asset manager, *Generate Capital*

*Generate Capital* builds, owns, and operates sustainable infrastructure to deliver affordable and reliable resource solutions for companies, governments, and communities. *Generate* develops sustainable solutions as diverse as solar arrays, fuel cells, geothermal systems, biomass & biogas, heat pumps, electric vehicles charging stations, and anaerobic digesters, among other leading-edge technologies. He will focus his talk on food waste recycling, zero waste to landfill goals and industry/technology capabilities, and sustainability reporting as it relates to food waste and biogas. Zoom #: **864 9526 0381** passcode: **rhN\$Ec&5**



We have scheduled two talks in our **Sustainable Business** speaker series, our educational collaboration with the *Sullivan Center for Business and Entrepreneurship*:



September 14 7:00PM **Role of Business in Climate Action**

Rajiv Ramchandra, founder, *In Wise Company*

The need for a business to create a meaningful climate strategy is not just a strategic imperative for the sake of competitive positioning. It is about the survival of life on our planet, an invitation for a conscious evolution, and an invitation to rethink the design of our societies, our businesses and our economies. This talk will broadly cover: ♦What exactly is climate change and what are its effects on people and the planet ♦What empowered role can businesses play, and are playing, in terms of climate action ♦What can you do?

Zoom #: **837 8380 9343** passcode: **4kMnMy.?**

October 21 7:00PM **Sustaining Rural Communities Through Impact Investing**

Karin Gregory, J.D., '80, co-founder and managing partner, *Blue Highway Capital*

Most Private Equity funds are focused just on returns. Blue Highway focuses on two factors for success: returns for our private investors, and how to make an impact by investing in small businesses in rural locations that are typically underserved by outside capital providers. Even banks only provide 16% of their capital to small business in the US. Ms. Gregory will explore the issues and opportunities and discuss some examples of impact-oriented investments and how to find that balance to create sustainability solutions for rural America.

Zoom #: **827 9548 7164** passcode: **liv32Aq.**



We are also offering two **Sustainability Film** series screenings, in person on campus in the DeWitt Lecture Room, Zabriskie Hall 106. We offer organic popcorn at these screenings.



September 28 7:00PM **The Human Element**

At the same time human activities alter the basic elements of life – earth, air, water, and fire – those elements change human life. This film inspires us to reevaluate our relationship with the natural world. Runtime: 78 minutes

October 19 7:00PM **2040**

Award-winning director Damon Gameau embarks on a journey to explore what the future could look like by the year 2040 if we simply embraced the best solutions already available to us and shifted them into the mainstream. Runtime: 91 minutes

