

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



President Jonathan Gibralter signed Wells College on to a letter of support for the *Transportation and Climate Initiative* (TCI), an opportunity to modernize and decarbonize our region's transportation system. The colleges, universities, hospitals, businesses, and groups signing this letter understand that the policy created through TCI will achieve several shared goals concurrently:

- \* mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from transportation;
- \* where applicable, helping meet binding carbon reduction goals;
- \* investing in public transit, alternative transportation, and road infrastructure, alleviating congestion;
- \* providing benefits for rural communities; and
- \* generating a revenue stream to fund these and future transportation improvements.

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### Spring semester sustainability events

Each semester, we program a robust array of sustainability-themed events and activities. This upcoming Spring semester is no exception—check out our line-up:

Our ***Sustainability Perspectives*** series brings to campus experts to educate us on various sustainability-related topics. These talks, which are all free and open to the public, are held on Mondays from 12:20—1:30pm in the DeWitt Lecture Room 106 in Zabriskie Hall.



#### **February 3 Getting Where We Need to Be: The Imperative of Sustainable Transportation**

**Fernando deAragón**, director, *Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council*

The transportation sector accounts for the largest share (nearly 30%) of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from burning fossil fuel for our cars, trucks, ships, trains, and planes. Transportation planners grapple with how to efficiently move people and goods while at the same time try to reduce the climate changing impacts of transportation. Learn about regional efforts to encourage alternative modes of transportation to reduce our reliance on single-occupant vehicles, along with initiatives to move personal and commercial vehicles away from fossil fuels.

#### **February 10 The effects of fire management on ecosystem services and geochemical cycling in traditional Maya swidden agroecosystems**

**Tomasz Falkowski**, postdoctoral fellow with the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future at Cornell University, explains that swidden (i.e. slash-and-burn) agriculture is often condemned for contributing to climate change and deforestation. As a result, the Mexican federal government is pressuring the Maya of southern Mexico to stop using fire management in their agroecosystems. However, preliminary evidence suggests that burning offers important ecosystem services that would be lost should traditional practices be abandoned.



#### **March 23 Supporting Energy Democracy with Local Carbon Offsets**

**Gay Nicholson**, founder of the

policy battles ahead may take on resources to assure energy leadership toward including every to promote renewables and my and assisting local families in energy improvements that would not otherwise be possible. Finger Lakes region. These grants help pay for insulation, air conditioning, and other upgrades to reduce energy use and greenhouse g

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, all campus events scheduled after 3/7/20 were canceled. We will attempt to reschedule these events for AY2020-21.

#### **March 30 Climate Change and Sports**

**Dr. Sandra Steingraber**, environmental toxicologist, activist, and author of “*Living Downstream*” will explore how the climate crisis is threatening the future of sports itself and will examine how sports figures are emerging as leaders in the climate justice movement around the world. Of particular interest: exposure to air pollution from fossil fuel combustion and its effects on athletic performance; the rising incidence of heat stroke in outdoor sports, such as football, long-distance running, and cricket; the leadership role that surfers, skiers, and snowboarders are playing in the fight for a renewable energy future; and the ways in which sports psychology can serve as useful tool in overcoming fear and anxiety about climate change. The talk presents opportunities for engagement by college athletes.



Photo credit: www.laurakozlowski.com

#### **April 13 Three Birds, One Stone: Ending One Small City's Food Insecurity, Social Isolation and Economic Stagnation**

Wells alumna **Tanzania Roach '99** will share her experience developing *Happy Camper Compostage*, an ambitious young project that aims to create a simple infrastructure to redirect food & biodegradable wastes from landfills. We look at food waste as a resource and use low-tech, human-powered solutions to address the problem of food insecurity, social isolation and economic stagnation. Key to our vision is being a business that models integrity, purposefulness and relevance.

**See more Spring 2020 Sustainability Events, page 4**

# Wellspring

## Faculty Accomplishments

**Niamh O'Leary**, professor of environmental science, was lead author on a recent publication in the peer-reviewed journal *Water*. The article focuses on phosphorus levels in Fall Creek and other tributaries of Cayuga Lake and is titled "Long-Term Study of Soluble Reactive Phosphorus Concentration in Fall Creek and Comparison to Northeastern Tributaries of Cayuga Lake, NY: Implications for Watershed Monitoring and Management." Work on the paper was primarily done during her recent sabbatical leave.



In November, **Kent Klitgaard**, professor of economics and sustainability, spoke at the School of Economics at Peking University on the topic of "Theoretical Advances in Ecological Economics." His talk was part of the Ecological Economics and Ecological Civilization International Forum in Beijing, China. The following day, professor Klitgaard chaired two panels of parallel presentations. He also spoke on "Energy and Theories of Political Economy" at the China Petroleum University, also in Beijing.

In February, Sustainability Center director **Marian Brown** attended the Second Nature Climate Summit in Atlanta. At this annual convening of representatives of Climate Commitment signatory institutions and investors, she co-presented with Bob Hinkle, CEO of Metrus Energy, in three informational sharing sessions on Wells' innovative Energy-as-a-Service agreement. Session attendees were very intrigued with Metrus'

funding model for needed energy system upgrades.



## Student Sustainability Projects

**Cheyenne Nowalk** '21 did her January-term sustainability internship in her hometown, working with staff and administrators at Cincinnati Central School on a cafeteria food waste and composting project. She researched alternatives for the disposable Styrofoam trays and plastic utensils the district currently uses. She has been asked to present her findings to the school board during Spring Break. Cheyenne

presented her project poster at the Internship Fair at the end of January; in this photo (above right), she explains her project to professor Ernie Olson. Also spotted at that same Internship Fair was **Robyn Jacobs** '20, who interned in the summer for the Aurora Farmers Market.



**Brittany Anderson** '21 signed on to be our RecycleMania 2020 intern, conducting waste audits and investigating the establishment of a redeemable bottle collection program. As part of her internship, Brittany conducted a waste audit of the collected material following the last women's home basketball game of the season, against Penn College on February 22. Following the game, Brittany separated landfill trash, recyclables, cardboard and food waste and weighed each waste stream; she also calculated the number of game attendees to determine the waste generated per capita. These stats were reported to RecycleMania for their Basketball Game Day Challenge.



**Kaya Perry** '22 worked through the late Fall and during the early Spring semester months to ably fulfill her role as the Wells College Seed Exchange intern. Kaya took charge, reaching out to more than 50 seed companies around the country, requesting donations. 18 seed companies responded, donating around 3,300 assorted seed packets. While we do not sell these seeds, Kaya calculated the retail value of these generous donations to be over \$7,000; it cost us only \$200 in shipping and handling costs to get these seed donations. Kaya organized all the available seed donations in the Wells College Seed Exchange, which is housed in our Long Library and open and accessible during Library hours. Kaya opened the exchange for public access in late February, emailing notices sent to an extensive list of local gardeners and growers, K-12 teachers, agriculture faculty, 4H programs, food pantry organizers, and area news outlets. Eager recipients quickly began to descend on the exchange to snap up their free flower, herb and vegetable seeds ahead of this year's growing season.

During the Student Art Exhibition in the String Room Gallery in February, we spotted these two interesting visual art displays with sustainability themes. **Jack Hardy** '22 created a thought-provoking demonstration made from collected campus litter. The accompanying text reads: "This is a representation of our treatment of the earth and each other, We kill each other for our world's resources and do nothing to replenish them, in turn destroying us". **Kingsley Ehling** '23 used the Book Arts Center equipment to print and bind an interesting thought piece on Climate Change.

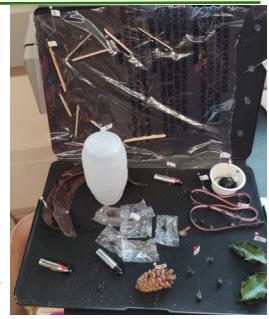


## Sustain-a-Cell Spring 2020

**Jackie Schnurr**, professor of Biology and Environmental Science, enlisted our help for a Sustain-a-Cell competition for two spring classes: *Biology of Organisms* and her new *Plants!* class. Sustain-a-Cell is a project in which biology students working singly or in pairs are charged with creating cell models using "found materials". The Center director explains to each class where to find such materials, and incents the best efforts with prizes. For *Bio of Organisms*, students could create either a plant or animal cell; the *Plants!* class had no option. Teams in these classes again did a terrific job, culling items from trash and recycling bins or picking them up off the ground and repurposing materials creatively to represent various cell organelles in great models like these:



Caitlin Lawrence '20 and Hannah Koerner '23 won the Best Use of Natural Materials category and the overall Grand Prize for their reuse of a broken laptop case and incorporation of natural materials like pinecones, berries and leaves. First year student Nathan Soliman's solo effort won top honors for the



Most Creative Use of Found Materials for his integration of singleton socks from his laundry room and the creative arrangement of the Target bag's red bullseye image to represent the cell nucleus.

## Bookstore Reusable Bags

Late in 2019, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation announced their statewide plan to phase out the issuance of single-use plastic shopping bags at retail outlets, which includes our college's bookstore. The ban officially takes effect March 1, but store manager **Rich Kloster** proactively explored the marketplace to find high-quality, cost-effective sources for reusable bags to sell in the store.

These new Wells-branded reusable fabric bags were made available - at the store's



## Toshiba Cartridge Recycling

Information Technology director

**Dan Wentworth**  
signed us up  
for  
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## NYSERDA Case Study

The four-way partnership among Wells, Metrus Energy, Trane, and the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)'s Real Time Energy Management Program (RTEM) to support our Energy-as-a-Service agreement to update our campus energy infrastructure has now been written up as a case study, available on the RTEM program website (photo right). Facilities Director **Brian Brown** is quoted in this piece as follows (edited slightly): "The ongoing services and monitoring that our partners... provide... enables us to address issues proactively, saving time and money on our operations and maintenance costs." The total ESA project totaled \$2.2M, with the RTEM program kicking in \$635K. Our annual energy savings are expected to top \$225,000, accruing really substantial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions too.

## Wells Adopts a Highway

Late last Fall, Physics professor **Scott Heinckamp** offered an interesting idea to help make the college more visible to passersby; he suggested we contact the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) and adopt a section of State Route 90, which fronts the campus. We filed the adoption application and have been notified that we have been assigned a 2.2 mile section of this scenic byway starting at Lake Road and running south (the 2-mile section in the village was already adopted). Our adoption obligations are to hold at least 4 highway cleanups per year; NYS DOT will put up large highway signage touting our adoption. The first cleanup will be during Earth Week (see pg 4).



## Offsetting Travel Carbon

The Center director used Sustainability discretionary account funds (from donations) to purchase offsets for our 2019-20 Study Abroad travel (90,200 miles, 70,356 pounds of carbon), plus Brown offset her air travel to attend the Climate Summit. The Finger Lakes Climate Fund uses dollars raised through individual and corporate purchases of carbon offsets for air travel, commuting, and home energy to support energy efficiency and renewable energy projects for low- to moderate-income residents in the Southern Tier region. CEO Gay Nicholson will speak about the Finger Lakes Climate Fund in March (see pg 1).



## Toshiba Cartridge Recycling

Information Technology director **Dan Wentworth** signed us up for Toshiba's EcoSmart Toner Recycling program. Toshiba, which has the contract to service all our network copiers and printers, used to take back empty toner cartridges for free, but recent changes in the global recycling market has forced this change. Toshiba now offers this low-cost recycling option, supporting 100% recycling of their imaging consumables. All cartridges are recycled with zero waste going to landfills and old cartridges are made into new, useful materials. Toshiba provides IT with receptacles into which spent toner cartridges are placed; when the container is full, it is mailed back and the contents recycled.



## Print Releaf Update

Wells partnered several years ago with Toshiba's Print Releaf program to plant trees in exchange for the amount of printing we do; during calendar year 2019, Wells' community printed 339,864 pages. PrintReleaf equates this print total to 41 trees that will be planted at the sustainable reforestation project we selected: Trees, Water & People. This non-profit works directly with the Oglala Lakota Native Americans on the Pine Ridge Reservation to green their landscape to combat climate change through carbon sequestration, recreate wildlife habitat zones on fire-damaged acreage, and develop income opportunities by training a local Native American workforce to care for and plant tree seedlings.



## New electricity contract

**Brian Brown**, director of Facilities Operation & Services, re-contracted with Constellation Energy to supply our electricity for the next four years. The good news: Brian negotiated an even lower cost for our electricity, saving us thousands of dollars each year. The even better news: the new supply rate includes 100% wind renewable energy credits, effectively "zeroing out" our emissions for purchased electricity (known as "Scope 2") in our emissions inventory. Now we can focus on reducing emissions from building heating (Scope 1) and emissions from landfill trash and air travel reported in our Scope 3 totals.



## Installments recycling

Psychology professor **Duncan Overton**, reached out to the Center to ask if we could give him old *Installments* as we replace these sustainability min-newsletters in bathroom stalls each month. Duncan cut the old *Installments* we gave him into small sheets for students in his PSY 101 course to use to provide feedback on his classes. Students let him know three things about each day's session: one good thing, one not-so-good thing, one "muddy" thing that Duncan can clarify in the next class. These feedback slips serve as the students' class participation grade, giving Duncan valuable feedback to improve his teaching, and this practice helps us by creatively reusing these sheets.



**Outreach****Center for Sustainability and the Environment**

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Wells Center for Sustainability and the Environment



@Wells Sust Center

The Center for Sustainability provided a "Green Goodie Bucket" with \$70 worth of more sustainable cleaning and personal care products for the Aurora Masonic Center's silent auction fundraiser during *Christmas in Aurora* in early December. Wells College Trustee



We also donated a Green Goodie Basket worth around \$125 to Peachtown School for their Leap Day Silent Auction fundraiser. These unique baskets seem to be quite popular as folks get a chance to try new products.



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

**Spring Semester Sustainability Events, continued from page 1**

We have planned three **Sustainability Film** screenings; these events take place at 7:00pm in the deWitt Lecture Room 106 in Zabriskie Hall. Free organic popcorn and butter will be served; these film screenings are free and open to the public.

**February 19 Blue**

Half of all marine life has been lost in the last 40 years. By 2050 there will be more plastic in the sea than fish. The way the ocean operates is different from how we thought of it 100 years ago. We can no longer think of it as a place of limitless resources, a dumping ground, immune to change or decline. **BLUE** shows us there is a way forward and the time to act is now. Runtime: 76 minutes

**March 4 2 Degrees—The Point of No Return**

As the Earth's average temperature rises each year, experts warn that we are nearing a fatal tipping point, 2 degrees Celsius above the norm that will set into motion a cascade of natural disasters that will devastate America and the world. Runtime: 86 minutes

**April 22 Ice Age—the Meltdown**

Manny, Sid, and Diego discover that the ice age is coming to an end, and join everybody for a journey to higher ground. On the trip, they discover that Manny, in fact, is not the last of the woolly mammoths. This animated comedy with a serious theme features the vocal talents of Ray Romano, Denis Leary, and Queen Latifah. Runtime: 90 minutes

In collaboration with the *Sullivan Center for Business and Entrepreneurship*, we host the **Sustainable Business** speaker series. Two talks are scheduled, both at 7:00PM in the deWitt Lecture Room 106 in Zabriskie Hall; talks are free and open to the public.

**February 5 Can Harnessing the Power of the Ocean Change the World?**

**Terence Cryan** currently serves as Chairman of the Board of *Ocean Power Technologies Inc.*, a pioneer in renewable wave-energy technology that converts ocean wave energy into electricity. Information from the oceans can help us understand climate change and natural disasters while also providing sources for food and energy. Wave power is abundant in all areas of the world and its harnessing offers a dependable clean source of renewable and cost effective energy.

**April 7 Imagine This!**

Wells alumna **Jennifer Wells** will examine current methods that municipalities in the Upstate into solid waste programs, capacity for waste management, composting industry, and what public and private sectors can do to promote sustainable solutions. Examples will highlight upstream/producer responsibility and outreach techniques that can move the needle toward waste management in the decades to come.

VP for GBB Inc. will examine current methods that incorporate the circular economy model objectives and develop local/domestic solid waste, recycling and waste processing sectors -- can do to Virginia, and the North- public-private partnership for sustainable solid

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Wells Campus Greens will be scheduling a number of interesting campus activities during Earth Week 2020, which this year marks the 50th anniversary of this important annual observance. The film *Ice Age— The Meltdown* (above) is offered during Earth Week, and we have scheduled two other special events that week:

**April 20 Creating Greener Cities: Strategies to Establish Sustainable Landscapes**

Dr. **Nina Bassuk**, Program Leader, *Urban Horticulture Institute* at Cornell University, will inform us about physiological problems of plants grown in urban environments, improved plant selections for difficult sites, soil modification, and improved transplanting technology. This event is held in collaboration with the *Southern Cayuga Garden Club*.

**April 25 Route 90 Highway and Beach Clean-Up** details to follow

In cooperation with the *NYS Department of Transportation* and the *Cayuga Lake Watershed Network*, the Wells campus and local community is invited to participate in a roadside litter collection and cleanup of our designated section of Route 90 as part of the state's *Adopt-a-Highway* program (see more page 3). At the same time, volunteers will be working with the support of the *CL Watershed Network* to do cleanups of adjacent beach and stream areas along "our" section of Route 90, to keep roadside litter from making its way into Cayuga Lake.

