



NEWSLETTER

Coming Alongside

A New Generation of Environmental Services



Greetings!

Welcome everyone! You are now reading our first Coming Alongside newsletter. In this edition, we aim to provide you with information about Coming Alongside, introduce you to our board of directors, our programs, and our latest environmental news.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, and we thank you for your support. We look forward to greeting you again in the winter and spring.

Your comments and feedback are always welcome at:
comingalongside@runbox.com.

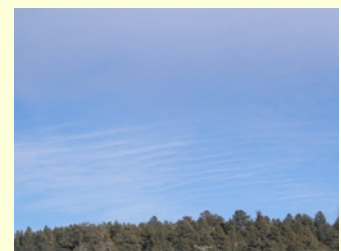
Who are We?

Coming Alongside is a non-profit environmental services organization committed to bringing invisible biochemical worlds alongside the average citizen. We seek to make transparent the biological and chemical hazards in our everyday environments, so that individuals, regardless of race, ethnic origin, or socioeconomic status, can be empowered to reduce exposure to and impacts of these everyday toxins.

As a 501(c)(3) organization (application pending), we rely entirely on (tax deductible) donor contributions. We are not influenced by nor do we influence political organizations in order to maintain objectivity in our assessment of environmental threats. Coming Alongside achieves its mission via community education, partnership, environmental testing, and broad base literature & data analysis.

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From Our Board of Directors:

Why did we start Coming Alongside?

- *Denise:* To address the need for streamlining, simplifying, and understanding the environmental health picture in a way that not only informs but also empowers the average citizen to protect his or her own health and family health from the myriad of toxins that exist in what we eat, breathe, and drink.
- *Anne:* To conduct the comprehensive science necessary to bring practical solutions to real people in everyday places.
- *Ella:* To provide some concrete solutions to the environmental exposure issues residents have been facing since Katrina. Since working with Coming Alongside, I can see the wider applicability of many of our materials and reports.

What makes Coming Alongside unique?

- *Anne:* We all really, really care! And we know how small changes can make big improvements in people's lives.
- *Ella:* Coming Alongside is independent so we are not driven by a moneyed agenda. Coming Alongside meshes scientific inquiry with useful information. We don't overload you with jargon; we help you where you are with tools to improve your environment.
- *Denise:* We are a one stop shop for identifying the best things you can do right now to improve the way the environment impacts your health and well being.

What is your vision for Coming Alongside?

- *Ella:* To grow into a widely used resource for people who want to empower their communities and for companies that want to be better corporate citizens. Too often, environmentalists are marginalized by their own politics. The most positive changes occur when a win-win situation can be created on both sides of an issue.
- *Denise:* To evolve into an organization focused on delivering information to people on the environment in a way that is not overwhelming, but actionable and high impact. That we uphold the highest principles of science and engineering in solidifying the foundation through which we deliver education, hope, assistance, and information.
- *Anne:* To help the public and our environment by reducing exposures to toxins in their environment.

To Learn more about Ella, Anne, and Denise:

Ella: www.reelrelief.com/

Anne: www.ce.washington.edu/people/faculty/bios/steinemann_a.html

Denise: www.ee.washington.edu/research/dms



Ella Kliger

Ella is a film-maker and community leader along the post-Katrina Gulf Coast. She has a deeply committed interest in delivering actionable solutions to ordinary people living in potentially toxic environments.



Anne Steinemann

Anne is a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Washington. She is a staunch advocate for improving indoor air quality for all individuals.



Denise Wilson

Denise is an Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Washington. She has a passion for applying her technical knowledge base to reducing the impact of human activity on the environment and on public health.



EveryDay Environments: The Air We Breathe

Indoor Air Quality is fast outpacing outdoor air quality in its impact on human health. Of the many potential harmful vapors that infiltrate our everyday living environments, formaldehyde is one of the most pervasive. Formaldehyde is present in many common building materials, such as the pressed or particle board used to make cabinets and most veneered furniture, and is also emitted from or generated by a variety of common household products, such as air fresheners and cleaners. Formaldehyde made its claim to fame in the FEMA trailer saga of the post-Katrina Gulf Coast but it is no stranger to almost every home and office building.

Formaldehyde in FEMA Trailers

by Ella Kliger

I'd been working on the Gulf Coast since September 2006. Becky Gillette of the Sierra Club asked me to help distribute formaldehyde test kits to residents. In doing this outreach work, I found that although there was a bit of press about "toxic trailers," most of the people living in them did not realize the severity of the situation or what they could do to help themselves. Remember, this was almost a year before the first Congressional Hearings on this topic. It seemed that what I was doing with the test kits was confirming that people were living in an unhealthy environment. I mentioned my concerns to Denise, explaining that I felt helpless. Within a week, Denise had created the Formaldehyde flyer and was asking me for edits. At that point, I realized that there was a way to promote the problem plus the solution. Denise would go on to create a more precise formaldehyde sensor. She developed a handheld device that could tell the relative differences of formaldehyde levels in different parts of a house. The sensor enabled us to better determine the sources of the formaldehyde, typically the sub-floor and cabinets. This kind of detailed information is key to determining whether a formaldehyde problem exists and how to lessen it.



Beyond Flowers:

The Sweet Smell of Formaldehyde

by Denise Wilson

With all the press surrounding FEMA trailers in the post-Katrina Gulf Coast, it would be easy to think that formaldehyde poisoning occurs only in FEMA trailers. Unfortunately, the not always discernible, sweet smell of formaldehyde has become almost as common as the scent of spring flowers in the post-Katrina zone. Truth be told, formaldehyde makes an appearance in almost every new construction; the more of certain resin-rich products in the construction, the more we breathe this pervasive long lasting, environmental contaminant. In fact, certain hardwood floor finishes can emit over 20 times the formaldehyde of the most common offenders: kitchen cabinets and cabinet accessories, whose emissions in new construction often exceed the 0.1 ppm limit established for 8 hour exposures in the workplace. Pressboard, particleboard, and its many processed wood and vinyl cousins join the ranks of a variety of consumer products, including major offenders such as second hand cigarette smoke and nail hardeners, to surround us with formaldehyde in our new homes.

While it would be comforting to believe the problem will disappear with FEMA trailers, the reality is that formaldehyde emissions are pervasive in new structures, buildings, and furniture and decay only slowly in time. Fortunately, formaldehyde exposure can be reduced through simple changes. VENTILATE. Keep windows open whenever possible, including while away from new construction. Use formaldehyde rich products (cigarettes included) in well ventilated areas, or better yet...outdoors. With ventilation, comes a predictable, welcome, and precipitous decline in formaldehyde. Let's leave that sweet smell for the flowers, shall we?



A Glance at Coming Alongside's Web Site

Our web site contains a wealth of information including:

- 🌐 Content about toxins in your environment
- 🌐 Our latest programs and publications
- 🌐 Links to other useful environmental web sites
- 🌐 Opportunities to volunteer or donate

Please visit our web site for more details:

www.comingalongside.org



Recommendations

What is the best piece of advice you can give to individuals concerned about toxins in their environment?

- 🌐 *Ella:* You have choices. You have a voice. We can help you to weigh your options, to find your voice.
- 🌐 *Anne:* If you can't drink it or eat it, don't clean with it. Don't be misled by claims of "natural," "green," or "organic" - these products can contain toxic chemicals.
- 🌐 *Denise:* Don't jump at the first thing you read, and don't give up if you feel overwhelmed. Let us help. DON'T ASSUME that just because, you can't SEE it or don't FEEL SICK right away, that it is not a serious health threat.

Where can citizens find more information about toxins in their environment?

- 🌐 *Denise & Ella:* The Coming Alongside web pages. Denise: They not only contain our studies and analyses but also many important links to other organizations and sources of information. Ella: For specific products and chemicals, the number printed on the package can often lead you to a person willing to help. If they can't help you, email us!
- 🌐 *Anne:* Environmental Health Network (<http://users.lmi.net/wilworks/>), Chemical Sensitivity Foundation (<http://www.chemicalsensitivityfoundation.org/>), and Human Ecology Action League (<http://www.healnatl.org/>).

Come Alongside Us!

We invite you to come alongside us in whatever capacity you choose:

- 🌐 Read our newsletter & share our information with others
- 🌐 Explore our web site: www.comingalongside.org
- 🌐 Volunteer your time and expertise
 - Technical Reader: Sorting through the literature for the bottom line
 - Technical Writer: Pulling together the facts and the figures into an accessible form
 - Community Educator & Teacher: Empowering individuals to productive and accessible change
- 🌐 Donate materials or money
- 🌐 Give us your feedback on our newsletter, web site, or other publications

Contact Us

comingalongside@runbox.com.