



WAGES News and Noticias

10th Anniversary Issue, Fall 2005

Women's Action to Gain Economic Security

Transforming Lives

The Impact of the WAGES Cooperatives

WAGES creates new jobs and empowers low-income women by organizing and incubating cooperative businesses. Through our eco-friendly cleaning cooperatives, the women featured here have found economic security and healthy, dignified work. These women are not alone.

Overall, WAGES coop members earn 50-100% more than they would make working for a conventional cleaning company, and on average, their household incomes have increased by 40%. The WAGES coops also prevent the release of thousands of pounds of harmful chemicals into our air and water each year.

A Community of Women

Luz, Emma's Eco-Clean

I was born on the Southern Coast of Mexico - Veracruz, to be exact - a town that was the first place in America to be free of black slavery. I came to the United States when I was 9, went back, and returned when I was 12.



I lived with my mother and went to high school in Redwood City, California. My mother (I call her "Rey," but her name is Reyna) is the best woman and human being. She did an amazing job as a single woman with four children. It would take me this whole page and another to write about my mother.

I joined Emma's 2 1/2 years ago as the Operations Manager, and since then, I have learned to manage the business. For me, the most important part of working here is the way I feel working in a cooperative of women. We have the knowledge, as immigrant Latina women, that we don't need a "boss" to be able to work—we can do it ourselves. We realize that we have power. And the community and the government pay attention to us!

In the coop, my self-esteem is high, and I am proud of myself for being involved in this project. I thank WAGES for the stupendous idea of making cooperative businesses like this one.

"In the coop, we have opportunities to learn new things, meet interesting people, and attend important events."

Top Quality Eco-Friendly Cleaning

Claudia, Natural Home Cleaning Professionals

I am a founding member of Natural Home Cleaning in Oakland. I enjoy my work a lot and I'm proud to offer a high-quality service. I've gained the trust and respect of my clients by being very detail-oriented.



In my last job, I worked as a janitor, using toxic cleaning chemicals like bleach and window cleaner all day long. I would leave work with headaches, allergies and feeling really tired. I felt really bad all around. Now, I don't use chemicals, and I'm really happy with my work.

I even use natural products at home. They don't cause any harm to my children or my husband. I have two daughters, one in first grade and one that just started pre-school. When I took the younger one to school the other day, she told me, "Mom, they don't know how to clean right! It smells funny in here." They had cleaned her classroom, and she didn't like the smell of bleach!

Health and Security for Families

Veronica, Eco-Care Professional Housecleaning

I am from Guadalajara, Mexico, and I am the mother of two young children. My first pregnancy was difficult, and I did not work. But with my second, I felt safe working because I knew I wasn't using toxic products. I have learned to value my health, and now I only use safe products at home.



Economically, it has been very helpful to have stability and job security. Before, I worked at McDonalds (earning \$5.70 per hour), in a box assembly factory (\$6 per hour), and for a commercial housecleaning company (\$8 per hour). Now I make \$13 an hour, and I have been at Eco-Care for 4 1/2 years. As a result, I am more independent. First, I was able to buy a car, and then two months ago, we bought a house in Gilroy!

I like being part of a coop - I know more people and I'm part of a group. Eco-Care is recognized in the community as a business that protects the environment, and that recognition is nice. We share a community with our clients, and they look at us with respect.

Celebrating A Decade of Pioneering Work with Women's Cooperatives



Julia Butterfly Hill, Ellen Love (WAGES)

Solutions for People and the Planet

"WAGES is an example of the power of solutions in action - solutions that help heal the planet and heal our human family at the same time. Truly in this time, this is visionary. Truly in this time, this is vital beyond belief."

- Environmentalist Julia Butterfly Hill speaking at the 10th Anniversary

A Historic Evening for WAGES: Our 10th Anniversary Event

250 people joined WAGES to celebrate our 10th Anniversary on September 29th, 2005. By all accounts, it was an evening of inspiring stories, delicious food, new and renewed friendships, and lively music. Several women shared how participating in WAGES' cooperatives has empowered them, and Julia Butterfly Hill inspired guests to contribute to the sustainability of our communities. The event raised more than \$10,000 in all! Our heartfelt thanks go to all who attended, contributed and helped organize the event. These photos convey the spirit of the evening, and the timeline and quotations on these pages describe some of what we are celebrating!

Una Noche Histórica para WAGES: Nuestro 10^o Aniversario

250 personas se unieron a WAGES para celebrar nuestro Décimo Aniversario el 29 de Septiembre de 2005. Fue una noche de inspiración, amistad, música alegre, y comida deliciosa. Unas socias hablaron de como su participación en las cooperativas de WAGES ha mejorado sus vidas, y Julia Butterfly Hill nos inspiró a contribuir a nuestras comunidades. Recaudamos más de \$10,000 en total! Les agradecemos mucho a todos los que asistieron, contribuyeron y ayudaron a organizar el evento. Las fotos en estas páginas muestran el ambiente de la fiesta, y el resumen de la historia de WAGES y los testimonios describen lo que estamos celebrando.

Soluciones para el Pueblo y el Planeta

"WAGES es un ejemplo del poder de las soluciones activas - soluciones que ayudan a sanar el planeta y sanar a nuestra familia humana a la vez. Esto es realmente visionario. En esta época, es mas importante que nunca."

- Ecologista Julia Butterfly Hill durante el 10^o Aniversario



Wilma, a client of Emma's Eco-Clean, and María Elena, one of Emma's worker-owners
Wilma, cliente de Emma's, y María Elena, una socia de Emma's

A Timeline of WAGES' First Ten Years

Three community workers start WAGES and train three groups of women (two in Spanish and one in English) in cooperative business planning.

Fantastic Fiesta Party Supplies and More and Non-Toxic Professional Housecleaning open for business (1997).

Finding service businesses more viable than retail, WAGES focuses on eco-friendly cleaning cooperatives as a vehicle for creating healthy, well-paid jobs for low-income women.

Emma's Eco-Clean opens in Redwood City (1999).

WAGES creates internships to build coop members' skills.

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

2000

Tres organizadoras forman WAGES y entrenan a tres grupos de mujeres (dos en español y uno en inglés) en planificación de negocios cooperativos.

Abren dos negocios cooperativos: Fantastic Fiesta y Non-Toxic Professional Housecleaning (1997).

Viendo que negocios de servicio son más viables que tiendas, WAGES se concentra en cooperativas de limpieza ecológica para crear trabajo digno y saludable para mujeres de bajos ingresos.

Emma's Eco-Clean abre en Redwood City (1999).

WAGES promueve habilidades de socias, convirtiéndolas en internas de programa.

Celebrando una Década de Trabajo con Cooperativas de Mujeres



La Peña Community Chorus sang Latin American folk songs
El Coro Comunitario de la Peña cantó canciones folklóricas de América Latina

Entrenamiento de Calidad

"Estoy super-impresionada por la calidad del entrenamiento de WAGES. Muchas felicitaciones por sus diez años. ¡Que cumplan muchos, pero muchos mas!"

- Carmen Denis,
Mujeres Unidas y Activas

High Quality Training

"I'm super-impressed with the quality of WAGES' training. Congratulations on your ten years, and may you have many, many more anniversaries!"

- Carmen Denis,
Mujeres Unidas y Activas



Bertha (Eco-Care) demonstrated eco-friendly cleaning techniques
Bertha (Eco-Care) demostró las técnicas de limpieza ecológica

Partners in Building Community Businesses

"Some of LCD's greatest small business loan successes over the last five years have been a result of working with WAGES and the cooperatives that they have helped start. It has been a pleasure watching the members of Emma's Eco-Clean, Eco-Care, and Natural Home Cleaning Professionals blossom and grow under the guidance and support of WAGES."

- Anthony Chang, Lenders for Community Development

El Desarrollo de Negocios Comunitarios

"Algunos de nuestros préstamos mas exitosos para pequeños negocios son el resultado del trabajo con WAGES y las cooperativas que ha lanzado. Ha sido un placer ver a los miembros de Emma's, Eco-Care, y Natural Home Cleaning crecer con el apoyo y consejo de WAGES."

- Anthony Chang, Lenders for Community Development



WAGES' founders Anna Olsen and Gayle Haberman with current staff Hilary Abell, Ivette Meléndez and Graciela Berkovich
Las fundadoras de WAGES con algunas miembros del personal actual

Eco-Care Professional Housecleaning opens in Morgan Hill (2001).

WAGES trains Canadian allies in our eco-friendly cleaning technique, giving birth to a sister coop called Eco-Clean in Winnipeg.

Natural Home Cleaning Professionals opens in Oakland (2003).

Eco-Care expands into San Jose.

WAGES launches new Community Education Program and Peer Leadership Program, with participants from Emma's, Eco-Care and NHC.

With technical assistance from WAGES, the Unity Council adapts our model to create Eco-Bay Landscaping in Oakland.

2001

Eco-Care Professional Housecleaning abre en Morgan Hill (2001).

2002

WAGES entrena a una organización Canadiense en nuestra técnica de limpieza ecológica, dando a luz a una cooperativa que se llama Eco-Clean.

2003

Natural Home Cleaning Professionals abre en Oakland (2003).

2004

Eco-Care se extiende a San Jose.

2005

WAGES lanza el Programa de Educación Comunitaria y el Programa de Liderazgo, con participantes de Emma's, Eco-Care y NHC. Con asistencia técnica de WAGES, Unity Council desarrolla Eco-Bay Landscaping.

Un Resumen de Diez Años de WAGES

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Fall 2005 Update on WAGES' Programs

Coop Incubation: WAGES continues to expand and strengthen our newest eco-friendly cleaning cooperative, Natural Home Cleaning. We are pleased to announce that, in October, the coop purchased medical insurance and long-term disability insurance for its members!

Leadership Development: Seven women recently graduated from the first cycle of our new Peer Leadership Program. All of the women completed three weekend retreats, organized Leadership Projects, and became ambassadors for their cooperatives and mentors for their peers.

Community Education: This new program educates Bay Area women about the health effects of cleaning chemicals and provides less-toxic alternatives. Since launching the program in April, WAGES has held six Spanish-language workshops and one in English, reaching more than 150 people.

Technical Assistance: In the first half of 2005, WAGES helped the Unity Council adapt our cooperative model and open an eco-friendly landscaping business in Oakland. Six founding members completed training over the summer.



Natural Home Cleaning's worker-owners celebrate after a new group of members joins the coop (June 2005)

Our Eco-Friendly House Cleaning Cooperatives

Call to receive a free estimate for services in your region of the San Francisco Bay Area!



Eco-Care
South Bay
(408) 778-8445



Natural Home Cleaning
East Bay
(510) 532-6645



Emma's Eco-Clean
Peninsula
(650) 261-1788

WAGES Board of Directors: Ann Blake, Alice Cathcart, Corinne Florek, Ivette Meléndez, Claudia Polsky, Lynn Rhodes, María Soria, Kevin Zwick

WAGES and Natural Home Cleaning Staff: Hilary Abell, Graciela Berkovich, Deb Goldberg, Coral López Marcelo, Ellen Love, Ivette Meléndez

Thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter!

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Special thanks to our 10th Anniversary Sponsors: Community Bank of the Bay, Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, Seventh Generation, Inc., Sylvia Perez

Support WAGES

Make a donation!

Help us continue to create good jobs for low-income women. Please send this coupon and a check payable to WAGES to:
2647 International Blvd. Suite 205 Oakland, CA 94601

Volunteer!

Donate your time and talent. Send this coupon or call us at (510) 532-5465 to offer your help with:

- Social work
- Website and materials design
- Translation
- Office support

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Thanks for making this work possible!