Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition
Board Planning Retreat
April 7, 2001
at the Santa Cruz home of Kristen Jensen-Sullivan and Mark Sullivan

Attendees

Tish Bayer, Annie Sayo, Loc Chau, Kyle Yamasaki, Louie Rocha, Poncho Guevara, Olga Meydbray, Kristin Jensen-Sullivan, Lily Hsieh, Chad Raphael, Kirby Wright, Lynn DeAsis, Ted Smith, Sydney Brown, Leslie Byster, Debra Newby, Richard McMurtry, Michael Stanley-Jones, Debbie Mytels, Claire Thorp, Paul Burks, Sheila Davis

Next Steps

1) Type up & organize these meeting notes -- to Ted by Monday, April 9.

2) Look over notes to identify IMMEDIATE action items, eg., letter to Jesse Jackson about re-evaluating his "Digital Divide" campaign

3) Ad-hoc Board "Policy Committee meets -- **Wed., April 11 -- 6 p.m. with pizza at the office conference room**
  Organize items from retreat by categories:
    Policy goals
    Our strategy to achieve these goals
    Steps to implement our strategy
    Internal/organizational policies to make/change
    Resources needed

  Identify short- , medium- and long-term ideas to implement
    Put in a timeline

4) Need to spend more time developing implementation steps... how to accomplish our goals

5) Identify WHO will carry out these tasks

Analysis of the Current Situation
Internal Strengths

A new Managing Director and a new Director of Development, both of whom are enthusiastic about their new positions.
Two new board members: Lily and Chad
Our whole organization (board and staff) is capable, energetic and enthusiastic.
Strong, long-term ties to the Labor Movement. (but see related "weakness")
Diversity among our staff and board (also, see related "weakness")
Credibility and expertise on technical subjects
World known reputation
Skill in raising funds from foundations (see related "weakness")
Sharing of resources and staff with SCCOSH -- stronger now that in recent past
Leadership (but see related "weakness")
Internal capacity to get things done

Internal Weaknesses

Concerns about the size of our office facility: do we have enough room ?
Possible solution: get workstation style furniture to use space more efficiently
Need to translate and simplify complex ideas into a 5th grade level vocabulary so that they can be understood by general public
Possible solution: Utilize more TV presentations, particularly local public, and cable TV programs such as in San Jose, Mountain View and Palo Alto.
We're not spending enough time maintaining our relationship with the Labor Movement. We're not talking enough with labor friends. It's essential to keep this coalition together. (see related "strength")
There's no structure for people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse program interests to work together. (see related "strength")
Possible solution: Have staff and board members discuss their concerns about issues, positions, programs, etc. at Board meetings.
A relatively small amount of our funds are raised from individual donations. We need a diversified income stream. (see related "strength")
We need to consider the future leadership of the organization as the "founders" generation may want to reduce activities or retire. Need to develop the second generation. (see related "strength")
Need to have a better understanding of the power dynamics in Silicon Valley and to develop more power for ourselves and our goals.

External Opportunities

External Threats

Discussion of SVTC Mission Statement

We came up with the following revision for our Mission Statement:

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition is a diverse grassroots organization which envisions a sustainable, non-polluting society where a healthy environment is a right, rather than a priviledge. We strive to achieve this vision by empowering people [or: by working for the empowerment of people] locally, nationally, and globally. We are commited to the practice of social justice and multi-racial democracy.

We agreed that the staff would review this version and work to further stream-line it.

Below is a further word-smithing by Debbie Mytels, which may give some ideas to staff in the streamlining process:

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition envisions a sustainable world where a healthy environment is a right, rather than a priviledge. To bring about this vision, we work for the empowerment of people locally, nationally, and globally. We are a diverse, grassroots organization, committed to the practice of social justice and multi-racial democracy.

Ideas
(these came "out of place" during the discussion & need to be integrated into their logical place)

Make a Power Point presentation out of the History Timeline. **Claire will ask someone who knows how to do this.**
Encourage Claire to be our stealth researcher -- such as with Patagonia -- to find other potential funding sources (if they're not right for her wildlife group)
Outreach: Connect with Physicians for Social Responsibility -- Brian Lindey (sp?) at UCSF
Need more clear instructions/roles/obligations re: what we're asking people to do when we talk to them.
    For example, does <u>everyone</u> on Board/staff ask their friends to be members ? to write lobbying letters ?
    OR, do we hire one person whose role is outreach like this ?

Use an artistic, "street theater" approach: develop plays and skits and take them to other groups, youth, etc.   Perhaps this is a task for an Outreach Director ?

Goals and Implementation Steps -- Organizational Issues

Membership -- Brainstorming
Define: What do we mean by Membership ?
    -- Individual members
    -- Affiliated organizational members

Individuals can consider themselves members in the following ways:
    -- volunteering
    -- giving financial support
    -- receiving invitations to participate in special events
    -- having a sense of solidarity with the organization and its goals
Membership is a "two-way street" -- typically, in other orgs., people give dues/donations... they get
    benefits in return, such as a membership card, logo items, a newsletter
Currently, we send newsletters to people who send us a $25 gift.
It's important for an organization to be able to say "We have XXXX number of members" as a way to
    express its power.
Question: Is it important to us to differentiate between "members" and "supporters" ?
Our answer: No, we are comfortable with a loose definition of "members = supporters," meaning people
    who give us both money and who volunteer their time and/or are involved with our activities. This
    still allows us to say, "We have XXXX supporters."

How do we reach out to individuals with little/no money?
    Question: Do we want to mail newsletters out to people who have not ever paid to SVTC ? If yes,
    for how long ?
    Our Answer: We will mail one sample copy... and distribute free copies widely, at community
    centers, meetings we attend, libraries, elsewhere.
      But, for a person to continue receiving the mailed newsletter, we want to receive at least a
    minimal $5 contribution (except in some very special cases that we know about)

Outreach -- Brainstorming
Goal: Develop relationships with others

Outreach to neighborhood associations -- particularly through the EH& J project
  For example, connect with the United Neighborhoods of Santa Clara County, which has been chaired by a Green party member

Revive ourselves as a "coalition" -- Create affiliate memberships for other organizations. Charge them a fee of $35/year. Send them update packets every 6 months.

Affiliate organizations: for groups that are low-budget, don't require that they pay to be an affiliate, but get them to "sign on" and send them info packets

[Developing affiliate memberships doesn't mean we will stop doing individual memberships... we want to do **both**. We call ourselves a "coalition," and this implies that we include other organizations, as well as individuals.]

Hire a staff member to be in charge of affiliate organizations -- involve SVTC program people in this outreach, but have an Outreach Director be responsible to keep list of contacts, maintain data base, be responsible for informing and involving people in various groups.

Alternately, without hiring additional staff, identify which project should be responsible to connecting with which community groups....

Groups and constituencies we should connect with:
  High school student groups
  Youth temp. workers
  Ethnic community centers, such as MACSA, CHAM, AIWA, etc
  Community colleges
  SIRENS -- immigrant issues group
  YUCA (Youth United for Community Action) in East Palo Alto
  Student environmental groups (such as SEAS at Stanford)
  Government
  Schools
  PTAs

Organizational Structure -- Brainstorming
State the goal of our organizational development: Build a constituency that will give us power to hold business and the government accountable.

To keep SVTC fresh and creative, follow a program model that retains our four program areas: • Sustainable Water
  • Sustainable Production (Clean Computer Campaign)
  • International Campaign for Responsible Technology
  • Sustainable Health (EH&J)
within each of these 4 areas, we can develop new projects that become models for others elsewhere. For example, the Clams project could be replicated in other communities with high tech production plants. Or, the projects might "devolve" and become independent, full-fledged orgs themselves (such as the West Valley air quality group that grew up around the Kaiser tire-burning issue).
  Possible future goal: Form a parallel, sister org to SVTC to work on political lobbying goals (such as the Sierra Club does)

Fund-Raising -- Brainstorming
Premiums and Perks for Various Levels of Giving

Current premium(s) -- things given in return for a donation:
- Newsletter
- E-mail updates (for those who have e-mail)
- Opportunities to give more
- Opportunities to attend events (special invitations)

New ideas for premiums:
- Bookmarks -- put in a thank you letter (no additional mailing cost)
- Logo items -- shirts, caps (could be sold, too)
- Something that would help them reduce toxics in their home
    -- a chart of non-hazardous household cleaners
    -- a mouse pad with info about computer recycling options
- A fuzzy critter/"computer pet" that sits atop a computer with a sign: "What will you do with me when I'm obsolete ?"
- Colored plastic cases for Palm Pilots, cell phones, with info re: electronics recycling [don't criticize, this is brainstorming!]
- Bumperstickers
- Music
- Our video (or make it for sale)

We should list names of our donors on the website, in the newsletter, in programs for events, etc. Give people an opportunity to say, "do not list my name" when they make a donation... but MOST people LIKE to see their names listed !

Set up special events: dinner with Advisory Council members (esp. Erin Brockovitch!)

Set up Toxic Tours with Ted... followed by a dinner [toxic dinner ? :-)]

Implementation Steps to Accomplish Social Policy Goals
(Brainstormed list -- no priority)

Community research re: What does the community care about -- hold two community forums/year to solicit ideas/input

Stakeholder meeting -- hold in an "off the record" setting with people from industry, other advocacy groups -- to perform a situational analysis with all these perspectives

Use a stakeholder model like above for creating policies and programs re: government procurement programs.

If do outreach to students (or anyone) need to have a clear focus: what do you want them to do ? What outcome do we want to organize them to advocate for ?

Engage in targeted policy campaigns: This [specific idea] is what we want the outcome to be.

Hold more specific, deliberate conversations with the head of the Central Labor Council, working Partnerships, etc.

Request meetings with Editorial Board of the Mercury-News

Hold biannual conference here in San Jose re:
>   1) Clean Production
>   2) Workers' Rights
>   People come to Silicon Valley from all over the world -- we can educate them as they are
>   passing through and impact all the other places, too.

An annual conference with international participants would also help us to research how Silicon Valley companies are operating overseas.

Research how other organizations that are effective in drafting & moving policies operate: how do they accomplish their agenda ?

Use the next edition of the Silicon Valley Environmental Index as an organizing tool -- benchmark numbers in each local Silicon Valley town as a way to organize people in these towns around the declining quality of life.

Identify 1 or 2 policy initiatives each year, and organize only around these 1-2 issues. Start to build a constituency this way.. so people who've been engaged in one issue are then educated and brought along to be involved in the next issue, too. Eventually they will become effective advocates who can say, "I'm a resident of Sunnyvale and a member of SVTC and I want "X" to happen in my town."

Pick 1 or 2 ideas that have a BIG impact-- how can we best leverage our time ? For example, how can be best use the new video ?

Implementation Steps for Shifting/Re-framing the Debate

Use the procurement issue to involve student environmental groups and public universities. Make a goal to change the UC/CSU procurement guidelines within the next year. This would build on requests we already are getting, and its an issue that's sitting on our doorstep.

Create stronger relationships with our allies in the Labor Movement -- via on-going forums, "early intervention" discussions re: "jobs vs. environment" issues such as the server farm

Similarly, along with Labor, we need to give on-going attention to other allies:
> Ethnic groups
> Progressive business groups
> People of wealth (already doing this now via major gifts program)

Need to capitalize on the landfill ban -- CRTs are now banned from landfills by a court order! What should we do about this ?   All the garbage haulers are now violating the law... how can we call attention to this ?

Need to rally a constituency around this issue -- need a way to create press about this, and an agenda for what we want to happen.

Develop a "report card" re: the value of various "recycling" options that are now available for computers. How can we publicize the landfill ban and at the same time publicize the existence of the electronics recycling/reuse directory?

There's a major conference next week re: the "Digital Divide", with Jesse Jackson, others. How can minority communities <u>benefit</u> from high tech industry ? SVTC is absent from this conference...absent from this debate. We should enlighten Jesse Jackson about the environmental [and human health] consequences of the computer/high-tech industry. IMMEDIATE ACTION

Connect with the three constituencies -- Labor, Ethnic groups and Progressive business -- and have a discussion with reps of these groups: How could they all benefit from computer recycling ? There would be positive outcomes for all:
>   — computers brought into low-income homes [the challenge is that people want good computers, not older, less useful ones]
>   — reduced pollution, landfill waste
>   — job training to refurbish computers'
>   — unionizing the recycling industry

Reach out to other communities on the health issues to keep this ball in the air.

We need a "chemical policy," not just call for a "ban on chemicals."

Evaluation of this Retreat Meeting
<u>Positive Things</u>
Personal introductions
Location
Brainstorming on long-term policy goals
Such an enthusiastic Board (said by a staff member)
The brownies !
All the food !
Great facilitators
We listened to and respected each others' views
Photos from the Taiwan trip
New Board members
Taking group photos
Breaking into smaller groups for discussion
Dealing with the Big Vision

<u>Things to Change Next Time</u>
Name tags with first names
Challenge of translating the Big Vision into action steps.
Give Board materials in time before the meeting to help in advance preparation.