Dear friends,

2020 brought global change and big challenges for our communities. The same communities already on the frontlines of climate and environmental threats found themselves at the center of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global recession and the uprising in defense of Black lives.

It was a year filled with stories of resistance and resilience as communities joined together in mutual aid, new groups formed and won against big polluters, and we survived a tumultuous election. It was also a year of adaptation, which tested the strength of the power we’ve built.

This year, we grew as an organization as well. Last spring, we launched our Digital Organizing Toolbox with trainings and tools for community groups to build power online. Then, over the summer, we changed our name from Toxics Action Center to Community Action Works to better align our name with our mission to help communities confront polluters and seed solutions.

As always, the real work happens on the ground in cities and towns across our region. We know that real, lasting change takes root when people get together and take action at the local level. And when community groups know how to make local democracy work for their health and environment, they lead the movement for large-scale transformation. In 2020, communities that were up against great odds laid the groundwork for the big change we so desperately need.

In this report, you’ll read about the Upper Valley Pipeline Coalition, whose members rose up and stopped a fracked gas pipeline planned in New Hampshire, the work Don’t Waste ME is doing to transform our waste system and secure environmental justice in Maine, a national coalition of communities organizing for safe drinking water for all, and more. Your support makes all of this possible.

With gratitude,

Sylvia Broude
Executive Director
STRONG COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

GLADYS MORENO FUENTES, HARTFORD COALITION FOR SAFE TECHNOLOGY
Gladys is a social worker, grandmother, Puerto Rican resident of South West, Hartford, and now a community leader in the fight to stop a 5G cell antenna. There’s not enough research to show that radiation from a cell antenna like this one is safe for a residential neighborhood, and this antenna is planned for a Latino community in one of the poorest parts of the city. So when Gladys got a letter in the mail that said a 5G cell antenna would be built just six feet from her home, she knew she had to take action. Gladys made endless calls, sent dozens of letters, and finally connected with neighbors to form the Hartford Coalition for Safe Technology—and they’ve been speaking out at hearings and meetings ever since.

AYESHA KHAN, NANTUCKET PFAS ACTION GROUP
Ayesha's husband Nate is a firefighter on Nantucket, Massachusetts, where they live with their two boys. Last year, Nate was diagnosed with testicular cancer at the age of 38. Ayesha started researching the high rates of cancer in firefighters, and it was only then that she made the connection between cancer and “forever” chemicals known as PFAS in the gear and the foam that firefighters use—gear that was supposed to protect them. Now, with Nate in remission, Ayesha co-founded the Nantucket PFAS Action Group with Jaime Honkawa and joined community groups across the country in the coalition we co-coordinate to take action at the local and national levels. Nantucket PFAS Action Group joined forces with Nantucket Firefighters Local 2509 and others to win a major victory—the first station in the country to get town approval to get PFAS-free turnout gear!

MIRIAM OSEFSKY, UPPER VALLEY CLEAN AIR COMMITTEE
Miriam is a climate activist who lives in Hanover, New Hampshire. She also has asthma. So when she found out about Dartmouth College’s plan to build a biomass incinerator in her town, she went to the very next public meeting. Biomass means burning wood for energy, and it pollutes the air we breathe and exacerbates the climate crisis. Miriam joined up with a group of neighbors to form the Upper Valley Clean Air Committee and resist the biomass incinerator. This year, they celebrated a big win when Dartmouth committed to not building the incinerator and began to explore clean energy options instead.

HILLARY LISTER, DON’T WASTE ME
The first time Hillary took action to stop a polluter in her community was after a fire at a waste incinerator in Athens, Maine, that lasted six weeks. After the state shut it down, the incinerator proposed to rebuild its operations. Hillary, whose family had already faced drinking water pollution in Leominster, Massachusetts, known as “Plastic City,” and Corinna, Maine, a town contaminated by an old wool mill, didn’t want to see this polluting incinerator rebuilt. So she and her neighbors led a years-long effort that kept that incinerator from being built. That’s when she met community leaders in Don’t Waste ME, and it was just the start of her two decades of helping communities fight polluting landfills, stop incinerators, and win better waste policies statewide.
We work side by side with everyday people to confront polluters and seed solutions because the people most impacted by environmental problems don’t stop when they’ve won their first fight. Many leaders use the power they’ve built to fight for the solutions we need to protect our health and environment.

STOPPING FRACKED GAS PIPELINES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE’S UPPER VALLEY

When neighbors in Hanover and Lebanon learned about a fracked gas pipeline and storage depot proposed for their community, they took action. For years, the community group Energy and Climate Upper Valley organized opposition to this pipeline. Neighbors held meetings, marches and huge rallies, collected over 1,100 signatures against the project, pushed Lebanon to remove fracked gas from its master plan, and showed up at every hearing and meeting to testify. Even after the Public Utilities Commission officially approved the project, the group never gave up. Now, this pipeline will never be built. Last summer, we won! The pipeline failed to meet the requirement to start construction within two years of its approval. This victory sends fracked gas companies a clear message: No fracked gas pipeline, large or small, is welcome in New Hampshire.

THREE COMMUNITIES IN THE FIGHT TO STOP POLLUTING BIOMASS INCINERATORS

Three communities in different states all have something in common: They are fighting to stop proposed biomass incinerators—which burn wood for energy—from being built in their backyards. In Hanover, New Hampshire, where Dartmouth College was proposing a biomass facility near homes and schools, residents came together to speak out and protect our health and climate. The group researched the dangers of biomass, reached out to neighbors and allies at the college, and even met online with Dartmouth officials when the pandemic canceled plans. Now, Dartmouth is exploring safe, renewable energy, including geothermal—indicating a major step in the right direction. Community leaders led by the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition in Springfield, Massachusetts, have kept up a decade-long fight to stop an incinerator proposed for a residential community. And now neighbors in Brattleboro, Vermont, who were gearing up to launch a fight against a new biomass incinerator proposed in their town, quickly won and joined activists in Standing Trees Vermont to stop our forests from being burned for energy.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE COMPRESSOR STATION AND FOR STATEWIDE SOLUTIONS

For six years, community leaders have been fighting a fracked gas compressor station in Weymouth, Massachusetts. This year, while the state was still in the first surge of COVID-19 cases, construction began on the compressor station while the community group Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station (FRRACS) led socially distant standouts and car rallies in opposition. When the compressor station became operational last fall, FRRACS watchdogged the compressor station’s two system failures that resulted in massive leaks of fracked gas and in months-long delays in the facility’s startup. FRRACS isn’t giving up, and they’re pursuing a legal strategy alongside their continued organizing to stop this compressor station from polluting their community. And meanwhile, these same leaders have helped the Mass Power Forward coalition we co-founded five years ago work for solutions by pushing for a climate bill that codifies environmental justice and moves our state toward 100 percent clean, renewable energy. With this new law on the books, it’s clear that the legislature and Massachusetts residents are ready for progress.

SOLVING MAINE’S WASTE PROBLEMS ONE LOOPHOLE AT A TIME

There’s a giant loophole in Maine’s waste policy that allows trash to come across the border from other
states, mix with Maine trash, and be ‘counted’ as Maine waste, which means it can end up in state landfills. Community leaders in Don’t Waste ME, who live in the shadow of the state’s largest landfill in Old Town, Maine, and are tired of Maine being the dumping ground for the region, have a solution. This year, Don’t Waste ME worked with residents across the state to bring a citizens’ petition to the Board of Environmental Protection to close this loophole and win protections for the communities most impacted by landfills in the state, including the Penobscot Nation. Their work is gaining traction and has won the attention of the media, from the cartoonist at the Maine Sunday Telegram to the editorial board at the Portland Press Herald.

COMMUNITY LEADERS WIN THE NATION’S STRONGEST DRINKING WATER PROTECTIONS IN MASS. AND N.H.

When everyday people in Massachusetts and New Hampshire learned that their drinking water was contaminated by toxic PFAS chemicals, they decided to do something about it. And now, they have won some of the strongest drinking water protections in the country. PFAS, called “forever” chemicals, are known to cause cancers, kidney disease and other serious health problems. They’re toxic even in extremely small amounts. When neighbors found out that they had been contaminated, they were shocked and confused—many had never heard about these chemicals before. But out of this crisis emerged leaders who rose up to get their communities organized and fight to clean up this mess. This year, we’re celebrating two major victories. In Massachusetts, community leaders pushed the state to issue the strongest drinking water protections on PFAS in the country. And in New Hampshire, where last year community leaders won drinking water protections so strong that they prompted a polluter’s lawsuit against the state, a court dissolved the injunction, and now the protections will finally go into effect.

A GROUP OF NEIGHBORS LED BLUE HILL, MAINE, IN GOING PESTICIDE-FREE

This year, neighbors in Blue Hill, Maine, organized their community to pass a pesticide-free ordinance by a 3 to 1 margin. This incredible victory started when Rick Traub and his neighbors, concerned about pesticides in Blue Hill, formed the Blue Hill Healthy Ecosystem Group. The group took action, writing a strong ordinance to ban pesticides in town and then working to make sure their community was behind them. The group tabled at weekly farmers’ markets and co-ops, created posters, organized three monthly gatherings at the library with speakers on going pesticide-free, and published articles about their work in the paper. Finally, community leaders built enough support in town to bring their pesticide-free ordinance to a community vote. In the end, 1,412 people voted to pass the ordinance, which now prohibits the application, storage or sale of nearly all pesticides in Blue Hill.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

- 59 calls to our hotline for help
- 294 community organizing group trainings
- 3,225 activists trained
- 279 leadership coaching sessions
- 69 side-by-side actions with groups
- 25 victories!

The Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station (FRRACS) at a socially distant protest against the mayor’s decision to accept a $10 million payout from the compressor station.
1 **HARTFORD, CONN.: SPEAKING OUT AGAINST 5G TO PROTECT COMMUNITY HEALTH**

When a Verizon 5G cell antenna was proposed for the South West neighborhood of Hartford, Connecticut, a Latino neighborhood already overburdened by pollution, neighbors like Gladys Moreno Fuentes, Eileen Noonan and Joe Wasserman came together to speak out about the impacts this proposal could have on their community’s health. Concerned that there is not enough research to show that radiation from the antenna is safe enough to be located in a residential neighborhood, residents formed the Hartford Coalition for Safe Technology. Now, they’re calling on city officials to slow down the process and speak out against a proposal that could harm the health of their community.

2 **PROVIDENCE, R.I.: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY LEADERS WITH A PLACE-BASED VISION**

Last year, we worked side by side with the Water is Life – Land and Water Sovereignty Campaign—led by Black, Brown and Indigenous activists—to stop a plan to privatize the public drinking water supply in Providence, Rhode Island. Community leaders who won that campaign always had a vision that was bigger than stopping the water privatization, and this year, we supported them in coming together to form a new group: Native Green. Now, Native Green is bringing Indigenous ancestral vision and environmental justice principles together to work for place-based solutions to environmental problems in the state of Rhode Island and beyond.

3 **BENNINGTON, VT.: RISING UP TO STOP DANGEROUS OIL TRAINS**

Every fall, an out-of-state company parks up to a hundred railroad cars, each loaded with 30,000 gallons of oil, on an abandoned track running through the middle of Bennington—next to schools, playgrounds and homes. Storing this kind of fuel on rail helps companies evade existing regulations, and with so much flammable, volatile fuel right next door, neighbors are concerned that these oil trains are a disaster waiting to happen. We’re working with neighbors in Bennington to fight back against these dangerous oil trains and pass an ordinance to ban the storage of fossil fuels in residential areas, keeping the community safe from potential disasters.

4 **SAUGUS, MASS.: FIGHTING LOCAL TRASH INCINERATOR AND PUSHING FOR STATEWIDE SOLUTIONS**

Saugus, Massachusetts, is home to the country’s oldest trash incinerator, which spews toxic pollution into the air that surrounding communities breathe. For years, we’ve worked side by side with community leaders such as Deb Panetta, Elle Baker, Jackie Mercurio, Ricky Serino, Ann Devlin and state Reps. RoseLee Vincent and Jessica Giannino to push this polluter to retire. Last summer, leaders from Saugus and communities across the state who are also on the frontlines of the pollution that comes from burning and burying trash came together to push for solutions that will protect their communities for the long haul. This year, as the state drafted its new Solid Waste Master Plan, a blueprint for how the state will deal with trash over the next decade, we helped community leaders call on the state to phase out trash incineration and focus on zero waste solutions.

5 **ROCHESTER, N.H.: PUSHING FOR ZERO WASTE SOLUTIONS INSTEAD OF LANDFILL EXPANSION**

New Hampshire has a history of activism to stop trash incinerators and polluting landfills. Across the state, community leaders are working together to move the state toward zero waste, supporting policies that will create the wastesolutions we need. Now, as community leaders team up to resist the expansion of the Turnkey Landfill in Rochester—the region’s largest landfill and source of toxic pollution—they’re working to show that New Hampshire needs to prioritize public health and the environment over deep-pocketed polluters who profit from burning and burying our trash.

6 **HINESBURG, VT.: FIGHTING TO PROTECT ONE COMMUNITY’S LAKE FROM PESTICIDES**

Nearly two years ago, neighbors of Lake Iroquois in Hinesburg, Vermont, won a major victory when a permit to use pesticides on the lake to kill an invasive plant was denied. Since then, leaders like Meg Handler and Elizabeth Deutsch of the Lake Iroquois Conservation Group have been watchdogging the lake, and they were ready to take action when they were faced with a new pesticides proposal. This spring, the group testified at virtual public hearings against the use of pesticides, using Zoom backgrounds as
protest signs and speaking out in support of a healthy, toxic-free lake. And now, leaders are working for bigger change, teaming up with neighbors fighting to protect lakes from pesticides across the state to reform the permitting process.

**STATEWIDE, N.H.: LAUNCHING A NEW COALITION FOR CLIMATE ACTION, JOBS AND JUSTICE**

This year, Community Action Works Campaigns partnered with frontline and Indigenous communities, environmental justice advocates, youth groups and racial justice organizations from across the state to launch the New Hampshire Renews coalition. The coalition is working at the intersection of the climate crisis, racial and economic injustice, and mass unemployment. We believe that by creating a broad and united front, we can advance solutions in our state that center the people on the frontlines of these overlapping crises. Together, we’re working to create policy that is good for our climate and our communities and to build the people power we need to make it a reality.

**STATEWIDE, VT.: CENTERING COMMUNITY VOICES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Since 2017, we’ve been addressing the need for environmental justice (EJ) policies in Vermont, working with state agencies, coalition partners and community groups to identify issues and solutions to protect the communities most vulnerable to environmental threats—all too often, Black, Indigenous, communities of color, and poor communities. That's why we’re working to bring in the Vermonters most impacted by environmental threats to help shape an EJ policy that is community-informed. At Community Action Works, we work with community leaders who are most impacted by pollution, including people in rural and remote parts of Vermont, and we’re making sure they are part of this process. We’re proud to collaborate with our partners on this work as part of the REJOICE (Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Expertise) Project.
When community groups know how to make local democracy work for their health and environment, they can make change beyond their backyard. Many of the leaders we work with, who first get involved because something so personal has happened that they have no choice but to take action, go on to lead the movement for large-scale transformation.

**FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL: FIGHTING FOR DRINKING WATER REGULATIONS ON PFAS ‘FOREVER’ CHEMICALS**

Across the country, 34 communities in 17 states are coming together to say that the “forever” chemicals known as PFAS have polluted their communities for long enough.

PFAS (or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a class of chemicals that can cause cancers, kidney diseases, reproductive disorders and other major health problems. These chemicals are estimated to be in the drinking water of more than 200 million people across the U.S. The people who are directly impacted have come together to do something about it that’s bigger than cleaning up contamination in just their cities and towns.

Four years ago, impacted communities came together and formed the National PFAS Contamination Coalition, which we co-coordinate, to fight PFAS at the local level and beyond. Now, as a new administration takes office, the coalition has already secured commitments to turn our vision of a PFAS-free world into reality and to end this contamination crisis nationwide.

**LOCAL LEADERS COMING TOGETHER FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY REGION-WIDE**

As states across our region take action for a 100 percent clean, local and renewable energy future, our region’s electricity grid operator, called ISO-New England (ISO-NE), is one of the biggest barriers.

The way ISO-NE controls our regional electricity market keeps us hooked on polluting fossil fuels, and the result is that Black, Indigenous, communities of color and poor communities bear an unjust burden of these energy sources’ pollution. Over and over, ISO-NE chooses fracked gas over clean energy, extends the life of the most polluting power plants, and thwarts state efforts to reach their mandated clean energy goals.

We deserve an energy grid that is accountable to ratepayers and people living with climate catastrophe and pollution, not fossil fuel executives and utilities. We’re bringing frontline and fenceline communities together across the region to call for ISO-NE to make a commitment to 100 percent clean, local renewable energy, no more sacrifice zones, and a commitment to democratic governance.

We’ve already secured a commitment from all states to launch a reform process. Now, we’re turning up the heat to make sure that this process and the outcomes align with our vision.

“Fortunately, Community Action Works has decades of experience fighting these battles. It isn’t quick, and it’s never easy, but local, grassroots organizing, led by members of the frontline communities, is the only way to make real, lasting change.”

– Judith Enck

Beyond Plastics
The communities we work with are at the center of the problems facing our health and environment, and local leaders are often the best able to see the real solutions and fight to realize them. That’s why, when the communities most impacted know how to take action, lasting change is possible.

**AFTER GAS EXPLOSIONS, NEIGHBORS IN LAWRENCE, MASS., WIN A STEP TOWARD CLEAN ENERGY**

Neighbors in Lawrence, Massachusetts, know firsthand what’s wrong with fracked gas. In September 2018, gas pipeline explosions in Lawrence, Andover and North Andover destroyed homes, injured nearly two dozen, and took one young person’s life.

But neighbors also know they can do something about it. After the gas explosions, we worked with a group of seasoned leaders—from youth and union activists to longtime Latinx residents—who came together as Pueblo Verde to demand that instead of fixing a polluting energy system, the city of Lawrence transition to a renewable one.

Community leaders took a step in that direction when they won a settlement to relieve energy bill debt and invest in renewable energy. Last fall, two years after the explosions, Pueblo Verde advocated for the investigation of and the resulting $56 million settlement from Columbia Gas, the company responsible. The funds from the settlement will go toward eliminating gas bill debt for 26,000 families in Massachusetts, and the rest will go toward renewable energy programs and grants in the Merrimack Valley.

Pueblo Verde’s goal is to win a just transition for Lawrence to locally-owned, clean, renewable energy. And with such dedicated leaders, they’re on their way.

**FROM FIGHTING LANDFILLS TO ZERO WASTE IN THE NORTH COUNTRY OF N.H.**

Residents in New Hampshire’s North Country feel like their home is the dumping ground of New England. For years, we’ve worked with neighbors in Bethlehem, in the heart of the White Mountains, to stop Casella from expanding a polluting landfill in town. Last year, a new landfill was proposed in Dalton, the next town over, and community leaders came together in a coordinated effort across town lines to keep these landfills out.

Community leaders have a different vision for what to do with our trash: zero-waste solutions. Manufacturers could be held responsible for waste from the products they produce, and we could shift to a zero-waste system where no town, in the North Country and beyond, is faced with a landfill proposal in their community. That’s why community groups across New Hampshire came together to form Be SMART (Save Money and Reduce Trash) New Hampshire to keep their communities safe from landfill pollution now and to work toward a zero-waste future.

“I was a stay-at-home mom with two young boys who lacked the knowledge and skill sets to put together an advocacy group. I am what many would call an accidental advocate. This was where Community Action Works came in. They gave me the confidence and support by providing me with the tools, skills, and resources to address the PFAS contamination. Through this process, I learned the power of my voice and how powerful we were as citizens.”

– Ayesha Khan
Nantucket PFAS Action Group
We especially would like to thank the following individual contributors to Community Action Works and/or Community Action Works Campaigns (formerly Toxics Action Center).

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SIDE BY SIDE WITH COMMUNITIES FOR YEARS TO COME
When you include Community Action Works in your will, trust or retirement accounts, your gift helps everyday people build the power to transform our world far into the future.

For information, call 1-800-841-7299, or email plannedgiving@communityactionworks.org
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At Community Action Works, we maximize our impact by focusing on building community power and developing local leaders for the long run. Your contribution makes that possible—together, we can confront polluters and seed solutions for a just and healthy future. These charts reflect the draft FY20 financial information for Community Action Works, Inc. and Community Action Works Campaigns, Inc.
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