



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

NEWSLETTER -- DECEMBER, 2006

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

-- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 24

The fourth annual Take Back Your Time Day was celebrated on October 24th!! From gathering for a discussion in Geelong, Australia, to staging "The Last American Supper" in Santa Monica, CA and Fort Collins, CO, to organizing the first Take Back Your Time Day event in Saguenay, Québec, to leafleting on the Boston Common and gathering in Cape Cod at the local Panera Bread cafe, supporters around the world and across the country took time to call attention to the time poverty epidemic and talk about what we can do to solve it. For more details, see the Take Back Your Time Day reports below.

If media coverage is any indicator, time poverty, overwork and over-scheduling are issues that are only gaining importance. Take Back Your Time Day was featured in *Body & Soul Magazine*, *Reuters*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and on the *CBC*, *NPR's Marketplace*, and *Fox* television, among others. There were also many postings on blogs and announcements in newsletters like Sean Casey LeClaire's [Be the Change](#), which he publishes from West Concord, MA, and Patricia Katz's [Pause](#) which she writes from Saskatoon, Canada.

Every participant in Take Back Your Time Day contributes to its success. We'd like to say a special thank to Bonnie Michaels for fielding the media calls and also to Bill Doherty for serving as the spokesperson for the Reclaim Dinnertime campaign, which included a worldwind media tour. See Bill Doherty's report on the dinnertime campaign below. We'd also like to thank Panera Bread for sponsoring Take Back Your Time Day 2006 and asking us to partner with them on their [Reclaim Dinnertime](#) campaign.

In October, board members John de Graaf, Cathy O'Keefe and Joe Robinson presented a workshop at the National Recreation and Parks Association national convention in Seattle. More than 200 people attended, even though the workshop was scheduled for 8 am. Next year, the NRPA wants us to address a much larger audience. John, and another of our board members, Cecile Andrews, also spoke about Take Back Your Time issues at the Simple Living America conference in early November. Cecile is the author of a new book called [Slow Is Beautiful](#), just published by New Society Publishers in Canada. We'll have a review soon. Congratulations, Cecile!

October also brought the Adventure Travel Trade Association's endorsement -- an industry first -- of Take Back Your Time and Work to Live's minimum paid-leave proposals to ensure vacation time in the U.S. To read the press release, visit www.adventuretravel.biz/release110106_wtl.asp. Thanks to Joe Robinson for making that happen.

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TRANSITIONS

GOODBYE TO GRETCHEN

This is a hard note to write. After four years of remarkable service Gretchen Burger is leaving her position as Program Coordinator (aka Executive Director) of Take Back Your Time. She will be beginning a new full-time job as a video editor and we all wish her the very best in that endeavor! Happily, Gretchen will remain as a member of the Take Back Your Time Board of Directors so that we won't completely lose her amazing energy and wisdom.

During the past four years, Gretchen has kept Take Back Your Time afloat, with work that went far beyond the call of duty (I know you're thinking, how ironical (!), but we have really needed such an effort, and without it we would probably no longer be functioning as an organization).

Gretchen has kept tabs on all the day to day work of the organization, communicating with all who send us inquiries, taking care of all fundraising chores, negotiating with potential partners, editing and writing much of our newsletter, organizing public events, talking to the media and many other tasks too numerous to mention.

I know that everyone in our organization who knows Gretchen feels the same way I do -- there is no way we can thank her enough! And I sincerely hope that once this organization gets the funding it really needs, we will be able to hire her back in a key capacity.

This will not be an easy transition, but both Gretchen and I are very excited about her replacement, Lisa Stuebing. Lisa comes with a lot of energy and a wealth of experience and talent. Please join me in saying the fondest of good byes to Gretchen and welcoming Lisa to the leadership of this organization.

Leisurely yours,

John de Graaf

WE WELCOME A NEW DIRECTOR

We are really pleased to introduce to you the new national director for Take Back Your Time, Lisa Stuebing. Lisa brings to the organization a strong background in organizational development and fundraising. She's a

seasoned organizer and presenter, has degree in geology and is also an athlete. Please feel free to introduce yourself to Lisa. You can reach her at Tulera@aol.com. Here's what Lisa says about herself:

Lisa Stuebing comes to Take Back Your Time with over 25 years of community involvement, 18 years of policy experience, and 8 years of program management. She has one adult daughter, who is a Gemini and speaks four languages. Lisa lives with her husband Adam, Be, the dog, 16-year-old cat, Max, and free-range box turtle, Herman.

KELLEY SMITH TO EDIT TAKE BACK YOUR TIME NEWSLETTER

We're also very pleased to introduce to you Kelley Smith, who will be joining the Take Back Your Time board and taking on the task of editing the newsletter. Kelley is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and worked for sixteen years in the electric utility industry. For the past six years, she has been a work-at-home mom. She enjoys vegetable and herb gardening, working with her Camp Fire club, bicycling, fixing broken things, cooking from scratch, reading, music, and pondering life's impossible questions. She lives in Oklahoma City with her family and well-behaved dog. Send your submissions, comments and suggestions to Kelley at smithkc@riskiii.com.

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TAKE 4 WINDOWS OF TIME, NOW THROUGH JANUARY 1ST

Perhaps you didn't get to take back any time on or around October 24th, well, it's not too late. The Take 4 Windows of Time program is running now through January 1st. Instead of racing through the holidays, consider taking a break this season by taking 4 windows for activities that rejuvenate and refresh, whether it be by yourself or with family and friends. Once you've taken your 4 windows, be sure to let us know what you did by [filling out the online feedback \(click here\)](#). We want to thank board member Barbara Brandt and the [Massachusetts Council of Churches](#) for generating the four windows idea.

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"TIME" TAKES THE POLITICAL STAGE

This election season, we took notice of those politicians who promoted free time as part of their agendas. We applaud Montana Senator-elect John Tester for highlighting the importance of having time off and being able to afford a minimal vacation. Tester was quoted in the Seattle weekly newspaper *The Stranger* as saying, "It's nice to go out fishin' sometimes."

Another political leader who has stepped up to promote family time is Florida Governor Jeb Bush. In promotion of the Sixth Annual National Family Day Governor Bush urged families to spend more time together at the dinner table. The Governor said that children and parents should put down the iPods and turn off the television and share conversation when they sit down for dinner. We agree!

All in all, the results of the US elections on November 8th provide increased hope for seeing some of our Time to Care Agenda items enacted into law in the next year or two. We expect to see paid family leave on the federal agenda and that of quite a few states. The Healthy Families Act on paid sick leave will also come up for a vote in Congress (San Francisco voters approved an excellent paid sick leave bill). John de Graaf met recently with a staff person for one US Senator who may be interested in introducing a paid vacation bill. And an increase in the minimum wage is almost a certainty, making multiple jobs less a necessity for low-income workers.

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THE MOTHERHOOD MANIFESTO SCREENING ON CAPITAL HILL

The following information comes from the October 31st edition of THE MOMSRISING e-EXCHANGE. For more information about MomsRising, visit www.momsrising.org.

On September 28th, *The Motherhood Manifesto* film was shown on Capitol Hill, hosted by Honorable Senators Clinton, Obama, Kennedy and Dodd. This premiere was a standing room only event and many thanks to our aligned organizations that helped generate turn out!

The Senators had jaw-dropping comments about the need for a motherhood and family oriented movement in the US:

- Senator Obama: *"Despite all the rhetoric about being family-friendly, we have structured a society that is decidedly unfriendly... What's missing now is a movement. What's missing now is an organization. That's why MomsRising is so important."*
- Senator Clinton: *"We're going to have a great movement of moms around the country, and dads, and grandparents and concerned Americans - what's more important than our children? I am absolutely delighted to welcome [MomsRising] to the Senate. This is where the first house party should be held."*
- Senator Dodd: *"There have been extensive debates on how to make the U.S. more secure. The idea that the U.S. is going to be more secure in the 21st century and not take care of our families falls on its face... The success of our country is attributed to people working together... This is patriotism too - standing up and strengthening America's families."*
- Senator Kennedy: *"We can't wait to get busy on [the MomsRising's] agenda."*

The upshot is not only that this was a terrific event, but also that MomsRising and our aligned organizations [which include TAKE BACK YOUR TIME] now have powerful political support for the issues we want covered on the Hill. Several legislative staff members are organizing additional film screenings for colleagues who weren't able to attend. Some offered to start blogging issues from inside the Beltway. Also, a couple of our Congressional representatives offered to send the Motherhood Manifesto DVD to all of the legislators in Congress.

Want to see the speeches from the D.C. event? Click on the names below to watch:

- [Senator Barack Obama](#)
- [Senator Hillary Clinton](#)
- [Senator Christopher Dodd](#)
- [Senator Edward Kennedy](#)

To order your copy of *The Motherhood Manifesto* DVD and for other materials about how to host a screening party or get your local group involved, visit the MomsRising.org website at www.goodstorm.com/stores/momsrising.

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LONG WORK HOURS LINKED TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE RISK

Americans who work long hours each week may be increasing their risk for high blood pressure, researchers report in *Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association*. The survey of California workers, funded by the U.C. Irvine Center for Occupational and Environmental Health and the National Institute for Occupational Health through the Southern California Education and Research Center, found that the more hours they worked, the greater their risk of developing high blood pressure.

Researchers analyzed data from a 2001 survey of more than 55,000 households in California, asking people about work hours, whether they had hypertension and about other health, demographic and lifestyle factors that could affect their blood pressure. The survey identified 24,205 working people ages 18 to 64.

Furthermore, clerical workers were 23 percent and unskilled workers 50 percent more likely to have self-reported hypertension than professionals.

Still, after researchers eliminated other possible reasons for hypertension, they found that the number of hours people worked each week was independently and significantly associated with self-reported hypertension:

- Compared to people who worked 11 to 19 hours per week, the risk of self-reported hypertension was 14 percent higher among those who worked 40 hours per week and 17 percent higher for those who worked 41 to 50 hours per week.
- Compared to people who worked 11 to 39 hours per week, people who worked 51 hours or more each week were 1.29 times more likely to report hypertension.

"We identified hours worked as being a possible risk factor for hypertension, which is a highly relevant finding in society today when you consider that American workers now work longer hours than workers in any other industrial country in the world, including Japan," Baker said. "We're essentially becoming a nation of workaholics."

Baker also said employers should consider the possible adverse effects on their workforces of requiring long work weeks, including possibly increased medical care costs and absenteeism.

Quoted in a *Los Angeles Times* article about the study, Work to Live's Joe Robinson remarked, "Clearly there's a connection [between work and health] and it's not only a connection, it's like someone shouting with a megaphone, saying, 'Wake up America!' We clearly are working beyond the physical capacity of our bodies as well as our minds."

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AMERICANS MORE SOCIALLY ISOLATED THAN THEY WERE 20 YEARS AGO

Americans are more socially isolated than they were 20 years ago, separated by work, commuting and the single life, researchers reported on Friday.

Nearly a quarter of people surveyed said they had "zero" close friends with whom to discuss personal matters. More than 50 percent named two or fewer confidants, most often immediate family members, the researchers said.

"This is a big social change, and it indicates something that's not good for our society," said Duke University Professor Lynn Smith-Lovin, lead author on the study to be published in the *American Sociological Review*.

Selected from the Reuters article: Americans' Circle of Close Friends Shrinking, by Amanda Beck, 6/26/2006.

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DUTCH STUDY FINDS CONNECTION BETWEEN DIVORCE & OVERWORK

Two sociologists interviewed 1700 Dutch people who have divorced since the end of WWII, analyzing their reasons for initiating a split.

The researchers found that violence and infidelity (very significant post-war) are now mentioned less frequently as reasons for divorce, while the number of individuals citing excessive hours at work on the part of a spouse has tripled. A lack of communication and a lack of attention are also frequently mentioned by both sexes as reasons for going their separate ways.

To read more about the Dutch study, see: www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2081392,00.html.

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BIONEERS RADIO PROGRAM ABOUT TIME

From Bioneers Radio comes a terrific new program about time, *Time Is Not Money: Waking from the Workaholic American Dream*, featuring author Vicki Robin and Take Back Your Time's John de Graaf.

What are the most precious resources on Earth? Oil? Gold? Water? Is time our real gold? Vicki Robin faced a life-threatening illness and awakened to the true value of time. John De Graaf, producer of the film and book [Affluenza](#), charts how U.S. residents spend time very differently from Europeans. What would the alternative to overwork and the workaholic American dream look like? To listen to Time Is Not Money podcast, [click here](#).

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"IT'S ABOUT TIME" RADIO SERIES

Take Back Your Time Board member Debra Krumholz is currently producing a radio show called, *It's About Time*. The focus of the show is on issues related to overwork, over-scheduling, over-consumption and time poverty.

If you or someone you know has a show idea or related personal story about the challenges, frustrations, and/or successes you've had involving issues of time (personal, family, workplace, community) that you'd like to share, please contact Debra at tbytamherst@comcast.net.

In addition, if you have knowledge or connections to radio stations who may be interested in airing this show, please let Debra know as well.

The archived shows will soon be available to listen to through streaming at timeday.org. Stay tuned!

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NEW TAKE BACK YOUR TIME POSTERS!

Huiping Iler of Ottawa, Ontario contacted us this summer offering her services to translate some of our materials into different languages. We now have [Chinese and Spanish](#) version of the clock head poster. Huiping writes:

As an entrepreneur and a mom (I own a professional translation firm in Ottawa, Ontario), I am always looking for a balance between loving the work I do (obsessed sometimes) and finding time to live/enjoy my life outside of work. On a sunny bright day, do I spend it in the office or do I go to the park with my son? Should I take an hour of my day to cook for my family? This kind of self-debating is what draws me to Take Back Time. I feel connected to the movement and want to meet others who are also trying to strike a balance.

We'd also like to say a big thank you to Helen Wyllie, who has created four beautiful new posters to publicize the Take 4 Windows of Time campaign. [Click here to check out Helen's posters](#). Helen lives in Scotland.

And finally, we want to thank Steve Jorgensen and Bill Whitney who have been working over the past three months designing [a new series of time-themed posters](#) for us -- look for these in the next few months.

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THE RECLAIM DINNERTIME CAMPAIGN -- A REPORT FROM BILL DOHERTY

One thing I learned from the Take Back Your Time/Panera campaign is what resources a large for-profit company can muster for a public education campaign. We saturated the country over a two day period with the message of reclaiming the family dinner hour and a mention of Take Back Your Time Day. Panera was good about mostly confining their name mention to their sponsorship of Time Day and a website for parents that I helped develop. The website naturally had material on Crispani, their new pizza, but the overall campaign was educational and not commercial. Bottom line: it worked for Take Back Your Time and Panera -- but I seriously lacked down time for a while!

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TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY 2006 -- YOUR REPORTS!

If you haven't written in to us about how you spent October 24th, please do! Send your summary to lisa@timeday.org today!

From Maureen Drewniany in Morgan Hill, CA

I am a Hypnotherapist in Morgan Hill, California. I read about Take Back Your Time Day for the first time a few weeks ago in the October issue of Body and Soul Magazine.

I decided to offer free guided relaxation sessions throughout the day on October 24th. I have sent out flyers, e-mails, and a press release announcing this. My day is almost completely booked. I feel great about participating in this way. So many of my clients come to me for a variety of issues directly related to their stress-out, overworked lifestyles. I look forward to being involved in an even bigger way next year.

From Cape Cod, MA

Steve Brown reports:

Our group met for a 'get back to the table' gathering at the local Panera Bread bakery cafe.

From Boston, MA

Susan Donohoe of Boston Conscious Consuming reports:

Our event went really well! We set up a table at the Park St T-stop in downtown Boston (by the Boston Common). We had seven volunteers hand out about 400 quarter-flyers, and we got about 30 signatures for the Time To Care petition.

From Human Agenda in San Jose, CA

Franci Collins, Board Chair Human Agenda, wrote:

We had a very successful event last week at facility offered by Catholic Charities, with about 30 people attending. Richard Hobbs shared some information about TBYT and spoke briefly about the price of our disconnection from our families, friends, and spirits. We then broke into 6 discussion groups that focused on:

Overwhelmed Kids. Overscheduling, etc. Can a kid be a kid?

Overwhelmed Adults. How to improve work-life balance.

Overwhelmed Adults. Impacts on family, friends, and self.

Time to Cultivate Spirituality. Time to reflect, think, & act.

Health & the Environment. Time for healthy people, a healthy world.

The Big Picture. The economics, policies, & politics of time poverty.

At the end, each group reported back the most common issues and a couple of ideas that were generated to help people start to shift the energy and priorities in their lives. I think that everyone was surprised at the pervasiveness of the problem and many people said that they felt inspired to start making some changes.

From Ames, Iowa

Elizabeth Holland writes:

I hope you are having a grand TBYTD! I just thought I would let you know that I did try to get the word out this year at the veterinary school here in Ames. It's probably not much to share, but I feel like it made a connection with some students and faculty. I have attached the emails I sent out with the help of a supportive professor. I hung a bunch of posters around the school (especially the sad dog ones!) and then we sent the first three e-mails out earlier in the month. On Sunday I sent the final email out. In addition, I posted the brief emails (on colorful paper) by the posters switching them out as we sent the new ones for those that don't really read e-mail. And tomorrow my mom (Mary Hart) is coming to visit and we are going to Panera to celebrate! One final note- The local news (WHO TV in Des Moines) mentioned TBYTD this morning right when I woke up- what a great start to the day!

From Iowa City, IA

Dave Gould of University of Iowa writes:

On October 23, John de Graaf spoke to an audience of about 250 University of Iowa students and faculty. The feedback to your presentation has been unbelievable! I received over 40 e-mails, either praising your visit, or asking when it would air on UITV. One message proclaimed your talk "the best at the University in years"! Another asked if you had ever considered running for office. (She added that you had her "vote"!)

From Slow Food Cornell, Ithaca, NY

Dana Shapiro writes:

Slow Food Cornell took local middle-schoolers to visit Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese Co. Later that afternoon, The Center for Religion, Ethics and Religion hosted a lecture by Scott Sherman, director of the UCLA Center for Transformative Action. In the evening we kept with the 'let's get back to the table theme' by hosting a lovely potluck party in honor of Mr. Sherman and Take Back Your Time Day which was attended by members of Slow Food Cornell and other Ithacans.

From Seattle, WA

Cecile Andrews reports:

On Sunday, October 22nd we invited people to a tea, and gathered around a table to talk about what we would do if we could slow down down. (We had asked people, to make name tags with their real first names and for their second names, something they would do if they had more time. Thus, I was Cecile Laid Back, and Gretchen was Gretchen Long Walk, etc.) We had a wonderful conversation with our cookies and felt that we

were continuing to build community in Seattle. On October 24th, we hosted a screening of The Motherhood Manifesto documentary with 911 Media Arts and MomsRising. MomsRising Executive Director Kristen Rowe-Finkbeiner and Take Back Your Time's John de Graaf lead the post-screening discussion.

From Central Missouri State, Warrensburg, MO

From Maureen Wilt and the social work students at Central Missouri State:

We had our TBYTD on October 23rd since my students aren't in class on the 24th. Students designed their own T-shirts, using the TBYTD logo on the front and a typical, harried day in the life of a social worker on the back (ending with social workers' recommendation to Take Back Your Time.)

Overslept: missed class, up to late studying.....8:00 A.M

Missed breakfast, running to class.....8:15 A.M.

Exhausted sitting in class.....8:30 A.M.

Grabbed lunch on way to work...2:15 P.M.

Late for work--got speeding ticket.....3:10 P.M.

Tardy for work....written up,,,,,3:15 P.M.

Missed the game....7:00 P.M.

Had to stay late at work...12:15 A.M.

Study for big test....3:30 A.M.

Fall into bed.....4:00 A.M.

Social workers advising you to

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME.....TIMELESS

We gave out awards and citations for either taking back one's time or not. Recipients received gift certificates donated by local restaurants and businesses. We had a table at our Student Union and individuals who filled out Time surveys or contributed to Bittersweet Place for Grieving Children & Their Families (a new non-profit organization in our area) were entered into a drawing for a free trip to Las Vegas or three other locations, a professional massage, free movies, etc. We had lots of students fill out surveys and raised \$200 for Bittersweet Place.

We also had a Time Jeopardy game based on the TBYTD handbook. Social work students contacted local businesses, media, and legislators to get the word out about TBYTD. Students did a great job of spreading the message; they really got into the police role of educating individuals they cited about the dangers of not taking back their time. The surveys we collected speak to the importance of this movement. More than half of the students filling out the survey got only six or less hours of sleep a night; many got 4 or less. Most students indicated that they got no vacation at all, or less than a week. My students plan on wearing their T-shirts the first Wed. of each month so that we can keep getting the word out about TBYT. Students also came up with the idea of a duck pond where individuals drew carnival ducks out of the water. The ducks were numbered and those numbers corresponded with a specific suggestion on what to do on TBYTD, such as call an old friend, spend time in nature, etc.

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YOUR LETTERS

URGENT REQUEST FROM STUDENT SEEKING INFORMATION

As I am finishing up my final quarter in the Recreation Program at Western Washington University, I am writing a research paper on the benefits of recreation in the workplace. I decided to study this after my boss, this past summer, built an hour into the day for each person have their "exercise time." I noticed that I was happier, more awake and alert, and felt refreshed after being able to do an activity of my choice. I am looking

for information on companies that provide their employees with either time built into the day for leisure or have a recreation program which offers employees opportunities while at work. I am also looking for studies and other resources that are related to job satisfaction and leisure time while on the job. If you know of any studies, companies, or other resources that may be beneficial to my research please contact me at whaleyp@cc.wvu.edu. I need this information by mid-December.

Thanks,

Pat Whaley

From East Northport (Long Island), NY

One factor contributing to longer hours is "globalization". I have many friends that need to deal with offices in Europe and India, which results in them receiving e-mails (via this infernal device called a BlackBerry) at all hours of the night. I notice the younger crowd (people in their 20's) seem to be rebelling a bit against these crazy hours, especially in the IT industry. I get into my office at 8:00AM and leave around 5:30PM, take 20 minutes for lunch, and people look at me like "why are you leaving so early?". I really wish some public/government agency would do something against this "indentured servitude" work ethic. If people worked "normal" hours, perhaps more jobs would be created, and people would have more time for their families which would result in lower divorce rates, children performing better in school, etc.

From Seattle, WA

I've been following the Take Back Your Time movement for a while now and I like everything that is being done and I just wanted to take a moment to make a comment about something going on in the company that I work for. One of the things that I always hear about is how Americans don't get enough vacation time. I agree that we need more vacation time in this country. I work for a financial institution that has always been great as far vacation. I think I am fortunate to have 3 weeks per year and I pretty much use it all every year.

One thing that comes to mind is what about sick time? Do you know how companies are in granting sick time for their employees? Time to be able to take care of themselves and their families. Apparently my company wants people to come to work sick now. They are in the process of changing their sick leave policy. Currently employees earn 1 day per month of sick leave. Starting in 2007 that is going to change to 7 days per year. The company claims this is an enhancement of sick leave because short-term disability will now kick in after 5 days. However, if you have used up your 7 days already, if you are sick, you will have 5 days without pay until the short-term disability kicks in at 60% of your pay. If someone has already used up their 7 days, I have a feeling we will be seeing a lot more sick people at work. This of course contradicts what the Health Department encourages in staying home when you are sick.

I just wanted to pass this along and I hope this is not a new trend that companies are going to start taking in order to save money.

From London, Ontario

I have been operating www.thehumankindnessproject.com for 9 months and I heard about your website today on CBC Radio 1. I wanted to share with you an article I wrote (that starts with why people roll through stop signs... and ends with because we're doing too much. Have you explored or has someone explored WHY we're doing this to ourselves?

From Arlington, WA

My sister works for Sears. Recently, she went to a party for one of the managers, who after 30 - 35 years of working, finally retired. He had been a manager for many years, I believe, and must have been working a lot of hours. Exactly one week after his retirement party, the security guard at the store told my sister that he had died of a heart attack. My sister was shocked. I told her I had heard stories from many people of this happening all over the country.

My friend, Robert of TheSlowLane.com told me he once asked his mother about why she didn't wash some dirty kitchen curtains, as they were full of dust, etc. She told him that she was afraid to wash them, she thought they would fall apart if she did, as she said the dirt was probably keeping the curtains together.

When we overwork, the body is the dirty curtains. Washing the curtains, or taking time off to relax, will make the curtains fall apart or cause the person to die (since you have not kept up with keeping the curtains clean). The answer is wash the curtains once every few weeks to keep them from becoming so brittle that they fall apart. So, take the necessary time off for rest and relaxation every few weeks, and don't overwork in the first place!

-- Jeanette Watkins, People for a Shorter Workweek

From Orinda, CA

I'm hearing some real horror stories from students (here and abroad). The pressure for students to compete for limited college slots and for schools to perform at the "No Child Left Behind" standards is causing teachers to go crazy with the workload they're applying to these young students. I can honestly say that it's nothing less than sheer madness. Each teacher feels the crunch to deliver scores for their own particular field or suffer the consequences; the net result is an aggregate homework load (across about seven teachers per pupil) that has these kids working past midnight to keep up.

I do think if you can bring this homework into your public policy agenda you can use those students to proselytize your message across the various personal websites, forums and other areas where they collect on the Internet. **Solidarity loves company, in other words.**

Your own schools up in the Seattle region rank high in the informal homework survey that I've done. From what I understand one of the schools there actually did create a homework guideline pamphlet (to placate parents) which nearly matches the suggested per-teacher numbers that I have suggested; unfortunately the teachers absolutely ignore the guideline since their incentive is to "survive" in this harsh educational landscape, if you will. If a school doesn't meet the national standard they lose funding. This drives the teachers to drive their students, regardless of the emotional costs. This drives the students to live stressed-filled lives, often turning to "cutting" and other self-destructive behavior. It's bad. That's about all I can say about it.

I'd love to be able to say that we made a difference in their lives, to give them a fighting chance to succeed.

Editor's note: If you're interested in reaching Michael Blankenship about the pressures today's students face, you can email him at: StudentRights@ChooseOne.com.

From Winnipeg, Canada

Your web site is just what I have been looking for. I have been concerned about the high level of stress in everyday life for many years and believe it has become the most widespread problem facing our society today. Take Back Your Time provides a good starting point to understanding the problems and its implications and to getting started towards a solution. I like the practical approach being proposed and see

this as the first step in making improvements in our quality of life - which we have lost touch with in the last few generations.

My sense it to really solve this problem, a commitment has to be made to living a simpler life with less stuff and lower income dependence. This is tough nut to crack as it will require a change from bigger is better, more is good mentality to thinking in terms of less is better in terms of consumption. After all who needs a four hundred thousand dollar house when basic comfort and housing needs can be met for one third to one quarter of that amount. You can get away without a car if you choose to live in walking distance of your core services and near good public transit routes. When you really need a car, lease or rent or take a taxi. Taking this approach substantially reduces our income requirements which in turn can free up substantial amounts of time for a family -- getting us back to the need for one income earner etc. To boot your health improves from walking more.

While I was in Australia, I picked up a book that described in great detail how conspicuous, wasteful consumption has lead to stressed, depressed and obese Australian society that is continually chasing income and failing to improve its quality of life. The book is aptly entitled *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* by Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss of the Australia Institute. Particularly interesting are the chapters on the downshifters -- people who have altered their lifestyles to reduce their income dependency and the appendix -- A political manifesto for well being -- which sets out a political agenda reshaping our affluenzic society. Have a look, it could be a useful addition to your excellent list of references.

From Kentucky

I just happened to stumble upon your website, and have found it very interesting. I support what you are doing, and know first hand what overworking is. I currently work not one, but two jobs. I am a factory worker and a part time reporter for a local paper. I don't do this because I like working all of the time, but because I have to. I would like to turn my part time job into my full time job, but aren't able to afford the pay difference.

Within factories around my area in Kentucky, most workers do not have a choice in the number of hours they work. I personally have worked a shift that requires at least 48 hours per week. Overtime pay was meant to discourage employers from requiring employees to work more than 40 hours a week, but it is little discouragement today. I've known factories in my area that have required workers to work 12 to 14 hours a day, 7 days a week for up to 3 months. What are employees to do with the cost of living increasing each day? We are left with only two options, work the shift or find another job. Unfortunately, jobs are getting scarce.

From Jersey City, New Jersey

I came across your organization while researching a follow up article for a class that at that time, I was teaching. I had assigned an article by Juliet Schor, *Americans Work too Hard*, and I wanted to find additional information about this work hours crisis.

When I found about your organization, I was thrilled because several years ago I decided to change my work life style because of the long hours. Ino longer work the typical 9-5, but I do work and my work load is now more humane. I stay home during the day with my children and at night I teach Adult ESL to incoming college students at different colleges/ universities. I must say that many of my adjunct colleagues feel the exact same way, and for that specific reason, they teach at several places and are no longer tied long hours with short vacations. I also have my students research your organization because to raise their awareness of this problem. In any case, thanks for getting back to me.

From Virginia

I work for the University of Virginia and get paid vacation (10 hours a month) and paid sick leave. However, I am required to work massive amounts of overtime, and I find it nearly impossible to get time off, even when I am sick. I have called in to say I was sick and been told that I had to come in until someone else could come and cover for me, which means that I work at least 4 hours sick. In the past year, I have accumulated over 7 ½ weeks of leave time (annual leave, overtime, holidays worked, etc.) in addition to my sick leave, yet I can't seem to get even a day off. I did get one day off to help my children when my ex-husband died, but that meant someone else had to work overtime to cover for me. My official days off are Saturday and Monday, which means that I don't even have two days off together. I am tired, stressed and frustrated, and my grandchildren are calling asking if they will EVER be able to come to my house again. If the state treats its employees this way, how can anyone expect them to encourage private enterprise to do any better?

P.S. Morale where I work is VERY low. I wonder why?

From Indianapolis, Indiana

I've been reading the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in search of world standards for other issues), and in the course of reading my jaw hit the floor when I got to Article 24:

"Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay."

I knew the UDHR maintained rights to form unions for labor reasons, but I never dreamed I would find stated so simply and forthrightly the foundation of TBYT, and with an entire article to itself. And this document is from 1948! Rest and leisure as human rights! And here I've been feeling so defensive towards employers for having to prove why I need rest.

As always, we welcome your feedback. Please send your comments to Kelley at smithkc@riskiii.com.

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