



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME

OCTOBER 24 WWW.TIMEDAY.ORG

Home | Join Our E-Mail List | Contact | Partners |
Public Policy Agenda | [Newsletter](#) | Handbook | Support Time Day

Click below to navigate...

Home
Join Our E-Mail List
Contact Us

Public Policy Agenda

Newsletter

+ Current Newsletter
Winter 2011

+ Press Releases

Newsletter Archives

(pdf versions)

- + Fall 2010
- + Summer 2010
- + Spring 2010
- + December 2009
- + September 2009
- + May 2009
- + February 2009
- + Nov/December 2008
- + October 2008
- + August 2008
- + June 2008
- + April/May 2008
- + March 2008
- + January /February 2008
- + Vol 5. Issue 3
- + Vol 5. Issue 2
- + Vol 5. Issue 1
- + December 2006
- + August 2006
- + February 2006



The Official Handbook
+ Order It

+ PDF Flyer

Handbook Excerpts

+ Organizing TBYTD

+ Teach-In's &
Study Circles

+ How To Pitch A Story

Handbook Discussion

+ Chapter Questions

+ Study Circles

Support Time Day

NEWSLETTER - Summer 2011

CONTENTS:

- Letter from the Executive Director
- Remembering Jon Rowe
- Happiness Conference Postponed
- Happiness Event at Allegheny College
- Pursuit of Happiness Day
- From our Board Members
- Take Back Your Time in the Media
- Other News You Can Use
- Letters

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends:

I'm sure you think I've taken back my time permanently since it's been so long since I've sent you a newsletter. I promise to get back on track asap now that some major changes have happened. From this newsletter on, I will try to send a shorter one each month. As I mentioned in our last newsletter, Take Back Your Time has become a project of Sustainable Seattle instead of Cornell University's CRESP Center for Transformative Action.

CRESP has been an amazing wonderful partner for these past nine years and I will be eternally grateful to Anke Wessels, Richard Landsdowne and others at CRESP for all of their help! We are moving to Sustainable Seattle because it is easier for me, since I live in Seattle, and because of our new partnership.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, Take Back Your Time is partnering with Sustainable Seattle on an exciting project called The Happiness Initiative: happycounts.org. I hope you'll take a look at what we are doing.

I think you will see how valuable this work is, with much the same groundbreaking impact that Take Back Your Time had when we began the organization nine years ago. I think you'll see the clear ways in which this work can enhance the Take Back Your Time goals.

And I hope you'll support this new path forward financially, because a boost from you now can really help this project take off in a big way this fall.

Donate



WHERE WE STAND NOW

We have put a new shorter version of the happiness survey on-line for anyone to take. It will soon also be up in several other languages. Some 7,200 people completed the first survey, and not surprisingly, the lowest overall score in any of the domains of well-being measured by the survey was in TIME BALANCE. We think this is helpful information in convincing policy makers that we need to do something about this issue in the US.

Under the leadership of Sustainable Seattle's Executive Director, Laura Musikanski, the Happiness Initiative is expanding rapidly. The City Council of Seattle has unanimously endorsed the project and the Portland Metro Council, representing 1.5 million people in 23 cities around Portland, OR, is close behind. Decorah, Iowa is also doing an initiative and several other communities, including Bellingham, WA, Tacoma, WA, Napa, CA, Olympia, WA and Eau Claire, WI are planning to do the same. We will be



Main Menu

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME is a project of **Sustainable Seattle**.

Order Fulfillment By The Simple Living Network

Web updates by Eldan Goldenberg

presenting our first "report card" to the city of Seattle on October 5th, and our City Council President Richard Conlin plans to take the idea to the National League of Cities!

The initiative is growing by leaps and bounds. Additionally, some sixty colleges and universities have expressed interest in doing campus initiatives, and one, Antioch University, Seattle, has signed on as an official partner. These initiatives will help carry the message of the need for time balance, vacations and work-sharing.

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE

We truly need your financial support for this new initiative that will, I am certain, take Take Back Your Time to the next level and allow us to reach a much broader audience about the need for time balance in our lives.

Our goal is to raise \$20,000 in this effort from individual donations to support some of our other fundraising and operations needs and to match other grants which we are expecting to receive soon but which need a match.

I hope you will consider this request seriously and consider sending a donation today that can help move this amazing new project along. Later in this letter, I will outline our very specific needs at this time. **Please contribute generously today!**



We also need your ideas and your volunteer time. If you have either to offer, please email me at jodg@comcast.net and I will connect you with the appropriate volunteer leaders. We have more than 25 volunteers who are putting in an immense amount of time on this project—they are an incredible group and it is very exciting to be working with all of them. They are taking the survey out to food banks, homeless shelters and reaching out to the most underserved members of our community. They, and the project, need your help!!!

Please consider starting a Happiness Initiative in your community or on your campus! We can provide you with the materials you need to do it!!! All of them will be available on our new Web site happycounts.org which will be fully up and running by mid-September! My colleague, Laura Musikanksi, and I would love to speak about the Initiative in your community. Let me know if you'd like to see that happen! We have been invited to speak about it in Hungary in September. We'll be at Middlebury College and other Vermont schools in October, and also at the Bioneers Conference in California! We'd love to speak at your college or in your community!

I also have some exciting personal news to share. My new book, WHAT'S THE ECONOMY FOR ANYWAY? (WHY IT'S TIME TO STOP CHASING GROWTH AND START PURSUING HAPPINESS), written with Dave Batker, is being published by Bloomsbury Press this October. And it was recently at the head of Publishers Weekly's list of "[Top Ten Business and Economics Books for Fall, 2011.](#)"

It also received praise from Kirkus Review. This book, dedicated to the memory of former Take Back Your Time leader **Jonathan Rowe** (see next section), makes a strong case for more time for Americans and for an economy based on greater happiness rather than simply a bigger GDP. My co-author, Dave Batker, and I hope to do a lot of speaking about this book this fall and winter. Let us know if you'd like us to come to your community!

Sincerely,
John de Graaf
Executive Director

PLEASE DONATE!!!

We still need your support. Please donate! Thanks to all of you who contributed since the last newsletter!



[Table of Contents](#)

We send this newsletter with a heavy heart, as we report the passing on March 20th of this year of a founder of Take Back Your Time and long-time active member of its board.

Jonathan Rowe died suddenly and unexpectedly of a rare bacterial infection. His life was memorialized in a moving ceremony at Point Reyes Station, California, in May. In addition to his distinguished career as a journalist and Congressional staffer, Jon co-founded the West Marin Commons in Point Reyes Station, to show the power of commons-based action in one town. He is survived by his wife Mary Jean and young son Josh. Contributions to support Jonathan's family can be sent to Wells Fargo Bank, 11400 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station CA 94956 (make check payable to Mary Jean Espulgar-Rowe). Tax-deductible contributions in memory of Jonathan may be sent to West Marin Commons/Town Commons Project, PO Box 127, Point Reyes Station CA 94956.

Jon had recently launched a new Web site: <http://jonathanrowe.org>, featuring his enduring writing for On the Commons, Yes! magazine, The Atlantic, Harper's and many other publications.. It contains more than 270 of his articles and radio shows.

A profile of Jonathan' work by his former colleague David Bollier, appeared in the book All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons. Several of Jon's own articles also appear in the book. You can find some of this material at:

http://www.westmarincommons.org/site/?page_id=1807

<http://onthecommons.org/users/jonathan-rowe>

<http://onthecommons.org/jonathan-rowe-1946-2011>

We truly mourn Jon's passing. He was an amazing and dedicated voice for a better, saner and more balanced life and a more just and sustainable society. Please give generously to help support his family.

[Table of Contents](#)

HAPPINESS CONFERENCE POSTPONED

We have decided to postpone the Happiness conference, which was scheduled for August 26-28 in Seattle. We are simply too far extended with work on the Happiness Initiative to work on the conference. Instead, we are teaming up with [Gross National Happiness USA](#) in Vermont, to create a national conference in June of next year. The conference will be held at Champlain College in Burlington, VT. We'll keep you posted. It's going to be a great event and we are delighted to support GNHUSA in their great work!

[Table of Contents](#)

HAPPINESS EVENT AT ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

By Samantha Laurence
Sophomore at Allegheny College, Meadville, PA

On April 21, 2011 students in Allegheny College's Freshman Seminar, Vision & Activism, hosted a Happiness Picnic to inspire the campus community to discover what happiness means to them through exposure to the Bhutanese concept of Gross National Happiness, in contrast to our Gross National/Domestic Product. The event was also designed to reinforce the college's Statement of Community and promote a lecture by filmmaker and activist John de Graaf, "Pursuing Happiness Instead of Growth". Mr. de Graaf's lecture was organized by the College's EcoRep program as part of its Minimization Mania Initiative.

The Happiness Picnic was held in the college's Campus Center and featured colorful posters, local food, and various activities, including the opportunity to take Sustainable Seattle's on-line Happiness Survey and learn about Bhutan's Nine Domains of Happiness. Participants were challenged to think deeply about happiness as a significant dimension of human experience, one that is essential in sustaining community and individual well-being.

Participants wrote their ideas about happiness on puzzle-shaped pieces that were displayed during and after the event, forming a collage of various ideas about happiness. These ideas were then traded for local foods and other refreshments, and participants were then encouraged to spend time in deliberative dialogue about happiness, work/life balance, the importance of community, and other important ideas from the nine domains.

Once collected the puzzle pieces were taped to poles around the event area, providing an enticing visual display that passersby and participants could explore, each reflecting diverse meanings and ideas about of happiness. Student organizers also transcribed happiness quotes onto the cups used for

beverages at the event, and these too helped inspire participants and stimulate conversation around happiness.

At the conclusion of the event, the puzzle pieces were arranged and displayed at Mr. de Graaf's lecture so that attendees could reflect on all of the ideas posted and add their own. A video of the event was made and is being edited into a short film that explores a range of ideas about happiness, which will be posted on YouTube in the near future. Allegheny College's EcoReps and student leaders from the Vision & Activism class are exploring the idea of participating in other Happiness events planned for 2011 – 12, including the national Pursuit of Happiness Day (see below) to be celebrated at multiple college venues across the country on April 13, 2012, which is Thomas Jefferson's birthday. Overall, the Happiness Picnic was an enormous success, serving as a trigger event that might catalyze the development of a Happiness Initiative at Allegheny College.

[Table of Contents](#)

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS DAY NEXT APRIL 13TH—JOIN US

April 13th is the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, author of the famous "pursuit of happiness" line in our Declaration of Independence (Jefferson even called happiness "the sole orthodox purpose of government".) Beginning on Friday, April 13, 2012, Jefferson's birthday will also be Pursuit of Happiness Day (PHD). The event will be a national festival/teach-in on American campuses and in American communities, coordinated by the [Happiness Initiative](#).

US campuses offer a great setting for a nationwide Pursuit of Happiness Day. The acronym, PHD, is especially appropriate for colleges. New technologies make possible televised linkages between campuses. The universities were the launching pad for the enormously successful Earth Day in 1970, the much more limited, Take Back Your Time Day in 2003, and Bill McKibben's hugely popular 350 events around climate change in 2009. Students have the time and desire to create events like this, with support from interested faculty. Moreover, and sadly, counselors at American universities have witnessed a major increase in depression in recent years—at Cornell University, six students committed suicide in the last year alone. Pressures on students are taking a toll. A focus on what they can do to improve their lives and their happiness is an imperative today.

But we also want communities to participate. There is no limit to ideas for this project. In the next few weeks we will be collecting input and feedback on this idea, and lining up commitments to participate. To find out how you can be part of this exciting event, email John de Graaf at jodg@comcast.net.

[Table of Contents](#)

FROM OUR BOARD MEMBERS:

From Bonnie Michaels

This has been a revealing year about individual happiness from the workshops I've conducted based on my book, Upside: How to Zig When Life Zags. (www.upsidethebook.com) Attendees are organizations going through downsizing, managers, unemployed workers, retired individuals, business networking groups and people in transition. The workshops have been carefully designed to cover specific topics regarding change, successful career strategies, lifestyle sustainability, mindfulness, networking and financial issues. The interesting observation is that all discussions come back to the meaning of happiness.

Making better choices about one's personal life and career has much to do with the definition of happiness. Before individuals can move ahead they must be clear about the real meaning of happiness. It is always a surprise when they discover that they already have many things in their lives that make them happy. They just haven't acknowledged them. For instance, even unemployed people discover that they have meaningful relationships and live in relative safety. Yet, they continue to search for high paying jobs, perfect relationships, and lifestyles that may no longer be possible.

What is lacking in their search is the understanding that change is more extreme than ever, the "not-known" is the new norm, and their lives will be on a roller coaster because of the continuous change. That doesn't preclude happiness. However, it does require adaptation, flexibility and a new mentality about expectations. It is difficult to be happy when you are expecting job security, a high salary and a 90's lifestyle. (Author's note: Those individuals in dire financial circumstances and out of work for years are in a different category. None attended the workshops)

Many individuals who volunteered while in transition found meaningful activities that added to their happiness. Helping others in worse conditions often painted a reality picture of their own situations—they realize they're not so badly off. Having more time was a blessing for some and a curse for others.

Those individuals who took advantage of the time off to improve skills and spend time with family/friends made the transition easier and were generally happier. Those that were resistant to the new circumstances became more angry and fearful.

Health improved for some because they had the time to exercise and cook instead of eating out. For many, those habits stayed with them when they resumed working.

For myself, I came away from these experiences feeling very grateful for the life I have and that is definitely translated into happiness. Many attendees learned the daily practice of gratefulness which added to their overall well-being in spite of their circumstances.

Much of this was reinforced by the following interview I did with an individual who experienced the recent great earthquake in Japan.

Tell me how the lives of you, your family and friends have changed since the earthquake.

We became much more aware of the power of earthquake and tsunami, although earthquakes have been common in Japan. We also have started to think about our priorities more seriously, and how to use our time better to live more fruitfully, while we are alive. We appreciate life more.

Has anything changed in the workplace—such as more open dialogue, compassion, flexibility, gratefulness, etc.

I think the Japanese workplace has changed quite a bit with more compassion, appreciation, and caring. Also, since we will be lacking massive electricity in the summer, companies are planning to introduce different types of flexible work arrangements, such as tele-work, and longer summer vacations, etc. that they would never thought of trying if this has not happened. It is expected that workers will have more time in the evening for personal activities, which in turn could change not only the life style but also the personal values of each individual.

How are young people reacting to all the changes since the earthquake?

They appreciate and care for family more. They also became more interested in volunteer work and contributing to others. More young workers take volunteer work vacations when their company offers them, conduct charity events, help fund raising, and much more.

What do you foresee in the future for Japan—individual lives and work lives?

The disaster has really impacted Japan in so many ways. It is very hard to foresee the future, but I truly believe that we will be seeing a lot of changes in the society, companies and people here in a positive way.

Can you see any upsides from the recent events?

People appreciate simple things and ordinary life more, and realize the importance of relationships. Companies became more understanding of employees' personal lives and also it has forced companies to think of ways of working flexibly. I think it has become a great 'chance' for Japanese to 'change'. Japanese dislike and have been avoiding change but the events have given Japanese a sense of emergency and a good reason to change.

From Greg Wright

Here's a practical application of the principle that workers should receive the entire money they've earned for their time at work!

[SMARTPHONE APP LETS WORKERS TRACK WAGES](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Workers who don't trust the boss to keep track of their wages can now do it themselves with a new smartphone application from the Department of Labor. But employers worry that the time sheet app, along with other new initiatives, could encourage even more wage and hour lawsuits.

The app, called DOL-Timesheet, lets workers calculate regular work hours, break time and overtime pay to create their own wage records. Department officials say the information could prove valuable in a dispute over pay or during a government investigation when an employer has failed to keep accurate records.

"This app will help empower workers to understand and stand up for their rights when employers have denied their hard-earned pay," Labor Secretary Hilda Solis said.

The app is the latest example of the Obama administration's push for more aggressive enforcement of wage and hour laws. The agency has hired about 300 more investigators to probe complaints of unpaid work time, lack of overtime pay and minimum wage violations.

Last year, the agency began a "Bridge to Justice" program that, for the first time, helps connect aggrieved workers with private lawyers if the department's Wage and Hour Division is too busy to handle a complaint.

As a result, legal experts say, wage and hour compliance has become a leading concern for employers as the new policies help drive up litigation over unpaid wages, also known as wage theft.

"The government is focusing on it like never before," said Gerald Maatman, an employer-side labor lawyer based in Chicago. "I think the mantra is kind of, 'All enforcement, all the time, 24/7.'"

On the Net: [Labor Department's Hour and Wage Division](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

TAKE BACK YOUR TIME IN THE MEDIA

Lots of stories mentioning us in the past few months!

[Working at Making the Most of Your Vacation](#)

New York Times

The company also keeps track of when people on the same project are planning to take time off, to ensure that "somebody's got your back when you're out," ...

[Memo to US workers: Take a break](#)

Los Angeles Times

"You would have had the idea that we were calling for the end of the Western civilization," says John de Graaf, founder of Take Back Your Time, ...

[Unlimited Vacation, but Can You Take It?](#)

Wall Street Journal

I don't want to be the next one laid off when the company downsizes again," says John de Graaf, executive director of Take Back Your Time, Seattle ...

[Why is America the 'no-vacation nation'?](#)

CNN

May 23, 2011 ... Let's be blunt: If you like to take lots of vacation, the United States is not the place to work. Besides a handful of national holidays, ...

Less work for equal pay a fair goal for everyone

MyCentralJersey.com

His was a vision of an America whose citizens had time to pursue their dreams. At a 2004 conference of the organization Take Back Your Time, ...

[On second blush, we should use more vacay time » Opinion » The ...](#)

It's positively un-American," John De Graaf, head of Take Back Your Time, asks on the Web site of the Seattle-based outfit that addresses issues of overwork ... [duncanbanner.com/.../On-second-blush-we-should-use-more-...](#)

[America the exhausted](#)

The State Press

John De Graaf, the national coordinator of the TAKE BACK YOUR TIME initiative, told [swcollege.com](#), "In Europe, workers receive an average six weeks of paid ...

[John De Graaf « CBS St. Louis](#)

News, Sports, Weather, Traffic and St. Louis' Top Spots.

[Winneshiek County Happiness Survey online at library website](#)

Decorah Journal

"It takes just a few minutes to complete," says John de Graaf, executive director of Take Back Your Time ([www.timeday.org](#)). "You'll find it's worth the time ...

[Seattle Gets Serious about the Pursuit of Happiness](#)

The Nonprofit Quarterly

... includes several other area nonprofits, including Take Back Your Time and the Compassionate Action Network, as key partners. SAHI partners hope that Seattle ...

<http://the grindstone.com/strategy/the-history-of-paid-vacation-while-europe-evolved-america-fell-flat/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joe-robinson/vacation-time_b_868655.html

<http://atlantapost.com/2011/05/24/is-americas-attitude-towards-vacation-productive/>

<http://sanityscraps.tumblr.com/post/5768428847/no-vacation-nation>

[Table of Contents](#)

OTHER NEWS YOU CAN USE

Digital Overload

According to new The Digital Lifestyle survey by Magnify.net in April, consumers and web surfers are facing a torrent of data growing faster than ever before. 78% of respondents were Technologies, Journalists, Entrepreneurs, Executives, and Professionals, with 48.5% saying that they were connected to the web: "from the moment I wake up until the moment I go to bed."

64.2% said that the Information coming at them today had grown by more than 50% compared with last year. 72.7% described their data stream as: "A roaring river", "a flood", or a "massive tidal wave."

People are missing important news, information, and appointments; friendships and family suffer, says the report.

- 76.7% read email and respond evenings and weekends
- 43.2% answer texts or emails on date/social occasion
- 57.4 % never turn off phone
- 33.0% check email middle of the night
- 35.2% answer work emails while with children
- 46.9% unable to answer all email
- 41.4% miss important news
- 39.9% ignore family and friends
- 16.9% miss appointments
- 62.5% wish they could filter out the flood of data

Steven Rosenbaum, author of *Curation Nation*, concludes that "... (since) the volume of raw data coming at us has increased more than 50% in the past 12 months... (and) as more digital devices and software services proliferate... data and speed of increase will grow exponentially... (and) will be unsustainable... "

He goes on to suggest that "... algorithmic solutions, better spam filters, smarter search, and more connected devices will fact-expand the problem... (while) human data management, shared and community filtering, and personal recommendations will allow 'content' consumers... (to) consume curated content... (and) surf less... "

<http://am.blogs.cnn.com/2011/06/08/why-is-america-the-no-vacation-nation/>

<http://strengthen-social-security.org/dont-make-us-work-til-we-die>

We're #1 -- Ten Depressing Ways America Is Exceptional

America is exceptional in the advantages we've had over other nations, not what we've done with those advantages. From *On the Commons* / By David Morris

www.newrules.org/governance/article/real-american-exceptionalism

<http://defendingthepublicgood.org/2011/04/18/the-real-american-exceptionalism/>

www.alternet.org/news/150691/we're_%231_-ten_depressing_ways_america_is_exceptional/?page=entire

Too, Too Much

Albany Times Union

Author **John de Graaf** was one of the first people to give our proclivity to overwork, overspend, and overconsume a name. He called it "affluenza" and defined ...

[Foxconn To Replace Human Workers With One Million Robots](#)

WORLD'S SHORTEST WORKING HOURS!

March 1937: A billboard on Highway 99 in California which reads 'world's shortest working hours' and 'There's no way like the american way'. (Photo by Dorothea Lange/Library Of Congress/Getty Images)

[Table of Contents](#)

LETTERS

From California:

I read a great article at cnn.com about American workers not having enough time off. I agree completely. And your site was listed on the article. Well, I am very happy there are some people out there (you guys) that are trying to do something that is so important to our existence: vacation time. I

work 200 hours a month and have 10 days of vacation a year. The story of many of us, work too much and not enough time off.

I just signed up for your e-mail list and hope I can help in some way and hope to get involved in this crucial cause. Will start w/ the letter to my congress rep. Together we can make a difference!

Hello. I found your Take Back Your Time website by hopping through citations in news articles and I wonder if you or your organization has any research compilations or literature reviews on the topic? Specifically, I think it's not overly helpful to approach business leaders with evidence of the human cost of overwork, but rather, with evidence of the business cost of overwork. For example, I've seen anecdotally in myself and in my coworkers that lots of overtime makes me sloppy, and I suspect I could accomplish more in 40 hours than I do in 60. And not just more per hour, more overall. However, I can't prove it, and approaching a supervisor with that theory and no proof is a sure route to the unemployment line. Can you prove it? Can you tell me who can?

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO: jodg@comcast.net

Table of Contents