2012 Annual Report

PHLUSH welcomed World Toilet Organization Founder Jack Sim to Portland in June

We were honored to host Mr. Jack Sim on a three-day visit to Portland. Since the energetic and spirited Founder of the World Toilet Organization had requested a packed schedule, the PHLUSH team, led by Abby Brown, arranged dozens of speaking engagements, interviews, and meetings.

The Singapore national began his visit at the City’s annual Starlight Parade, where he was hosted by the Royal Rosarians. Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz welcomed Sim at City Hall, after which he toured the Portland Loos, the innovative, city-patented sidewalk toilets installed throughout downtown.

At Portland State University, Sim toured the laboratory of Dr. Radu Popa, where black soldier flies are used to more efficiently cycle nutrients, transforming organic waste directly into valuable animal feed. Sim then visited New Earth Farm in Hillsboro, Oregon to observe Bokashi fermentation, vermicomposting, and related recycling processes that produce rich soil amendments. He also attended working lunches hosted by Ken and Kyle Earlywine of Green Flush Technologies and by Dr. Jay Kravitz of the Global Health Center at the Oregon Health Sciences University.

On June 4th, 2012, Representative Earl Blumenauer, the staunchest advocate for international water and sanitation action in the US Congress, introduced Jack Sim to a public audience at Mercy Corps. PHLUSH Co-Founder and former Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association Chair Tom Carrollo introduced the Congressman. Carrollo noted that the Old Town Chinatown neighborhood which is home to both Mercy Corps and PHLUSH, was incorporated into Oregon’s 3rd District following the 2010 US Census. Congressman Blumenauer has represented District 3 in Washington DC since 1997.

Jack Sim quit a successful business career in 2001 and founded the World Toilet Organization to raise awareness the 2.5 billion people who lack basic sanitation. A Time Magazine “Hero of the Environment”, Sim is developing market-based Bottom-of-the-Pyramid products that use human waste to enhance food security and meet the aspirations of the poorest of the poor. PHLUSH has been a WTO member since 2008.

Abby Brown received travel grant to represent PHLUSH at the World Toilet Summit

Thanks to a generous travel grant, PHLUSH Outreach Specialist Abby Brown travelled to Durban, South Africa in early December to attend the World Toilet Summit. Colleagues nominated Brown to represent PHLUSH because of her volunteer contributions and her interest in global sanitation. Her presentation, “Advocating Sensible Sanitation in North America: What Works”, highlighted our efforts in public toilet design, emergency sanitation, and ecological sanitation.

Launched by the World Toilet Organization in 2001, the Summit brings together advocates and technical experts to share knowledge, brainstorm, strategize and plan. PHLUSH members have presented at past Summits in Delhi, Singapore, and Philadelphia. We are grateful to the World Toilet Organization for covering Brown’s flight and accommodations.

Throughout the Summit, the PhD student at University of California Santa Cruz live blogged proceedings. Among the global toilet experts Brown met were Trevor Mulaudzi of South Africa’s Clean Shop and Barbara Penner of the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College of London. Both are profiled on the PHLUSH website.

Jack Sim’s visit was made possible through the generosity of Green Flush Technologies, Philanthropy Now, the Paul Rippey Family, Steel Bridge, OHSU Global Health Center, and Water for the Ages.

U.S. Congressman Earl Blumenauer introduced Jack Sim at a speaking engagement at Mercy Corps.
Salinas Chinatown
PHLUSH is managing a
community toilet in
California

A new PHLUSH initiative is
underway in Salinas Chinatown in
California, a sister neighborhood to
Portland Old Town Chinatown. In
2008, neighborhood leader and
businessman Harold Weiner was
invited to Salinas to talk about
developments in Portland and in
2011 a group of Salinas community
leaders made a return visit to
Portland.

Dr. Seth Pollack, of the Service
Learning Institute at California State
University Monterey Bay, engages
students in work in Salinas
Chinatown neighborhood, which is
home to people without houses
living in unofficial encampments.
Given shared goals in hygiene and
sanitation, the Cal State folks
welcomed our suggestion that they
launch their own PHLUSH group.

A third PHLUSH group will support
our 2013 initiative to bring hygiene
and sanitation to Portlanders without
houses. PSU PHLUSH is being
formed by a talented group of
students in Community
Development at the School of Urban
Studies and Planning at Portland
State University.

Through our work in
emergency preparedness, we’ve introduced
sustainable sanitation alternatives to people
across the Pacific Northwest

Emergency sanitation was a key
focus in 2012 as experts urged
households and neighborhoods to
prepare for a Cascadia Subduction
Zone quake, which would interrupt
water and sewer service.

The City of Portland’s Office of
Emergency Management endorsed
the Twin Bucket Emergency Toilet,
our adaptation of the system used in
post-earthquake Christchurch, New
Zealand.

Emergency toilet exhibits at
22 community events ranging from
neighborhood preparedness fairs to
multi-day events organized by the
National Guard and professional first
responders.

The Twin Bucket Emergency Toilet came
to the attention of the Bill and Melinda
Gates Foundation and we exhibited at a
Reinvent the Toilet event at Seattle’s
Pacific Science Center in June.

As demand grew for emergency
sanitation options, Molly Danielsson and
Mathew Lippincott instructed groups in
the collection of urine and feces and
composting for safe recycling and reuse.
For most audiences, emergency
sanitation training was their first
introduction to closed loop sanitation.

Professional partnerships
have led to key publications

Following a semester of teaching and
field testing with graduate students in
Collaborative Design at the Pacific
Northwest College of Arts, Danielsson
and Lippincott completed A Sewer
Catastrophe Companion: Dry Toilets for
Wet Disasters. The profusely illustrated
and meticulously documented guide to
waterless sanitation answers the
question “what will we do when the
toilets don’t work?”
Covering both emergency sanitation preparation and response, the manual gives information on containers and supplies needed, collection and storage, building a compost pile and testing to ensure pathogens have been eliminated before compost is reused on gardens. *A Sewer Catastrophe Companion* is being used to train professional first responders and citizens alike. It is available on the websites of MDML and the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management.

Carol McCreary co-authored fact sheets published by the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, a Europe-based international network of which PHLUSH is a member. With K. Gröber, T Panzerbieter, J. Rück and L. Kappauf, she researched and wrote “Public awareness raising and sanitation marketing.” With D. Spuhler, M. Fogde, and P. Jenssen she co-authored “Capacity development for sustainable sanitation.” The full *Compilation of 13 Factsheets on Key Sustainable Sanitation Topics* is available online from the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance.

Following her participation in Sustainable Phosphorus Summit at Arizona, Carol McCreary co-authored with Professors Timothy Crews of Prescott College and James Cotner of the University of Minnesota, “Cultural beliefs, values, and the biogeochemical cycling of P,” a chapter in *Phosphorus, Food, and Our Future* (K. Wyant, J. Corman and J. Elser, eds.) forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

**Online advocacy and media outreach give PHLUSH all-volunteer efforts global reach**

Thanks to support from Lewis Barrett, Electronic Communications Specialist at Neighbors West-Northwest, we enjoy an online presence that includes a website, a blog, a Twitter feed, a Facebook group, a YouTube account and a newsletter. Launched by Co-Editors Poonam Sharma and Abby Brown, *Pee, Poo and You* features PHLUSH news for a national and international audience. Free subscriptions are available on the phlush.org homepage.

PHLUSH members gather at regular monthly meetings in Portland to which the public is invited. Sanitation specialists and citizen advocates from other parts of the US and from abroad, often join our meetings via Google+ and Skype.

Journalists and other individuals continue to make inquiries at info@phlush.org resulting in increased media attention. A front page article in *The Los Angeles Times* entitled “Portland Loos, a public toilet that skips to the head of its class” illustrates the PHLUSH design principles.

**Our collection of resources has grown to include mobile exhibits**

Library materials for reference and circulation include publications made available through the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, documents collected at the World Toilet Summit and other events, books on toilet design, videos, DVDs and printouts of specialized studies.

To better respond to requests for emergency sanitation information, we now make available exhibits in mobile carts. Each includes a Twin Bucket Toilet with lids and seat, carbon additives, gloves, supplies, and Lucite display boxes for handouts. These are sometimes loaned to volunteers from other community groups following a brief orientation at our office.

In January we moved to a new larger office, located in the historic 1872 New Market Theater and generously made available by our friends at Beardsley Building Development.

**In 2012, we celebrated three global days of advocacy with local action, strategic email and online campaigns**

Sanitation has become a key focus of World Water Day, which is commemorated globally in the third week of March. Here in Portland we exhibited our Twin Bucket Emergency toilet system at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. The activity-filled World Water Day featured a walk and a run for water and gave PHLUSHers a chance to chat with local groups committed to water sustainability in the US and overseas.

For Global Handwashing Day on October 16, we tweeted messages with links to scientific research, investigative journalism, educational materials, videos, games and posters. We focused on handwashing as a bulwark against the contagion associated with recent public health scares and the need for restrooms with handwashing facilities.

The goal of our November 19th World Toilet Day campaign was to promote better household and neighborhood-level emergency sanitation instructions in a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, which is likely to compromise water and sewer infrastructure for months or years. Our emailed letters to City Councilors and Country Commissioners in three west coast cities resulted in grateful replies and instructions to staff to follow up using materials available on the PHLUSH website. In response to our advocacy, authorities in Seattle, Washington, and Vancouver, British Columbia have changed their emergency sanitation guidelines.
Research and professional development brings new opportunities for 2013

Late in the year we proposed the project “Sanitation as a Human Right: Toilets for Portlanders without houses to the Community Development Faculty at Portland State University’s Toulan School of Urban Studies. Through June 2013, a student team known as PSU PHLUSH will address complex challenges facing most of North America’s large urban areas.

In December 2012, Kate Washington was awarded a nine-month research internship through the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program to explore whether having more public toilets public toilets would encourage use of public transportation in greater Portland. The results of her research will be presented at an August 15th research symposium for McNair Scholars, a program administered by Portland State University. Jeff Holiman will represent PHLUSH in the Sustainable P Research Coordination Network (RCN). Based at Arizona State University, the P Sustainability RCN will synthesize data, perspectives, and understanding about phosphorus to improve P efficiency in food production and develop robust pathways of P recycling.

Abigail Brown will support Carol McCready in leading the global working group on Sanitation Awareness of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance.

PHLUSH believes that toilet availability is a human right and that well-designed sanitation systems restore health to our cities, our waters and our soils. An all-volunteer advocacy group based in Portland, Oregon, PHLUSH collaborates with grassroots organizations, environmental activists, planners, code officials, city managers and emergency responders. We receive support from the Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association and Neighbors West-Northwest. PHLUSH is a member of the World Toilet Organization and a partner in the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance.

Public Hygiene Lets Us Stay Human (PHLUSH)
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With great sadness...
...we share news that Barbara Lescher, who co-founded PHLUSH and has remained our inspiration, passed away on January 29, 2013. Her Celebration of Life is March 16 at 1 pm at Crossroads Christian Church in Portland. Later this year we'll find a lasting way to honor her indomitable spirit.