



# ITEMS



COMMISSION ON VOLUNTARY SERVICE & ACTION

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Fall 2011

## CVSA Connects Arthus-Bertrand's Film "HOME" to Local Volunteer Action

*Film Impels Viewers to Seek End to Unsustainable Economic, Energy Policies*

by Susan Angus, CVSA Executive Director

"This is a win-win arrangement!" exclaimed Yann Arthus-Bertrand, renowned photographer from Paris, standing in the lobby of the Village East Cinema in New York City the first week of February 2011 after seeing dozens of people who had just watched his film *HOME* gather at CVSA's *INVEST YOURSELF* volunteer information table. CVSA volunteers Marjorie Pollice, Susan Louie and Rita Rochford took shifts staffing the table in the lobby each day of the free screenings to talk with audience members about how they can put their concerns about systematic human and environmental destruction into action by volunteering with CVSA or any of the hundreds of non-government volunteer organizations across the country and world promoted in CVSA's catalogue of volunteer opportunities, *INVEST YOURSELF*.

When CVSA learned of *HOME* — a unique film not well known in the U.S. that gives the viewer the opportunity to actually view ways in which climate change is altering the earth and the resultant deleterious effects on all forms of life — CVSA contacted the producer in Paris about our interest in holding a screening in New York City. We learned that Arthus-Bertrand had plans to come to New York soon along with staff from the GoodPlanet Foundation, the nonprofit organization he founded in 2005. They had a scheduled premiere showing at Columbia University and then a week of free screenings in the East Village — not far from CVSA's former Union Square office location. CVSA offered to help with local publicity and, after seeing our *INVEST YOURSELF* catalogue and the Fall 2010 issue of *ITEMS* with its coverage of the United Nations'

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## CVSA Relocates to Long Island City!

"We have a bright new office, with plenty of room for teams of volunteers to work in to expand *INVEST YOURSELF* distribution, maintain communications with CVSA member organizations, produce our publications and inspire new activities to promote volunteer service needs and opportunities!" CVSA Executive Director Susan Angus enthusiastically explained at a staff meeting on 13 August. "Now all we need are more volunteers, people serious about strengthening the independent non-government volunteer service and action movement during this time of tremendous change throughout the world."

In June CVSA moved our office into rental space in Long Island City (LIC), a formerly industrial neighborhood

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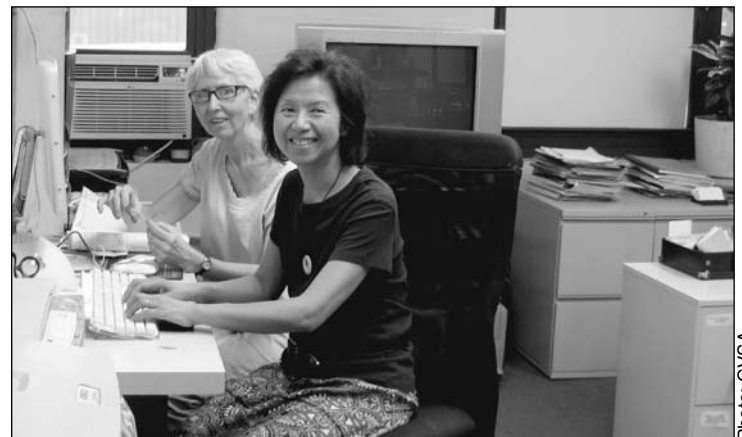


Photo: CVSA

Susan Louie (right) and Marjorie Pollice (left), CVSA volunteers working on this issue of *ITEMS* in the new CVSA office.

### Organizations featured in this issue:

CUMAC, Paterson, NJ  
GoodPlanet Foundation, Paris, France  
Maysles Cinema, New York, NY  
Paterson Alliance, Paterson, NJ  
Southern Mutual Help Association, New Iberia, LA  
We Care, New York, NY

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**ITEMS** is published quarterly by **Commission on Voluntary Service & Action (CVSA)**, the consultative and coordinating body of more than 200 non-government, voluntary service organizations based in North America that support or place volunteers with projects and programs serving people in the U.S. and internationally. **CVSA** seeks to interpret, extend, promote and support the world of voluntary service and involvement programs, and maintain and expand the ability and right of individuals to donate their time and services to persons, groupings and communities of people in need, free of government restraint.

**ITEMS** is **CVSA's** newsletter information service for organizational members represented in **INVEST YOURSELF — The Catalogue of Volunteer Opportunities**. **ITEMS** reports and provides analysis of news related to the voluntary service field on a national and international level, as well as political and economic developments relevant to the independent voluntary service sector.

Many volunteers and volunteer organizations learn the hard way: through their own experiences, using trial and error. We find that wasteful and contrary to the basic principle of organization: that an organization is stronger than an individual. Collective experience is therefore also more powerful than that of a single individual, or, for that matter, a single organization.

Your submissions to **ITEMS** of information, news, advice, photographs and graphics depicting your work or simply your comments and concerns are instrumental to the process of growth and advancement of voluntary service as a whole. We always look forward to receiving them.

Editor.....Susan Angus  
Production Staff.....Susan Louie, Evan Goldblatt  
Photography.....Brian Gately  
Sponsorship Staff.....Marjorie Pollice, Eden Zernisky  
Printer.....Wall Street Group, Inc.

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**CVSA** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable corporation with an all-volunteer staff; volunteers are always needed and tax-deductible contributions are welcome.

**Contact CVSA: 22-19 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue, 2nd Fl., Long Island City, New York 11101 (718) 729-CVSA or (718) 482-8724**

## CVSA Relocates

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just on the other side of the East River from Manhattan that is rapidly becoming an extension of Manhattan for many firms (such as CitiBank, MetLife and JetBlue) and cultural institutions (such as Museum of Modern Art and artists lofts) as well as home for numbers of nonprofit organizations, including two that are CVSA members: Hour Children and Fortune Society. The new office is accessible via several major subway and bus lines.

With twice the space CVSA had at Union Square, this increased office capacity will allow CVSA to expand the scope of its activities this fall, including weekly literature tables, speaking engagements and professor canvasses on college campuses in LIC and Manhattan for volunteer recruitment and *IY* distribution. In addition, CVSA has started weekly community outreach activities in LIC near libraries, churches and at public events, where potential volunteers can be found.

"We are taking advantage of the necessity to produce literature and publications with our new address and phone number as an opportunity to upgrade the quality of our literature," said Angus. "We will be producing new posters, brochures and flyers that both promote *IY* and reach out to new volunteers and additional organizations that would benefit from being listed in the *INVEST YOURSELF* catalogue. Your ideas about slogans and/or design input for this new literature are welcome.

"This fall, from our new office, we are launching a fall campus campaign to find students on college campuses in both Manhattan and Queens interested in volunteering. We are reaching out to churches and other organizations in Queens as well to expand our outreach through information tables, all geared to training more organizers and building up CVSA's resources to provide more assistance to membership organizations and bolster their ability to survive and stay true to their goals" said Angus.

Through weekly Membership Communications/Outreach Phone sessions, CVSA has begun to garner updates for *INVEST YOURSELF* listings, as well as referred contacts to additional organizations who may be interested in being listed in *IY*. The next issue of *INVEST YOURSELF* is due to be printed in the spring of 2012. "We gather our updates by doing twice-monthly consultations with CVSA member organizations. In contacting them, we also discuss how they can make benefit requests to CVSA for organizer assistance

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## EDITORIAL:

## The Time to Act is Now!

Right now, more people are living in poverty in the United States than in 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson launched the so-called “War on Poverty,” and an “austerity” program of government cuts in essential human services that will downsize, eliminate or privatize most social service programs is currently unfolding.

Over the last several years since the collapse of the U.S. economy, thousands of nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations throughout the country that are dedicated to serving people in need and carrying out community based programs to bring people together and improve their lives have been struggling to survive with diminished access to resources.

While more people are volunteering with organizations attempting to focus on problems of poverty, hunger, care for the elderly, poor education, unjust immigration laws, environmental conservation, alternative energy programs and more, these organizations often need additional methods for effectively involving volunteers from the community.

There is a tremendous wealth of leadership, experience and know-how demonstrated by people running so many of the organizations in *INVEST YOURSELF*. There are things

some groups know how to do really well, and other things in which they lack experience. Through CVSA we are developing the ways and means to share this experience and knowledge where it is needed and put it to work to advance our collective interest in a stronger movement of independent voluntary service and action, to develop a stronger voice both nationally and internationally.

### Resources Are Not in the Right Hands

For over six decades CVSA has been pointing out, in our call for independent voluntary service and action, that the root cause of the injustice and suffering that has been expanding in the U.S. is not a lack of resources available in this nation. For example, in the fourth quarter of 2010, corporate profits hit an all-time record high of \$1.68 trillion. In addition, major multi-national corporations are sitting on \$1.9 trillion in cash reserves, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The corporations and financial institutions of the very wealthy are not rehiring the eight million workers they “laid off” since 2008. They are only making loans to other financial institutions, not to small businesses or individuals. No government body is holding these institutions accountable to the working people they gouged and looted.

Millions of people have lost their homes in the last three years as waves of foreclosures continue, despite government promises to not abandon “Main Street” while they bailed out Wall Street. With the dearth of affordable housing and still soaring unemployment, homelessness is on the rise across the country in staggering numbers. Providing tents to the

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## Time to Act

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homeless has become an industry — hardly a just solution when millions of empty homes sit unused and guarded.

This year more towns and cities are declaring bankruptcy, lacking a sufficient tax base to cover their costs, as a result of high unemployment and the withdrawal of federal funds. New “emergency” laws and the already established practice of filing for bankruptcy allow union contracts to be broken by both private companies and state and municipal governments, further reducing the wages of those who still have jobs and causing this downward cycle to accelerate and compound itself. With growing poverty, there is an increase in many communicable diseases, historically and internationally known as diseases of poverty. At the same time, hundreds of hospitals and community clinics have been closed in cities across the country in the last year.

All of these problems and increased needs are walking in the doors of the volunteer service organizations listed in the *INVEST YOURSELF* catalogue and others like them throughout the country. They are increasingly without the resources needed, as many sources of funds have diminished or dried up, with individuals no longer able to afford to make donations and institutional funding sources giving less. Many *INVEST YOURSELF* organizations have told CVSA they have had to cut their staff and their programs, as a result of loss of grant money and individual donations from their historic support base.

Wealth has been enormously concentrated into fewer and fewer hands since the 2008 economic collapse. In 2010, for the first time in U.S. history, the total amount paid in salaries and wages to all the workers in the country adds up to less than half the total income in the country, falling to 49.6 percent in the first quarter of 2011! At the same time, corporate profits made up a record high 14 percent during that quarter. The previous peak for corporate profit as a percentage of total national income was in 1942 at 13.6 percent but that was attributable to a rise in war production contracts.

### There's Volunteering and There's Something Being Called Volunteering

In the 1980's former President Ronald Reagan moved the responsibility for programs that alleviate poverty for the poor and disadvantaged from the government onto the shoulders of individuals and private organizations by calling for a “new voluntarism” and telling churches that he could abolish welfare in the U.S. if every church took care of one welfare

family. Every subsequent U.S. presidential administration has established “volunteer” programs that actually co-opt and destroy the independent voluntary action movement, while government fails to meet the goals of those who need and those who want to see poverty eradicated. The AmeriCorps program, the federal government's domestic version of the Peace Corps, recently announced it will monitor more closely against any political activity on the part of AmeriCorps volunteers. These young people work for a year full-time in social service or environmental programs in poor areas at below minimum wage just to get some credit toward student loan debts, yet are barred from participation in demonstrations, speaking in public hearings or other arenas for input to government policy otherwise supposed to be open to all U.S. citizens. They are allowed to work for free to pay off a fraction of their student loan bills, but not allowed a voice in changing policy in need of change to solve the root causes of the problems.

CVSA's founders followed and promoted the premise that CVSA's program must highlight and aid volunteer organizations that exemplify public policy as it *should be* enacted, rather than blindly follow the promulgations of government policies as they are *currently* being enacted — lest the organizations be reduced to mere extensions of the same failed government policies from which the need for their volunteer assistance arose.

Organizations listed in *INVEST YOURSELF* and CVSA member organizations are looking for ways to grow, in the face of this situation, ways to meet the needs and challenges of their constituencies and communities and for real solutions to the growing problems. That is why we need you as volunteers with CVSA, so CVSA can reach more volunteer-driven organizations struggling to advance their goals and provide information and training in organizing methods and strategies that will strengthen their efforts. We also need your participation to expand the circulation of *INVEST YOURSELF* to promote volunteer service and involvement.

Please call CVSA today at 718-482-8724 about how you can join our efforts and become part of the solution. ☺

### CVSA Urgently Needs:

A scanner, MAC computers, a laptop, a desktop paper cutter and a wide screen TV.

If you can donate such equipment, new or used in good condition, please call us at (718) 482-8724.





## CVSA Relocates

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Photo: CVSA

CVSA volunteer Jalice Dejesus (right) at the Fall 2011 New School University Volunteer Fair talking with students about the opportunities for volunteers committed to social justice and serving those in need.

and education as well as working out ways to increase their participation in CVSA,” said Angus. “We have just formed a Membership Mutual Assistance Ways & Means Committee to formalize the process for benefit requests. The committee, in consultation with CVSA members, can also recommend new benefits and develop the ways and means for fulfilling CVSA member benefits and program expansion. We are now talking to our members and volunteers about the need for a volunteer to become the CVSA Membership Development Coordinator.”

By the end of this year, CVSA will resume monthly field visits to member organizations, and groups listed in *IY* outside the immediate New York Metropolitan area. These visits generally last three to five days, allowing CVSA to visit several organizations in the same geographic area.

This fall CVSA will launch a World Affairs Film Series to be held every second Sunday afternoon, starting in

## Thank You!

CVSA thanks **Julia Demaree**, Director of Emmaus House in Harlem, and **Kirk Barrell**, President of the Emmaus House Board, for their warm and welcoming hospitality to CVSA in providing temporary office space for CVSA in their building on West 120th Street for a year, while we searched for new headquarters that would give us the space we needed for our growing mission and operations.

CVSA also thanks **Doug Rochelle**, general manager of 7A Cafe in the East Village, long-time sponsor of CVSA's newsletter *ITEMS*, for helping us with the physical move by providing a truck to move furniture and equipment to our new office.

October. Each film will be accompanied by a speaker or group discussion. The first of these films will be shown at the new CVSA office to introduce volunteers and supporters to the location. As participation and attendance in these events increases, CVSA will develop the resources to relocate them to appropriate larger sites in subsequent months.

### Call Today!

For more information about how you can help build CVSA's program, call CVSA today! Participation is not limited to people residing in New York. We need *INVEST YOURSELF* Representatives throughout the country, as well as organizers here at home base to be able to respond to the needs and requests for assistance from membership organizations, to expand our publication production, and our Community Education and Speaking Campaign. On-the-job training is provided for everyone in all the arenas of CVSA practice. Call 718-482-8724 and let us know how you can help. ☺

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## CVSA Connects “HOME” to Volunteer Action

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Photo: CVSA

Yann Arthus-Bertrand (right), Director of the film *HOME*, leading Q & A session after a screening at the Village East Cinema in New York, giving the microphone to Susan Angus, CVSA Executive Director (left), to speak about volunteer opportunities and the need for action to impact change.

struggle for international cooperation to stop global warming, Arthus-Bertrand invited us to hold our *INVEST YOURSELF* information tables in the lobby of the theatre throughout the entire week *HOME* would be showing in order to connect people who came to see the film with relevant volunteer involvement here in the U.S.

### ***HOME* Delivers Hard-hitting ‘Wake-up Call’**

*HOME* is a film of extraordinary beauty, giving viewers a visually stunning look at life on earth, with aerial footage from 120 locations in 54 countries. The film takes you through the history of life on the planet and provides a visually powerful and factual understanding of the irreplaceable links and the necessary balance between water, oxygen and carbon to sustain life. It shows how the world’s predominant mode of production and development over the last 200 years, and particularly in the last 50 years, has broken those links.

The film presents a very clear picture of how these changes in the earth’s physical condition will destroy life and society, as we know it — potentially in a decade and certainly by 2050 — unless we do something now to reverse this man-made apocalypse. “*HOME* provides the basis for us to put out an urgent call to action,” said Angus. Some statistics from the film demonstrate that urgency:



Photo: CVSA

CVSA volunteers (left to right), Christine Jackman, Marjorie Pollice and Susan Louie staffing the *INVEST YOURSELF* table in the lobby of Village East Cinema, ready for the next crowd to emerge from a screening of *HOME*, talking to an early arrival for the next screening.

“40% of the earth’s arable land has suffered long-term damage.”

“75% of fishing grounds are depleted, diminished or in drastic decline.”

“The ice cap is 40% thinner than it was 40 years ago.”

“One out of ten rivers in the world no longer reach the ocean for several months of the year. The Colorado River is one of them.”

Produced by Luc Besson (Europacorp) and Denis Carot (Elzevir Films), the \$16 million production cost was funded by Francois-Henri Pinault and the PPR Group (the branding portfolio that handles Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and several other luxury brands) as a not-for-profit film project. Arthus-Bertrand is well known in Europe for his aerial photography, but this was his first motion picture.

*HOME* was produced in 2009 and seen by millions of people throughout Europe in 2010. Glenn Close, one of this country’s most renowned and respected actresses, volunteered her narration of the English-language version of the film; however, the film was not shown in the United States until February 2011 when it debuted in New York City. Arthus-Bertrand asks that the film be shown without charge; it has no copyright. “American movie theaters didn’t want to show it because the movie was free,” Bertrand explained. The owner of the Village East Cinema screened the film four times a day, for a week, at cost, with the filmmaker paying the \$10,000 rental fee for the use of the theater himself. All but the early matinees were presented to a full or close-to-full house every day.



Photo: CVSA

Eva Ferrero and Benjamin Grimont, staff of GoodPlanet Foundation based in Paris, France, answering questions from the audience at a screening of *HOME* at Village East Cinema in February 2011.

## Village East Screenings Just the Beginning

Since the Village East screenings, CVSA has distributed copies of the *HOME* DVD to a dozen CVSA member organizations in the U.S. that are now conducting their own screenings with their volunteers, staff and community members. The DVDs were given to CVSA by the producer in order to put them into the hands of organizations that are directly involved in work to reverse the growth of hunger, poverty and environmental degradation and that have the ability to show the film to a broad audience of people who could be further motivated to act.

Organizations now planning screenings with discussions afterwards in their community this fall include the Maryknoll Global Concerns office in New York, which has NGO status with the United Nations and has long been involved in advocacy for true sustainable development; Eagle Eye Institute in Somerville, Massachusetts, which involves



Photo: CVSA

Benjamin Grimont and Eva Ferrero of GoodPlanet Foundation with Susan Angus, CVSA Executive Director in between screenings at Village East Cinema in New York City.

youth in urban environmental education and conservation; Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Washington, D.C., which has placed full-time volunteers with community-based organizations all across the country; El Porvenir in Denver, Colorado, which sponsors sustainable self-help water and sanitation projects in Nicaragua; and Amizade Global Service in Morgantown, West Virginia, which organizes service learning programs in poor communities in developing countries around the world, as well as within the U.S.

Annie Kelly, the volunteer recruitment coordinator for Good Shepherd Volunteers, who administrates support for Good Shepherd's full-time volunteers during their one to two years of service, came to the Columbia University screening in February at CVSA's invitation. "This is a big wake-up call about how much trauma we've done to the earth in just 50 years," she exclaimed. Kelly then showed the film to the Good Shepherd staff and ten full-time volunteers currently working in the area and plans to make it part of the ongoing orientation and education for Good Shepherd's new volunteers.

Over 400 million people have watched *HOME*, mostly throughout Europe, but also in places like Bangladesh and the New York headquarters of the United Nations. Bertrand is most interested in it being viewed by people in the rich, developed countries, because, while the destruction of the environment has been most severe in the world's poorest communities and nations, the policies that cause it have primarily emanated from the wealthiest, advanced industrial nations (led by the United States) in support of multi-national corporations.

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## CVSA Welcomes New Member, CUMAC Paterson Alliance Unites Nonprofits

*Editor's Note: Due to the severe flooding caused by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, Center of United Methodist Aid to the Community (CUMAC) is now, as we go to press, running a large scale disaster relief program to aid over 5,000 people in Paterson who are displaced and have lost everything. Thousands more in the surrounding areas are also displaced and many of the area's food pantries and other agencies who standardly offer help have lost all their supplies and are turning to CUMAC for help. CUMAC's office and warehouse are fortunately on higher and dryer ground, and staff are now collecting and distributing food and clothing; they particularly need donations of undergarments and socks. The Paterson area was already 50% living in poverty; now the severe floods are a catastrophic blow to tens of thousands of people. How much aid will actually come from official government agencies is still to be seen. Many of CUMAC's regular volunteers from outlying towns cannot get to the CUMAC office because of flooding and roads cut off in their own towns. Anyone who can come to Paterson for a day (or longer, if you can arrange for a place to stay) to volunteer and bring supplies can be of great assistance. Contact Stephanie Ames at CUMAC for more information and other ways you can help.*

Commission on Voluntary Service & Action (CVSA) Executive Director Susan Angus conducted a new member site visit in Paterson, New Jersey to gain a more in-depth understanding of the history, present-day programs and needs of Center of United Methodist Aid to the Community (CUMAC), and came away learning also of its role in a groundbreaking consortium of nonprofit organizations called Paterson

Alliance that seeks to magnify what they can accomplish for Paterson's economically depressed community through collaborative effort.

Angus met with Stephanie Ames, Volunteer Coordinator, this February, and introduced CVSA's mutual assistance process among CVSA member organizations that augments each group's endeavors while strengthening the independent volunteer service and action movement as a whole. CUMAC listed its volunteer opportunities for the first time in the 2010-2011 edition of *INVEST YOURSELF (IY)* upon CVSA being referred to them by a United Methodist parishioner and CVSA supporter from the New Jersey area.

Following the meeting with Ms. Ames, Angus was also introduced to Reverend Pat Kruger, who has been Executive Director of CUMAC for over 20 years, spoke of Paterson's growing poverty and concerns of government abandonment of the poor. "The Feds want to cut WIC and Head Start, and probably will," Kruger told CVSA. "The government is cutting everything for low-income people and nonprofit programs. As a nonprofit that serves a large community in need, I have to look at how to be sustainable. I want CUMAC to be here in 40 years – and I know I won't be. So we have to build it so it lasts, for as long as people need it."

Towards that end, Kruger has been working tirelessly to create many sources of support and allies, obtain financing to secure ownership of the building facilities, and training leadership to follow her. CUMAC now devotes as much time as possible to organizing around policy issues and impending cutbacks on the poor, in addition to providing direct services of food, clothing and individual advocacy.

"CVSA extends help to member organizations in how to more effectively utilize volunteers to enhance their missions," explained Angus. "This may include staff training, teaching best practices for volunteer recruitment, advising on outreach

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**Broken Promises follow BP Gusher:**

## **Gulf Coast Residents Fight for Survival and Revival**

by Evan Goldblatt

The people of the Gulf Coast of the United States have experienced multiple environmental disasters in recent years, resulting in a continued, and further deteriorating, economic depression. Commercial fishing is a substantial industry in the region. The damage to the aquatic environment from the BP spill of April 20, 2010, along with the five hurricanes that have hit the coast since 2005, and flooding from the Mississippi River this spring, has severely affected the industry. Southern Mutual Help Association (SMHA), based in New Iberia, Louisiana, a long-time member of CVSA, and listed in *INVEST YOURSELF*, reports that economic losses to the region are upwards of \$2.8 billion. SMHA, which has been organizing in and serving the area for over 42 years, says prior to the Gulf disaster, the commercial fishing industry employed over 31,400 individuals and contributed \$107 million in yearly state sales and income tax. Commercial fishing is more than just an occupation to those in the region; it is a lifestyle that retains its deep cultural heritage.

### **Effects of the Spill on the Gulf Maritime Market**

Helen Vinton, who serves as the Assistant Executive Director of the Southern Mutual Help Association, recently told CVSA that income has ceased for many of these fishermen. Further, the prospect of future earnings appears bleak. The impact of the petroleum-based pollution to the coastal breeding grounds, which serve as the source of these fishermen's livelihoods, has been significant. Along with the highly publicized man-made and natural disasters that have affected

the region, fishermen have long been struggling with the rapid increase of imported, farm-raised shrimp and crawfish. This influx of industrially produced shrimp further threatens the dwindling sources of income for these small independent fishermen on the Gulf Coast.

Fishing and shrimping industry practices aside, the spill has obliterated the Gulf's maritime market. Though BP has admitted culpability and assumed financial responsibility for the Deep Water Horizon disaster, the company has exhibited a lackluster effort in compensating those affected. According to Vinton, many of the people who have filed claims with BP have found it extremely difficult to collect reparations. The partial payments made by BP have done little to make up for what the company's negligence has cost the local fishermen. Vinton assesses that it could take as long as five years for the Gulf market to rebound.

### **BP and Federal Government Spin on Recovery**

According to the Institute for Southern Studies, Kenneth Feinberg, the federal government appointee now in charge of distributing compensation via the Gulf Coast Claim Facility (and previously in charge of handing out compensation for 9/11 victims), has predicted that the effects of the spill will be remedied by 2012. The most the fund will distribute to individual claimants will be two times their approximate losses from 2010. Vinton expressed her belief that two years of losses simply do not provide enough compensation. Further, as experienced with the Exxon Valdez disaster, many of the health effects people are beginning to suffer may not fully materialize until years later. This makes the two-year timeline insufficient for providing relief and compensation to those affected. According to a report from the Alliance for Justice, an independent nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., this inadequacy is compounded, as those

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## CUMAC, Paterson Alliance

*Continued from page 8*

efforts to increase volunteer pools and by publicizing their programs in *ITEMS*, CVSA's newsletter, in addition to *INVEST YOURSELF*, CVSA's catalogue of volunteer opportunities."

Founded as CUMAC/ECHO (Center of United Methodist Aid to the Community/Ecumenically Concerned Helping Others) in the late 1970s, CUMAC got its start when a Paterson schoolteacher named Hugh Dunlop recruited his church congregation to collect food for his obviously ailing, hungry students. Realizing that there was a greater need in the city of Paterson, Dunlop established a small pantry to provide emergency food to the local community. CUMAC, which began in a borrowed church closet, now owns a 28,000 square foot facility in downtown Paterson; it has grown from a single-purpose, volunteer-run group into a multi-service agency with a staff of 21 (of which 6 are full-time) and hundreds of volunteers donating thousands of hours of work annually.

### **Industrial Cities Turned Wastelands, With High Concentrations of Poverty**

Currently New Jersey's third largest city, Paterson was once an industrial hub. The powerful waterfalls on the Passaic River that runs through Paterson enabled the city to become one of the first industrial centers in the United States. Boats, locomotives, submarines, firearms and almost 50% of the nation's silk were all once produced in Paterson. Now, rather than factories, they have factory outlets. There is the Cheesecake Factory, a restaurant; and a 150 year-old machine and iron cable factory that now makes fiber optics. Its well-paid workforce mostly commutes from suburbs far outside the city. Today, as in most formerly industrial cities of the U.S., Paterson has high unemployment, growing hunger, and most job openings are for low-paying service work.

In the last two years, CUMAC has had a 60% increase in requests for emergency food and other forms of assistance. The official unemployment rate in Paterson is over 10.2% (without counting those employed at part-time jobs or who have stopped looking for work). In 2009 a survey by the AJ Casey Foundation found that 61% of families in Paterson spend more than 30% of their income on rent and 25.7% of the children in Paterson (31,953 children) live below the federal poverty level. Passaic County is the second poorest county in New Jersey, second only to Somerset County, where 43% of children live below the federal poverty line.

Paterson is home to the country's third largest Dominican community, has a large Arab Muslim population as well as

many other races and ethnic backgrounds. CUMAC has worked for years at breaking down historic barriers between each cultural grouping so residents can work together to deal with problems they have in common.

### **Alliance Builds Mutual Respect Among Agencies**

Ames graduated two years ago from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts with a degree in international development and history and began working with CUMAC soon after. During her college years, Ames explained, she saw nonprofits in Worcester fighting with each other, competing for resources. When she came to CUMAC, she learned that CUMAC's Executive Director, the Reverend Pat Kruger, was participating in something called the Paterson Alliance, a loose grouping of nonprofits in Paterson. Ames saw the Paterson Alliance as a positive approach to these problems, augmenting what CUMAC is able to do on its own.

The Paterson Alliance was founded in 1985 by five Paterson nonprofit agencies that wanted a greater voice in setting the agenda for policy and development in Paterson. In 2003 the Alliance incorporated and became a 501(c)(3) of its own and now has grown to 80 organizational members. These nonprofits meet monthly in the public library. The Alliance has obtained foundation funding to support an Executive Director who coordinates the continuity, resource development and communication among the member organizations, whose focus is on sharing information and building ways to collaborate, not compete.

Kruger participates as much as possible in the Alliance's monthly meetings and CUMAC has gained from the teamwork in very tangible ways.



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For example, when CUMAC received funding for needed renovation of their warehouse space, the grant did not cover the cost of prerequisite demolition work. Through the networking and relationships they had established through the Alliance, CUMAC was able to work with Habitat for Humanity, that had volunteer crews available, and St. Paul's Community Development Corporation (CDC)'s youth training program, that was in need of a construction project. Through this group effort, CUMAC completed the demolition and was able to use their renovation grant and stay within budget.

Kruger and Ames introduced Angus to Leah Dade, the new Executive Director of the Paterson Alliance, so that CVSA could share the benefit of the Alliance's experience with other CVSA member organizations. CVSA Executive Director Susan Angus talked with Dade about the challenges in Paterson that the Alliance is addressing at this time.


"The need for organizations to collaborate, to come together in an alliance format is particularly important in these very hard economic times," Dade said. "For instance, there are many families in Paterson under threat of foreclosure on their homes right now. We contacted everyone in the Alliance who deals with homeownership and also got people from some of the banks, people in real estate, and in legal services. We are organizing free workshops for people in risk of or in the process of being foreclosed. Everyone in the Alliance is publicizing this to his or her constituencies.

"The number one benefit that all the members say they gain from the Alliance is the networking and the ability to know first hand what else is going on in the nonprofit community, what other nonprofits are experiencing organizationally and

the needs of their constituencies so they can each determine who to partner with around specific things coming up," Dade continued.

"People who run these nonprofits are focused on their day-to-day work, putting out fires; they don't have time to step back and look at it from a broad perspective, an aerial view, and think about who are all the players and what else we could be doing or to ask ourselves how more effective we could be if we were working together with other groups on this or that matter. So having an organization where our focus is not to compete, and not to do direct service, but to create the organizational infrastructure that provides the environment that allows an Executive Director to come to a meeting, talk about how else she or he can make her program more effective by reaching out across the table and working with some other organizations that may be providing services to the same population of people — it is like taking a retreat once a month with people who are also addressing needs and problems in Paterson," Dade said. "Our goal is to become the independent voice of nonprofits in Paterson and be able to improve the quality of life for people in Paterson through our collaboration of efforts."

Ames said she loves *INVEST YOURSELF*, CVSA's catalogue of volunteer opportunities. She hopes one day to make a full-time volunteer commitment in a developing country with one of the organizations listed in IY, but right now she has plenty to do about the hunger and poverty in Paterson.

For more information about CUMAC, call Stephanie Ames at (973) 742-5518. Additional information about the Paterson Alliance is available by contacting Leah Dade at (973) 519-3655 or [www.patersonalliance.org](http://www.patersonalliance.org). 



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## Gulf Residents Fight for Survival

*Continued from page 9*

who accept payment from the Claim Fund must sign a waiver barring them from claiming future damages.

Further exemplifying the bureaucratic and political nature of payment distributions, U.S. District Judge Carl Barbier has ruled that Feinberg shall be considered an agent of BP. As we all know, BP is a business enterprise, and many, including Mobile Baykeeper Executive Director Casi Callaway, fear that BP will treat compensation as a business expense, hoping to minimize its costs as much as possible. In an interview with a local television station, Callaway stated, "What Feinberg would like to do and BP would like to do is wrap everything in a nice little bow and call it finished, and put a timeline on it, and we never have to look at the Gulf again."

### Media Downplays Impact of Spill on Health

Detriments to both health and economics have become intertwined. In highly publicized television advertisements, broadcast as the spill continued to leak into the Gulf, BP indicated that they would hire out-of-work fishermen impacted by the spill to help keep the oil from reaching the marshes and shores. According to Vinton, in reality, the people hired were from outside of the region, and local commercial fishermen were kept from assisting in the effort. Vinton noted that this was detrimental for two reasons. First, the locals have an expert knowledge of the terrain, they know the tides, and which areas of the coast were of the highest priority. Vinton says the local people could have kept the oil from reaching the marshes, if they had been allowed to assist in the clean-up effort. Instead, they all had to watch helplessly as the oil reached their shores. Second, these fishermen are still out of work, and desperately need the jobs. The locals are unable to fish, and they were prevented from earning a living by helping to restore their main source of income.

As mentioned above, members of the community who assisted with the clean-up effort (whether sanctioned by BP or not), coastal fishermen, and locals who live and work on the coast have begun to experience significant health effects. These ailments may only foreshadow increasingly significant concerns in the future. According to the Alliance for Justice report, in one instance, a 3-year-old who visited the Gulf Coast region was found to have blood levels containing three times the normal amount of the toxin ethyl-benzene. The

report also indicated that this result was typical for blood samples of people living and working in the region. Unfortunately, due to the rural nature of the region, few doctors in the area have experience with these health problems. Nor do they have the means to treat those affected. Vinton reported upon several examples of these health effects, including a fisherman whose shoulder suddenly became paralyzed. No doctor in the area could diagnose or treat it. Vinton stated, "There have to be doctors somewhere in the world who know about this and what to do, but they are not here in Louisiana."

### Rushing Back to Drilling Under the Guise of Job Creation

Further compounding issues, Congress has passed HR 1229, which they called the "Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act." Although this bill offers more employment in the region, it rushes drilling permit applications through the Department of the Interior. If the permit is not reviewed within a 60-day period, the permit application is automatically approved, whether or not a thorough review of potential environmental impacts has been made.

Furthermore, the late spring flooding of the Mississippi River forced the government to open up spillways that inundated these rural areas that are already under strain. There are limited options for homeowners to protect their land, and many farmers in the area had their crops ruined by these floodwaters.

### Volunteer-based Organizations Take the Lead

SMHA and similar organizations are attempting to create positive outcomes in the region despite difficult conditions on the ground. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, SMHA's Rural Recovery Response program mobilized over 4,500 volunteers, hailing from a total of 44 states and 11 countries. They have made a difference for over 1,000 homeowners, fishers, farmers, small businesses and churches, assisting with the recovery and rebuilding the region. SMHA also needs full-time volunteers year-round for many aspects of its community and economic development programs. They know what to do and have developed the right processes for doing it, they just need more resources and more people involved.

Southern Mutual Help Association was founded in the summer of 1969 in order to take collective action against the oppressive conditions experienced by over 100,000 people living and working on the Louisiana cane plantations. Responding to their experiences, SMHA workers found that the War on Poverty policies and programs (based on the 1964 Economic

*Continued on page 17*





# Small Church-based and Low-income Credit Unions Gain Strength Through Cooperation

On May 14th, Commission on Voluntary Service and Action (CVSA) Executive Director Susan Angus gave a presentation about community outreach methods and strategies to members of We Care, an organization of New York City low-income and church-based credit unions that was formed one year ago in the summer of 2010 by Joy Cousminer, founder and CEO of Bethex Federal Credit Union in the Bronx. The group was created to strengthen the member credit unions through mutual assistance and collective action and to halt the trend by federal regulators of merging or liquidating small credit unions.

Cousminer, whose credit union is a member of CVSA, put community outreach and membership expansion on the agenda and invited CVSA to make this presentation to address the fact that many credit unions have not engaged in community organizing or outreach since their founding days. The need to revitalize community awareness, support and involvement in the credit union movement is critically important in the face of the pressure currently being exerted

by federal regulatory agencies which liquidated 19 credit unions throughout the U.S. in 2010 as well as closing 11 credit unions so far this year, with the latest one being Borinquen, a credit union in North Philadelphia that served the low-income Hispanic community since 1974. (See *ITEMS* Fall 2010 and Winter 2010 issues for background.)

Angus talked with the We Care group about how to effectively use tabling at street fairs, in front of supermarkets and wherever there is street traffic. She explained how to actively engage people at the tables rather than just waiting for people to come up to them. They also discussed the importance of visiting area college campuses to give talks and hold information tables and get more young people involved, not only as members of the credit union, but as volunteers to help run them. One member in the audience pointed out that students are looking for hope in these difficult times, they want to get involved in organizations that do good in the community and agreed this was important while expressing the difficulties of making the time to do so.

When CVSA advised that each credit union would do well to call all their members on the phone about the need for volunteers to help with this outreach, a member raised the concern that these calls might make it appear that the credit union is having difficulties and would worry people. Angus explained how this was a common fear — but quite the opposite is true. “People already know everyone is having difficulties and that government policies are making it harder and harder for low-income people anywhere to survive. We all know our communities are devastated economically. They need to hear what you are doing about it and, more often than

*Continued on next page*



Photo: Brian Gately

Joy Cousminer, (left) founder of We Care and CEO of Bethex Federal Credit Union, introduces Susan Angus, CVSA Executive Director at the May 14 meeting at St. Phillips Episcopal Church in Harlem.



Photo: Brian Gately

Marie Nickens, CEO of Queens Cluster Credit Union, (left) and Tom Wenner (right) of St. Phillips Credit Union who hosted the May 14 We Care monthly meeting at St. Phillips Episcopal Church in Harlem.



Photo: Brian Gately



## Credit Union Strength

*Continued from page 15*

not, are glad to hear there is something they can do to help.” Angus explained that this doesn’t mean everyone you call is going to volunteer, but if you call everyone — you will get the volunteers you need.

Many of the We Care member credit unions operate with a small staff. Some are run by part-timers, often with a completely volunteer staff. For example, Marie Nickens, CEO of Queens Cluster Credit Union, spoke about how she and her board have overcome numerous obstacles to keep the credit union growing. She meets with credit union members at their home or church on her own volunteer time, after her pay-job hours, to fill out loan applications with them. Chartered 35 years ago, Queens Cluster started with twelve American Baptist Church congregations throughout Queens and is now down to nine, because of church closures. The credit union is a lifeline for its members so they are changing their charter to include churches of other denominations in Queens in order to survive and expand. She does not have the time to also do additional outreach activities and would welcome concerned volunteers through We Care to help out.

Mr. George Daniels, of St. Mark’s Credit Union which was founded 100 years ago, spoke about how, when they started, it was the only church in the Harlem community with a credit union. They later helped start credit unions in several other churches. His credit union just changed their charter to allow it to include members from another local church. “The churches are small, about 200 or 300 members. Consolidating credit unions of churches or adding another church to your credit union, rather than each church starting a credit union is a way to make your credit union stronger and spread the credit union movement to places where there are none now,” he explained.


Cousminer, a 40-year veteran leader in the community development credit union movement, endorsed CVSA’s suggestion of carrying out a speaking engagement campaign as a project of We Care on behalf of the member credit unions and encouraged everyone to participate and to recruit more students and young people.

Cousminer, who recently joined CVSA’s Advisory Board, later discussed with Angus what she sees as a philosophical shift coming from the federal government and some credit union trade associations that downplays the cooperativism of the original credit union movement, replacing it by constantly harping on the need to “grow their bottom line.”

Cousminer explained that apparently it is no longer good enough, from the government examiners’ perspective, for a credit union to have a stable loans-outstanding rate, low default rate and substantial savings deposits. These factors are not given as much weight by the examiners if the credit union does not also have a “significant growth rate” of additional capital being generated from investments and other allowed sources of capitalization. This has been the basis of many of the “liquidation” decisions. The regulatory agency also keeps increasing the amount of money they require credit unions to put into their allowance for loan losses fund, which is taken from their income, which further negatively affects their “net worth” calculation.

“The original philosophy of credit unions was that they are nonprofit financial cooperatives, making credit available to working people who otherwise have no access to it. They need to be stable, provide small loans when needed and give basic financial services for low-income people who will not be served well or at all by for-profit banks and will otherwise end up exploited by loan sharks, pay-day loan schemes and the like,” Cousminer explained.

Cousminer would like to start a credit union school that offers a course to community credit union leaders — new young ones as well as the older seasoned ones — on the history of the movement, its original philosophy and principles and how to maintain that in this day and age. She feels it is especially important now to educate young people about credit unions and get them involved as leadership, grounded in an appreciation for their original purpose as a way to fight the current government trend leading to eliminating independent alternates to the for-profit banks.

For more information about We Care and how you can volunteer to strengthen the credit union movement, call Joy Cousminer at Bethex Federal Credit Union at 718-299-9100, or CVSA at 718-482-8724. 



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## Maysles Cinema in Harlem Creates Community Forum

The Maysles Cinema, a nonprofit cinema run largely with volunteers and interns coordinated by a small staff, is one of the more recent CVSA members. Located on Lenox Avenue and 128th Street in Harlem near CVSA's previous office, the cinema opened in 2008 as a program of the Maysles Institute, founded in 2005 by the famous film producer Albert Maysles.

Maysles Cinema exclusively programs the screenings of documentary films, generally independently curated films, and provides a forum for the discussion of the films' subjects, which usually relate to questions of social, racial and economic justice. Its film series have included Documentary Masterworks, Music on Film, American Prisons, Family Portraits, Globalization/Gentrification and Congo in Harlem. Other series have focused on the politics of reconstruction in Haiti, southern hip hop culture and music, sports documentaries and female documentarians.

The programming often includes discussions with those involved in the production, or with organizations involved in the subject matter of the films being screened. Tickets to most screenings are sold on a suggested donation basis, so no one is excluded for lack of funds and screenings are scheduled at least four nights a week.


CVSA volunteers first met Philip Maysles on outreach in Harlem to meet the businesses and organizations in the area. Albert Maysles' son Philip, who is a fine artist, is also one of the co-directors of the Cinema, along with Jessica Green, who does the cinema programming. Philip developed the initial programming and started the youth program, which now offers year-round educational opportunities for young people from Harlem, northern Manhattan and the South Bronx. He explained that the cinema has developed a process for seeking out and encouraging the participation of local social and cultural organizations and citizen-activists in the programming, as a way to utilize the screenings for generating community involvement, thus building a venue

*Continued on next page*

## Gulf Residents Fight for Survival

*Continued from page 14*

Opportunity Act) did not change people's lives — the policies were based on service, not on real change. SMHA founders recall their years working for OEO programs, "When we began to make changes, to involve people in real decision making, we were fired. Across the South, programs were taken over and became tools for the creation of a service system, not for making substantive change," Vinton said.

The region desperately needs your help. Fortunately, there are ways you can take action because of the existence of non-government, community-based organizations like Southern Mutual Help Association. For more information about volunteering in Southern Louisiana, contact SMHA at (337) 367-3277, or [www.southernmutualhelp.org](http://www.southernmutualhelp.org). SMHA is interested in serious volunteers who can commit for extended periods; knowing that an extended commitment is necessary to make a real difference in this blighted region. 



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## Cinema Creates Community Forum

*Continued from page 17*

for exposure to film about under-represented social issues as well as for the overlooked artists and their work.

“Our goal from the beginning has been to cultivate a non-traditional audience for documentary film,” Philip stated. “Rather than just trying to appeal to the film-going audience from all over the city...we’ve been targeting local audiences in Harlem and other communities that may not be interested in film as art in general, but may be more interested in a certain cultural phenomenon or a certain political situation.” He explained that the point was to work with residents of the Harlem neighborhood, documentary filmmakers and activists, as well as community-based organizations in general who are engaged in social, political and cultural change and allow for things to be created and emerge from the mix.

Albert’s daughter Rebekah Maysles runs the volunteer program. She was already seeking ways to more effectively involve additional volunteers in the work of running the cinema this past spring when contacted by CVSA. At the Maysles’ request CVSA held a work session and discussed processes and tools for recruiting, training and positioning volunteers in defined roles, and the principles of building a staff to allow for significant participation of volunteers in the operating of the programs and the organization.

Maysles Cinema is housed in the storefront and basement of a four-story brick building and features a 60-seat cinema, along with a spill over room with a second screen. They also run an education program for teenagers and adults that involves teaching storytelling and training in camera skills, lighting techniques and post-production work. This August, the participants in the Maysles Institute summer teen filmmaking class screened films that they produced which ranged in topic from immigration, racial identity, gender and graffiti to the fight for community gardening and bullying.

The resources to start the Cinema, including purchase of the building, came from the Maysles family, who live in Harlem. The Cinema has also won various grants and awards to allow the expansion of programming. Anthony Riddle is now the managing director. Albert Maysles, who founded the Maysles Institute, along with his late brother David Maysles, was one of the early creators of “direct cinema” through which one captures life as it unfolds before their camera — without scripts, sets or narration. Albert Maysles is best known for his films “Gimme Shelter” (1970), “Grey Gardens” (1976) and “Running Fence” (1977).

Cinema volunteers and interns help at the box office, work with programming and archiving, organize the community outreach tactics and activities, design outreach materials and a weekly newsletter and write press releases and press listings. They use good old-fashioned door-to-door marketing with printed flyers and calendars, essential for a neighborhood institution like Maysles that strives to connect international audiences with film buffs, activists and people from around the corner. The outreach and programming influence each other, as the line between curator, artist and audience member is constantly melded and rearranged through this process.

The staff of Maysles Cinema will be glad to talk with anyone interested in developing a similar program in their own community to share their experiences about its success and difficulties. Call Anthony, Rebekah, Philip or Jessica at (212) 582-6050.



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## CVSA Connects “HOME” to Volunteer Action

*Continued from page 7*

Yann Arthus-Bertrand did not start out as an environmentalist. He is a famous and successful photographer. It was because of what he began to see, over and over, as he traveled the world doing his aerial photography — the destruction, the literal wounds in the earth, and the human suffering caused by improper and excessive exploitation of the earth's resources — that he decided to find out what “sustainable development” meant, what was causing climate change and why there is so much poverty in the face of so much wealth. He researched, studied, correlated it to what he saw — and became convinced. He knew he then had to convey what he saw and learned to the rest of the world. He now

describes himself as an activist seeking to change the world, and has produced *HOME* so that others can see why, and follow in his footsteps.

The GoodPlanet Foundation, based in Paris, helps companies to develop eco-friendly initiatives, compensate for carbon emissions and curb greenhouse gases, and promotes education about the environment and climate change in the public school systems in Europe. Their website has a great deal of information about global warming and projects to offset it, as well as about the film *HOME*.

As Arthus-Bertrand explained to his audiences: “Everybody knows what we are saying in this film is true, but nobody really wants to believe it. We are at a crossroads; we have to adopt important decisions if we want to change the world.”

A frequently asked question from the New York audiences was whether the film has been shown to children in schools. Bertrand was quick to answer, “Certainly it can be shown to the children, but if we wait until the children grow up to solve this problem — it will be too late! How can we ask them to do what we, the adults, have refused to do?” He further explained that it is we, here today, that have the responsibility to tackle and reverse this still accelerating problem: “Our way of life is not sustainable, and certainly not sustainable for the whole world if everyone in the world did what we in the rich countries have been doing.”

After the first two of the seven days of screenings at Village East Cinema, Arthus-Bertrand invited CVSA

*Continued on next page*

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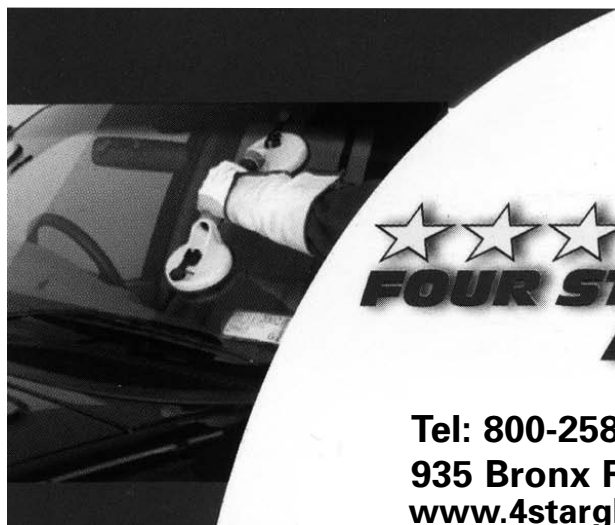
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## CVSA Connects “HOME” to Volunteer Action

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Executive Director Susan Angus to join him in leading question and answer sessions with the audiences. He often told audiences, when someone asked what they could do to change what is going on, “I am the artist and am communicating with this film what the problem is: you have to decide on what the solutions are and what you will do.” He would then introduce Angus, handing over the microphone, to talk about the many volunteer opportunities with community-based non-government organizations to work for alternative energy and economic policies. Midway through the week, when he had to return to France, Arthus-Bertrand deputized CVSA to continue with the Q & A’s after each screening, along with two of his staff members who answered questions about the film production, so that CVSA could continue to link people who wanted to take action with organizations that need them.

### Defining Sustainable Development

*HOME* is about climate change — but it is about more than the climate; it is about the consequences of having allowed control of the earth’s resources and wealth to be concentrated into the hands of a tiny portion of the world’s population, who profit greatly from its exploitation, while the majority of people in the world are denied adequate access to the necessary water, food and viable land to support life. When cared for properly, the earth provides an adequate amount of resources via its natural processes, for all who live on it.

But instead, because of an insatiable, uncontrolled quest for consumption of resources by those with the capital to do so, as stated in the film:

“20% of the world’s population consumes 80% of its resources.”

“In the past 50 years, the gap between rich and poor has grown wider than ever.”

“Half the world’s wealth is in the hands of the richest 2% of the population.”

“80% of the world’s mineral wealth is consumed by 20% of the world population.”

The film shows how this unsustainable exploitation of resources is occurring faster than ever before, and the pace is accelerating. The ice sheet that covers Greenland contains 20% of the world’s fresh water. It is melting into the ocean (salt water) faster than even the most pessimistic scientists predicted ten years ago, just as the glaciers of the Himalayas, the source of drinking water for hundreds of millions of people, are melting and disappearing faster than all previous predictions.


This global warming is caused by the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that have been emitted into the atmosphere, largely through the overuse of fossil fuels, compounded by massive deforestation, over-mining of the earth, pollution of our rivers and abuse of arable land. More carbon is emitted into the atmosphere than the natural processes of the oceans and forests can absorb; it then fills the atmosphere and traps heat that otherwise would dissipate into space. The temperature of the earth’s atmosphere is rising faster than even conservative scientists predicted.

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## Change In Individual Lifestyle Is Not Enough

Although “going green” is popular and the understanding of the need for conservation more accepted, the problem is that the message from mass media — and even from much “alternative” media — has largely been reduced to the scope of individual actions: recycling, buying from the local farmers market, eating organic or driving a fuel-efficient car. While these are objectively beneficial actions (for those who can afford these options), simply “doing my part” by recycling, not eating as much meat or using less electricity are not effective ways to solve this systemic problem; it will not stop the global warming now occurring at an accelerated pace. We must demand government accountability to stop voracious, rapacious national and multi-national industries from doing what is currently reaping them enormous (short-term) profits, at the expense of the earth’s environment.

In 2010, the world watched in horror when the Deep Water Horizon oil rig blew up in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 people and pouring 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf, destroying the sea life and livelihoods of thousands of fishermen. Halliburton, which manufactured the defective equipment at the wellhead, was barely mentioned in the news stories. Halliburton has received not only billions of dollars in government contracts for the war in Iraq, but also billions more for post-Hurricane Katrina contracts. With oil gushing into the Gulf week after week, the U.S. government surrendered control of the emergency operations to British Petroleum and Halliburton which are still in control a year later. These companies made billions in profits in 2010. They built the well using illegal, shoddy construction practices to

increase their profits, and they patrolled the disaster zone during the spill with their private security boats to keep reporters and researchers out. Their executives were called before Congress, but none of them have been charged with a crime, and no action has taken place to prevent such “mishaps” in the future.

What has even more impact on the world’s oceans is the massive amount of industrial fishing. Three fourths of fishing areas in the world are depleted, terminated or face risk of becoming so — not from oil spills — but from the impact of the huge trawlers sailing from Europe, Japan and the United States to plunder the seas of poorer nations. With massive amounts of capital being poured into this industry, these ships have fished out the waters off the coast of Somalia, for example, where the fishermen, desperate for another means of survival, have turned to piracy.

*HOME* shows, through its stunning photography and straightforward narration, the impact of a system based on exploitation, not just from an accumulation of individual destructive acts, but a system that uses resources without any plan for replenishing them.

The message of *HOME* is that we must act now: “It is too late to be a pessimist,” the narrator tells us toward the end of the film; the only question is how you will get involved and take action.

We at CVSA also say: It is too late to simply continue hoping things will get better. The scientific solutions exist, the resources are there, but we must organize and work together to

*Continued on next page*



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## CVSA Connects “HOME” to Volunteer Action


*Continued from page 21*

take responsibility for how these resources are used. Systemic change requires collective action, analysis, planning, strategy and organization.

### Being a Responsible Actor in Shaping History

CVSA has long talked about volunteering being an act of rejection of the notion that the problems are too big to solve; it is about being a responsible actor in shaping history. Leaders of many developing nations see this as not only a matter of environmental and energy policy, but a matter of evaluating the entire predominant economic system and the definition of sustainable development. “The world’s current economic growth model — characterized by extreme production and consumption, slashed forests and polluted air and water supplies — was operating at nature’s expense and, while it was not too late to change course and improve our relationship with Mother Earth, time is running short,” said UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiros to the General Assembly on April 20, 2011 in a debate on ‘Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development.’ Acting General Assembly President Charles Thembani Ntwaagae (Botswana) agreed and spoke of how the benefits of economic progress came at great cost of irreversible degradation of the natural resource base, and said “We too have been depleted. Consumerism is consuming those in the developed world, while many in the developing world could not even consume enough to meet their basic needs.”

The United States has only 5% of the world’s population, but uses about a quarter of the world’s resources, and so we, those who live in the United States, have a particular responsibility to take action to correct these inequities. The poverty, hunger and homelessness that exist here in the U.S. and that many of the organizations in *INVEST YOURSELF* address are not the result of an overall scarcity of money or food or housing. The 400 wealthiest people in the U.S. have more money than the lowest-income 50% of the U.S. population, combined. There are millions of empty homes sitting in communities around the country, foreclosed due to the greed of the top financiers who created a way to put so many of our working class in harm’s way. California alone could produce enough food to feed every human being on earth with proper practices in place. Worldwide hunger could be eliminated with proper local production processes and equitable distribution. There is work to be done that could employ everyone — with a living wage. The resources exist, the technology exists, the methods are known — it is a question of who holds the power to decide how they are utilized, and what interests those with the power choose to serve.

CVSA works to promote and strengthen independent, volunteer-driven organizations that are bringing people together to tackle these problems and to meet many other needs of people throughout the world. CVSA connects people who want to make a difference with non-government affiliated volunteer organizations. We need you to help expand these efforts in these very critical times. Call CVSA at (718) 482-8724 about ways you can help, including organizing a screening of *HOME* for your school, club, religious congregation or grouping. 



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	6pm	Volunteer Organizer Class
Tuesday	10am-4pm	Membership Communications and Development
Wednesday	9am-12	Volunteer Outreach
	1pm-4pm	Business Community Outreach
	6pm-9pm	Publications Production
Thursday	9am-2pm	<i>INVEST YOURSELF</i> Distribution phoning and mailings
	2pm	Volunteer Organizer Class
Friday	9am-12	Membership Communications and Development
	12-4pm	Volunteer Outreach
	6pm	Volunteer Organizer Class
Saturday	9am-12	Volunteer Outreach
	1-4pm	Publications Production
	4pm	Weekly Staff Meeting
Sunday	11am-4pm	Publications Production

## CVSA VOLUNTEER PROJECTS from wherever you are

- ◆ Be an *INVEST YOURSELF* Representative:  
Publicize and distribute *INVEST YOURSELF* through your organization, in your local area to schools, colleges, libraries, places of worship, local community centers or workplaces.
- ◆ Expand our Speaking Engagement Campaign:  
You may know schools, congregations, social action committees, organizations, associations or other community groups who would be interested in having a CVSA speaker make a presentation about the non-government volunteer service and action movement.
- ◆ Organize a free screening of HOME:  
CVSA volunteer organizers are available to lead discussions after the screening and would be glad to help you organize such an event at your school, college, workplace, community center, cultural center, place of worship or anywhere you can gather a group of interested people together.

**INVEST YOURSELF!** Don't wait and hope for change to come... build it now!

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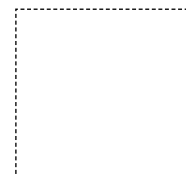
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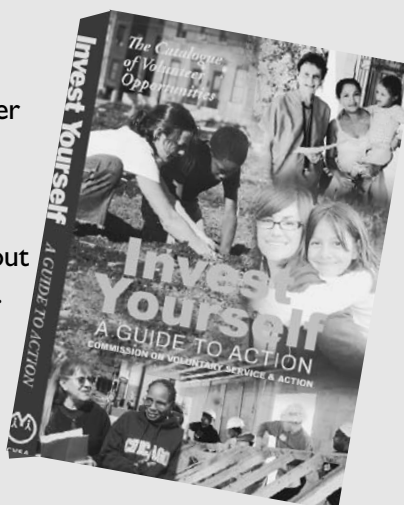
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