

## Computer Take Back Campaign Makes Advances

Texas Campaign for the Environment (TCE) joined the national Computer TakeBack Campaign in Spring 2002. TCE has taken a prominent role in the effort because of the Campaign's focus on convincing Austin-based Dell to become a leader in taking back their obsolete products. After all, Dell is a computer sales leader with a unique relationship to its customers who buy directly from Dell through phone and Internet sales.

Our first meeting with Dell staff occurred soon after letters from TCE supporters started arriving at Dell headquarters. That meeting resulted only in promises to keep the channels of communication open. In July 2002 at Dell's Annual Meeting of stakeholders, Michael Dell, the founder and CEO of Dell, said there wasn't much consumer demand for computer recycling.

### Generating Public Demand & Pressure

TCE took that as a challenge and had thousands of Texans across the state write handwritten letters and postcards to Michael Dell. Those letters showed the breadth of support for computer takeback policies, which Dell already follows in European countries and in Japan.

Most of the letters were gathered night after night by TCE staff in neighborhoods and on the telephone. Postcards were collected at campuses and events such as the Austin Black Family Technology Day, the Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair in Fredericksburg, and the Green Festival in Austin.

TCE built upon that foundation of support with pointed activities to demonstrate the depth of feeling on this issue.



### TCE makes headlines across Texas and the nation.

We recruited Central Texas religious leaders to sign an Open Letter to Michael Dell on the issue. We organized high school and college students to become educated and active on the issue. Some TCE activists turned up at the Consumers Electronics Show in Las Vegas where Michael Dell was a featured speaker.

TCE also raised the issue in the State Legislature. These activities and others sent an unmistakable message to Dell and his company that computer recycling and takeback advocates were not going away.

### Dell Starts to Respond

In March 2003, Dell Inc. announced plans for a 5-city (and later an additional 10-city) tour of one-day free recycling drop-off events around Texas and the country. What the company found was that there were many consumers who would take advantage of a free opportunity to get rid of the e-waste in their homes and offices. Significantly, Dell echoed TCE's position that one-day events might collect e-waste for a day, but they are not a comprehensive 365-day a year solution

to the immense problem of e-waste.

The first significant victory for our campaign came on July 3, 2003, when Dell announced that it would stop using prison labor for its consumer collection efforts. Less than two weeks later, their new free market recycling partner in Austin, Image Microsystems, announced plans to hire 100 more workers. The idea that the development of an e-waste recycling industry would protect the environment and create jobs for Texans gained traction.

### 2003 Dell Annual Meeting Ups the Ante

Dell's Annual Meeting on July 17, 2003 at the Austin Convention Center became a focal point for activity. A truck left Seattle, Washington a week before the Annual Meeting and made stops picking up Dell e-waste on its way to Austin.

At the Annual Meeting, Dell shareholders were greeted by activists and given flyers that outlined the company's potential financial liability for e-waste. We also made a case for the upside opportunities for the company if they aggressively met the challenge and used Dell's experience efficiently delivering computers to provide cutting edge take



## Letter from the Executive Director

In the past eighteen months, Texas Campaign for the Environment has been a leading organization in the Computer TakeBack Campaign that took on the electronics industry over electronic waste, or e-waste. Our efforts have been focused on Dell the world's leader seller of personal computers.

Amazingly enough we are bringing Dell around. Dell is now voicing support for companies to take back their products at the end of their useful life. From the start we argued that taking back their obsolete machines would be good for the environment, the public health and Dell's business. Now they seem to agree.

What remains is for Dell and other companies to work with TCE and the Computer TakeBack Campaign fill in details and make it a reality. Dell has significant corporate muscle to flex which will be critical to putting this policy into place.

TCE's muscle comes from people like you - and thousands of Texans who write checks and write letters to pressure decision-makers to do the right thing. We have played a major role in nudging the leading seller of personal computers in the world onto the responsible environmental path, that's cause for some celebration. We'll hold on popping open any champagne bottles until we're further down the road on establishing a firm policy of producer take back, but we're encouraged.

In the meantime, we are also broadening our concern to other solid waste issues. In September, Disney announced they would be using Austin as a test market for disposable DVDs that oxidize and become useless 48 hours after opening. We are mobilizing opposition to the product.

TCE is also opposing state-level efforts to loosen the rules that require landfill operators to have specific plans to handle common problems at poorly-run landfills. Unfortunately, too many landfills are close to drinking water supplies and shoddy operations could affect many Texans who live far away from the stench and other problems that many neighbors must endure.

Our efforts on these issues and others have one fundamental prerequisite for success. You. We cannot do this work without you and your support. You make TCE a strong, flourishing organization. You have turned your concern for the environment into action - and results. We appreciate it. Thank you for your confidence in us. I promise we'll do our best to continue to deserve it.

Robin Schneider  
Executive Director

## 2003 Highlights

TCE mobilized citizens in Representative Todd Baxter's district to stop a bill that would have allowed the burning of municipal waste to count for renewable energy targets.



TCE mobilized Travis County residents to stop a proposed change in flood plain rules to make it easier to expand a landfill.



TCE has been getting out to more and more communities across the state. TCE traveled to Dallas, Denton, Sherman, Houston, College Station, Temple, Georgetown, Round Rock, Kerrville, Fredericksburg, San Antonio, Seguin, Bastrop, Lockhart, Alpine, New Braunfels, San Marcos, Corpus Christi and many places in between. This has allowed us to tackle more issues locally and to broaden our membership in important districts throughout the Texas Legislature.

### ***A message from the canvass staff to our supporters:***

*Thank you so much for all you do! It is you, the members, that make our work so fulfilling and so much fun. Every day we run into people like you: those who are passionate about making a difference and making the world a better place. You not only make our work a lot easier, you make us better people and better organizers!*

*Thanks again...see you soon!*

TCE staff has grown considerably and TCE has had its best year to date in Austin. That success is due in large part to the staff. TCE would like to recognize the following organizers for their excellent leadership over the past year: Fred Kirsch, Laura Squire, Zac Trahan, Eleanor Whitmore, Dillon Roberts, Joe Bachman, Lani Ogle, Stacy Guidry, Jon Lerner, Haley Collins, and Nakisha Nathan.

# Will the State Go in Reverse on Rules to Clean up Landfills?

Trek English knows what it is like to have two poorly run landfills near her Northeast Travis County neighborhood. Don McKenzie knows the problems running a business across the street from the East Bexar County landfill that has racked up 11 violations of environmental laws in three years. Jacque Peace in the small North Texas community of Luella near Sherman has had her land polluted for years by another landfill that's been a bad neighbor.

These community leaders are researching and organizing their neighborhoods to pressure landfill operators to follow the law and run their operations in a way that does not result in fires, massive runoff, horrible stench, windblown waste and ever-present vermin.

Unfortunately, the Texas environmental agency, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, is poised to take away one of the safeguards that neighbors and environmental enforcement agents can use to penalize bad operators.

Right now, in order to get a permit, landfills are required to provide details on how they're going to control potential problems, such as noxious odors, wind-

Please write letters to your state legislators to request them to join the opposition to the plan to weaken the landfill rules. Write two letters:

State Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin TX 78711

State Rep. \_\_\_\_\_  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin TX 78768

To find out who represents you in Austin, go to: [www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/fyi/fyi.htm)



If you have to take your gas-powered car or truck in for an emissions test, remember that diesel vehicles don't have to go. They are so dirty they would never pass. For too long, drivers and breathers have been taking up the slack for dirty diesels that have been unabashedly polluting the air. It's time for diesels to stop blowing so much smoke.

blown waste, or birds and rats that scavenge on garbage if it's not adequately covered up. Recently, some dumps have had their expansion permits rejected when challenged by concerned neighbors in courts because they don't have the required details in these Site Operating Plans, or SOPs.

In October 2003, on a 2 to 1 vote the TCEQ Commissioners started a process to WEAKEN the rules so that the dumps don't have to provide details of how they are going to prevent and address such problems. Luckily, one of the Commissioners who voted in favor of weakening the rules has left and a new person has been appointed, Larry Soward.

TCE is encouraging Texans to stop this move. We've generated hundreds of letters and emails to the Commissioners, but we need to put pressure of our elected officials for them to go on record in opposition to weakening these rules. The final decision will be made in March or April 2004. Please take a moment to call or write your state legislators to take a stand.

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back services. The company agreed to take back the e-waste collected on the Hard Drive tour and takeback activists joined with Dell staff to transfer the e-waste onto a waiting truck.

## Dell Starts "Talking the Talk"

We hoped that their decision to take the symbolic amount of e-waste was an indication that Dell was coming around on the e-waste question more broadly. First, at some national stakeholder discussions and more recently at national conferences on electronic waste and the Texas Recycling Summit, Dell spokespeople have become take back advocates. Pat Nathan, Dell Vice-President for Sustainable Business, credited the Computer TakeBack Campaign, and TCE specifically, for playing a key role in bringing Dell to the pro-takeback position. She also encouraged businesses, governments and other institutional customers to ask for take back services.

In fact, the Computer TakeBack Campaign has been working closely with allies in government, higher education and health care sectors to make take back and other environmental performance measures a part of their buying criteria – so that the entire life cycle costs of a product are considered when purchases are made. Utilizing market mechanisms have been an important theme and component of our strategy.

## Making Sure Industry Walks the Walk

What happens next? The growing coalition of takeback supporters – TCE, recycling advocates, Dell, HP and others – must forge ahead to put this policy in place. National stakeholder meetings will be coming to a close soon and we will work hard to see that any agreement includes a high road option that rewards electronics producers that take responsibility for their e-waste. Federal legislation will probably follow. Other electronics companies will probably be targeted to step up to the plate. TCE will continue to broaden the base of support for takeback policies until it's as easy to recycle electronics as it is to buy them.

## You're Invited to TCE's Annual Meeting

**When:** TBA  
Noon to 2:30pm

**Where:** TBA

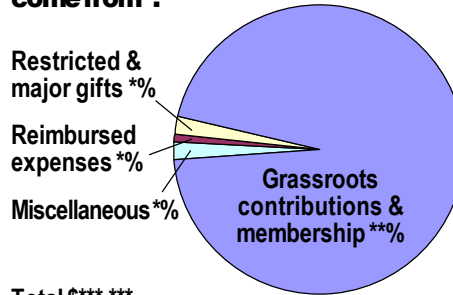
**What:** We will review TCE's progress and hear about plans for 2004.

*Please join us for some good cheer & good eats.*

**RSVP TCE office at 512-326-5655.**

Texas Campaign for the Environment continued to stretch its dollars and concentrate on our mission of protecting the public health and the environment of Texas. Here's an overview of where our funds came from and what they were spent on.

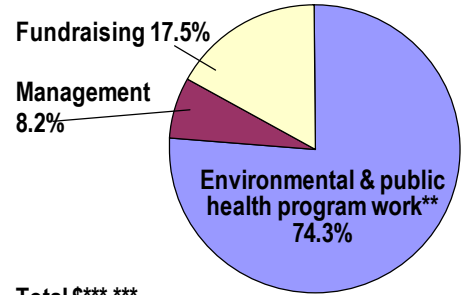
### Where TCE's contributions come from\*:



**Total \$\*\*\*,\*\*\***

\*Based on IRS Form 990 for 2002.

### Where your contributions go:



**Total \$\*\*\*,\*\*\***

\*\*Includes grassroots organizing, lobbying public officials, public education, research and media work.



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Austin, Texas 78704**

[www.texasenvironment.org](http://www.texasenvironment.org)  
512-326-5655  
512-326-5922 fax



## Stop Disposable DVDs

Disney is test marketing disposable DVDs in Austin. Consumers have 48 hours once they open the package to watch the film until the DVD becomes unusable. Although marketed as "EZ-D's," they're anything but easy on the environment. These DVDs will be tossed in landfills. For every pound of product manufactured in America, 32 pounds of waste is created. Throwaway products like these result in staggering energy and resource waste.

Texas Campaign for the Environment is mobilizing opposition to EZD's. HEB has pledged to keep the communication lines open before they make a decision about whether to sell EZD's after the test-marketing phase.

## Here's What You Can Do

1. Don't buy EZDs and discourage others from buying them!
2. Write Disney CEO Michael Eisner and tell him to stop filling up our landfills with disposable DVDs.

Michael Eisner, CEO  
Buena Vista Home Entertainment  
350 South Buena Vista St.  
Burbank, CA 91521

3. Write to HEB and express your opposition to selling products that create unnecessary waste in Texas.

HEB CEO Charles E. Butt  
646 South Main St.  
San Antonio TX 78204