



# BUILD THE FUTURE

**CLEAN WATER  
MASSACHUSETTS  
ANNUAL EVENT**

**Thursday, June 11, 2026**  
**6:00 PM - 8:30 PM**  
**Multicultural Arts Center**  
**41 2nd Street, Cambridge, MA 02141**

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# OPENING REMARKS

Tonight is about honoring the people who built the foundation we stand on and celebrating the leaders who are building what comes next.

For decades, change did not happen because powerful institutions decided it should. It happened because people organized. They knocked on doors, built coalitions, showed up to meetings, trained new leaders, challenged systems that were not working, and imagined something better. Tonight, we celebrate that legacy and the people carrying that work forward today.

As we gather together, we are reminded that building a healthier, more just future does not happen overnight. It is built person by person, relationship by relationship, campaign by campaign.

Thank you for being here tonight. Your support powers our work to protect families from toxic chemicals, advance clean energy solutions, strengthen environmental justice communities, improve air quality, and grow the next generation of grassroots leaders across Massachusetts.

This movement has always been powered by people. And together, we are building the future we want to see.

In solidarity,

**Cynthia Mendes**

Massachusetts Director  
Clean Water

# Thank You to Our Sponsors...

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Conservation  
Law Foundation

A photograph of a woman and a young child sitting in the shallow water at the edge of a beach. The woman is wearing a black t-shirt and a light blue wide-brimmed hat. The child is wearing a light blue shirt and a white hat with a floral pattern. They are both looking down at something in the water. The beach is sandy and extends to the horizon under a clear sky.

**The Saunders Family  
supports Clean Water's  
work to Build the Future**

# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

**6:00 PM — Doors Open | Cocktail Hour & Registration**

**6:30 PM - Welcome Remarks & Grounding**

Cynthia Mendes, Massachusetts Director

**6:45 PM - Award Presentations**

**The Legacy of Organizing**

Reflections from Polly Hoppin, former Massachusetts Director

**John O'Connor Grassroots Leadership Award**

Presented by Amber Schmidt, New England Zero Waste Specialist

*Honoring Cindy Qiao*

**John O'Connor Canvassing Award**

Presented by Julia Scalera, Field Canvass Director

*Honoring Violet Henriques*

**The Power of Electoral Organizing**

Remarks from Elizabeth Saunders, Donor Development Manager & Massachusetts Senior Advisor

**Clean Water Champion Award**

Presented by Elizabeth Saunders

*Honoring Brad Dye*

**Building Power Across Massachusetts**

Remarks from Cindy Luppi, Senior Director for State Policy and Program

**Clean Water Champion Award**

Presented by Emma Weis, Climate Justice Organizer

*Honoring Ben Thomas*

**Building the Future We Want to See**

Remarks from Maureo Fernandez y Mora, Advisory Board Member

**Youth Leadership Award**

Presented by Omesa Mokaya, Youth Engagement Program Manager

*Honoring Kidus Tsige*

**8:00 PM - Closing Remarks**

Cynthia Mendes, Massachusetts Director

**6:00 PM  
Cocktail Hour &  
Registration**

**6:30 PM  
Welcome  
Remarks**

**6:45 PM  
Award  
Presentations**

**8:00 PM  
Closing  
Remarks**

**8:30 PM  
Event  
Concludes**

# Thank You to Our Sponsors...

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**MLRI** MASSACHUSETTS  
**LAW REFORM**  
**INSTITUTE**

## Thank you to those who made this event possible!

Beautiful flowers and table pieces from Mahoney's Garden Center

Delectable spirits from Meili Vodka

Amazing food from La Veracruzana Mexican Restaurant, Panaderia Rincon  
Guatemalteco and Trader Joe's of West Newton



# CELEBRATING OUR 2026 HONOREES

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## Cindy Qiao

### John O'Connor Grassroots Leadership Award

Cindy, a Newton North High School senior, is being honored for her Zero Waste work, founding the Full Fork Initiative. She saw uneaten cafeteria food being dumped in the trash and realized she could tackle two problems — hunger and waste — with one campaign. Her initiative now diverts untouched cafeteria food from seven Newton schools, reducing waste while distributing weekly snack bags to 100 students in need.



## Violet Henriques

### John O'Connor Award for Canvassing

This was a COLD winter! Violet, a field manager and leader in the Northampton canvassing office, is being awarded for her tenacity. She not only successfully organized door-to-door through freezing weather, but she also inspired and trained newer staff to join her. Did you give Violet hot cocoa this winter? Thank you!



## Ben Thomas

### Clean Water Champion Award

Ben, the Director of State Government Relations at Boston Children's Hospital, is receiving the 2026 Clean Water Champion Award for his exemplary commitment to the Air Quality and Toxic Free Kids legislative campaigns. Ben's leadership has brought a new level of visibility and momentum, introducing these campaigns to key audiences, attracting significant new funding, and broadening support.

# CELEBRATING OUR 2026 HONOREES

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## Kidus Tsige

### Youth Leadership Award

Are you feeling yourself sliding into climate despair? You need to meet Kidus. A sophomore at Malden High School and an alum of Clean Water Fund's Youth Action Collaborative, he is being honored for his leadership in the youth climate movement, expanding youth coalitions, rallying young leaders, and lobbying legislators for climate action.



## Brad Dye

### Clean Water Champion Award

Brad is a stay-at-home dad of a kindergartener. But before that, he worked for 14 years in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, rising to the level of Staff Director for a member of the House leadership team. Like many parents, he is jumping into the fray in 2026 to build a better future for the youngest Americans. Brad is volunteering his time and expertise to help lead and strengthen Clean Water Action's elections and endorsements work this year while still juggling school pickup and drop-off. Thanks, Brad!



## **About Clean Water Action & Clean Water Fund**

Clean Water Action is a national organization with hundreds of thousands of members working to protect our environment, health, economic well-being, and community quality of life. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, our campaigns focus on air quality, toxic-free kids, clean energy, and grassroots electoral organizing.

Clean Water Fund is our tax-deductible education fund, supporting research, public education, and community organizing for environmental health.

All proceeds from tonight's event support Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund's work to protect families from toxic chemicals, advance a just transition to clean energy, grow grassroots leadership, empower environmental justice communities, and improve air quality for all residents of Massachusetts.

*Please note: Contributions to Clean Water Action power legislative advocacy campaigns and election work and are not tax-deductible. If you need a tax-deductible option, contributions can be directed to Clean Water Fund.*

### **With gratitude to our Advisory Board members for their guidance, support, and leadership.**

Brent Baeslack  
Ellie Goldberg  
Essence Perry  
Jeremy Shenk  
Kiera Alventosa

Lee Ketelsen  
Lynn Nadeau  
Margot Barnet  
Maureo Fernandez y Mora  
Sara Moffett



# Thank You to Our Sponsors...



**BOSTON COLLEGE**

**Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good**

Best wishes to our Friends and Colleagues at Clean Water Action  
in your continuing work to protect our environment and  
safeguard the health of all Massachusetts residents.

# Thank You to Our Sponsors...



Patient Advocacy and Guidance

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We clarify complex medical illness  
so you know what is happening,  
why it is happening,  
and what your options are.

Brita Lundberg, M.D.  
[brita@lundberghealthadvocates.com](mailto:brita@lundberghealthadvocates.com)  
617-651-1078

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# Thank You to Our Sponsors

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We are deeply grateful for the generous support of our sponsors, without whom this work would simply not be possible. Your partnership helps us turn shared hopes into real progress and bring the future we want to see within reach.

Anonymous

Boston College, Program for Global Public Health and the Common Good

Brent & Sue Baeslack

Charles River Watershed Association

Climate Jobs Massachusetts & the AFL-CIO

Community Labor United

Conservation Law Foundation

Cynthia Arens

Dr. Brita Lundberg

Edward Petcavage

Emily & David Hutcheson

Estelle Disch

Gail & Ed Bucher

Gerry Frank (in honor of John O'Connor)

Jeannie Ramey & Bruce Biewald

Joan Kulash

Jonathan Hecht & Lora Sabin

Julie Hyde

Karen & Gary Martin

Katherine & Chris Sims

Lucy Saunders

Margot Barnet & David Coyne

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Naomi Mermin

Pamela and Griff Resor

Patricia Gozemba & Karen Kahn

Phillip Segó & Susan Yanow

Recirclable

Toxic Free Future

William & Kathleen Rousseau

William Saunders and Judith Markland

# Meet our team!

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**Clean Water staff are hard at work protecting our families' health and environment every day.**

Amber Schmidt - Zero Waste Outreach Specialist

Cindy Luppi - Senior Director for State Policy and Program

Cynthia Mendes - Massachusetts Director

Eben Bein - Youth Engagement Consultant

Eliza Rubel - Clean Energy Communications Intern

Elizabeth Saunders - Donor Development Manager & Massachusetts Senior Advisor

Emma Weis - Climate Justice Organizer

Erin Reid - Clean Energy Communications Intern

Gage Frank - Development Manager

Julia Scalera - Northampton Canvass Director

Kerry Doyle - Communications Consultant

Laura Spark - Environmental Health Program Director

Nicole Estey - New England Budget Coordinator

Omesa Mokaya - Youth Engagement Program Manager

Yasmina Mateson - Office Manager



# Celebrating Elizabeth Saunders

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For decades, Elizabeth Saunders has been a steadfast leader and mentor at Clean Water. The last 13 years were spent as Massachusetts Director, where, through her vision, persistence, and unwavering commitment to environmental health, she helped build the strong foundation our work stands on today. Elizabeth led campaigns that took on some of the worst toxic industries, fighting to protect children and families from harmful chemicals and advancing policies that put people's health before corporate interests.

She has also been the strategic force behind much of the work that makes our victories possible. Often working behind the scenes, Elizabeth is the person who connects the dots, anticipates challenges, builds thoughtful plans, and turns bold ideas into effective campaigns. Her leadership has strengthened partnerships, developed new generations of advocates, and shaped the way we fight for healthier communities across Massachusetts.

As she steps into her new role on the national Clean Water team as Donor Development Manager & Massachusetts Senior Advisor, we celebrate not only this well-earned promotion, but the extraordinary foundation she has helped build in Massachusetts and the impact she will continue to have across the country. Elizabeth has helped build the future we want to see, and we are grateful that her leadership, wisdom, and determination will continue to guide us in the years ahead.

Please join me in thanking Elizabeth for her decades of service and congratulating her on this well-deserved promotion. On behalf of the entire Massachusetts team, advisory board, and thousands of members, whose lives and communities have been improved by her work, thank you, Elizabeth, for helping us build the future we want to see!

In solidarity,  
Cynthia Mendes  
Massachusetts Director  
On behalf of the Massachusetts team and our members

# Thank You to Our Sponsors...

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**Reuse. Return. Repeat.**

*Delicious takeout, without the waste!*



**recirclable**

**Recirclable is proud to support Clean Water Action and partner with ReThink Disposable to help restaurants reduce waste.**



# **Thank You for Building the Future with Us**

[cleanwater.org/ma](http://cleanwater.org/ma)  
[bostonCWA@cleanwater.org](mailto:bostonCWA@cleanwater.org)