

Campaigns for farmworkers' rights, for ending "pinkwashing", for the rights of nature, and others receive top marketplace activism prizes, Sister Pat Daly honored for individual achievement at the BENNY Awards

Awards recognize victories and significant achievements in corporate reform

Top corporate campaign activists were honored in October at the 2009 BENNY Awards, given by the Business Ethics Network (BEN) project of Corporate Ethics International. The Campaign for Fair Food and Think Before You Pink: "Yoplait--Put a Lid on It" campaign tied for the first place BENNY Award, and the campaign for Derechos de la Naturaleza, or Rights of Nature in Ecuador's Constitution, won the second place BENNY Award. Each campaign won a significant victory in corporate transformation in the last year. Sister Pat Daly was honored for her decades of contributions to corporate ethics.

"These campaigners won incredible victories on behalf of workers' rights, human health, and the environment," said BEN Executive Director Michael Marx. "They are making corporations accountable to all of us."

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and partners' Campaign for Fair Food aims to improve farmworkers' sub-poverty wages; combat forced labor in the agricultural industry; and demand that corporate food retailers use their market power to ensure more humane labor standards from their Florida tomato suppliers. Through the campaign, Burger King, Whole Foods and Subway agreed to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to improve farmworkers' wages and working conditions, and Bon Appetit becomes first foodservice provider to sign with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

The Think Before You Pink campaign of Breast Cancer Action targets "pinkwashers:" companies that use pink ribbon marketing to demonstrate commitment to the breast cancer cause, while selling products that actually contribute to the disease. Last year, the Think Before You Pink: "Yoplait--Put a Lid on It" campaign targeted General Mills, whose pink ribbon Yoplait yogurt is made with the cancer-linked growth hormone, rBGH. General Mills responded by announcing removal of rBGH-stimulated milk from their products. Dannon immediately followed. With these two commitments, two-thirds of the U.S. dairy market became rBGH-free.

The Derechos de la Naturaleza, or Rights of Nature in Ecuador's Constitution, campaign of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) worked to prevent further devastation of Ecuador's environment by corporations. The drafters of Ecuador's new constitution recognized the need to do something fundamentally different to protect nature. CELDF assisted the Ecuador Constitutional Assembly to draft Rights of Nature provisions. In the new constitution, nature is no longer treated as "property" under the law, and instead is recognized as having the inalienable right to exist and flourish. Ecuador is the first country in the world to codify a system of environmental protection based on rights.

Sister Pat Daly received the Individual Achievement Award. Daly is a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, New Jersey and Executive Director of the Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment, an organization of 40 Roman Catholic dioceses and congregations in the NY metropolitan area. Her work has been critical in forcing General Electric to pay for a clean-up of the Hudson River, getting Ford and GM to exert pressure on their suppliers to improve working conditions, and in moving the agenda of global warming into the priorities of corporate America.

BEN organizes the awards to celebrate the victories and achievements of corporate campaign activists. Activists who are Members of BEN nominate and vote on campaigns for the BENNY and Path to Victory Awards. BEN Advisory Committee and staff choose recipients of the Individual Achievement Award.

All 2009 nominated campaigns can be viewed at:
<http://businessethicsnetwork.org/section.php?id=380>

The BENNY Awards are given as part of the BEN Annual Conference, which in 2009 was co-sponsored by the U.C. Berkeley Labor Center. Activists gathered in Berkeley, CA and Washington, D.C. and were teleconference-connected for an in-depth analysis of a year of integrating legislative and corporate campaigns, focusing on the climate and energy, health care reform, and Employee Free Choice act campaigns.