

THE EUGENE VEG EDUCATION NETWORK Vegan Education - A Resource Making a Difference

Rebecca Barnett

The Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN) was cofounded by Lin Silvan and her husband, Robert Jacobucci. I had the pleasure of interviewing Lin. I was floored by her passion, energy, selflessness, and tireless dedication to vegan education.

When Lin and Robert retired to Eugene Oregon in 2002, they set out to turn their part-time advocating into a full-time endeavor. Lin's career had focused on all aspects of education and training for corporate America, and Robert had been a physicist. They founded the Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN) in 2005, in time to have booths for Earth Day celebrations. Emphasizing their core values of compassion, nonviolence, and sustainability, EVEN has been flourishing under their leadership.

Lin shared generously about her full-time work at EVEN, and the principles she turns to when challenges arise. We asked how she holds tight to her core values since these are the philosophical basis for her work as an activist and a leader.

"With compassion, we become like everything in the world that is excellent," she says. "Compassion, along with integrity, creates a solid, unbreakable, unshakable backbone for any vegan venture. *Any* venture!"

Mission Statement

As a vegan resource nonprofit, EVEN's mission is to inform, educate, and encourage those interested in veganism and its positive impact on the health of the planet and all its inhabitants.

"We all can aspire to be a steadfast advocate for the voiceless, the exploited, and the abused.

However, to make it actually happen, it's necessary to collaborate and work in harmony with others who have that same objective. It's a thing of beauty."

Events

With a focus on education and outreach, EVEN hosts an impressive array of EVENTS (get it?), organizing lectures, dine-outs, vegan fairs, book signings, and vegan potlucks—including their annual Thanksgiving Peaceful Potluck—designed for celebrating and sharing.

While all EVEN events, publications, and resources are 100% supportive of veganism, those who seek help from EVEN are met and cared for wherever they are on the path to veganism, and EVEN educates from that point. Lin uses language that is both empowering and nonjudgmental, such as: "At every pivotal point in our day, we each can make the most compassionate choice possible."

Throughout years of vegan-event planning, Lin has seen the power of a friendly, polite approach to everything, including securing venues.

"Get a list of facilities from your library, make calls, meet, dress nicely, shake hands, keep your word," she says. "The best approach is basic like our ABCs. Always Be Courteous."

Outreach

EVEN is always expanding its approach to outreach, aiming to reach more new people, and offer more resources to those already on their way.

One example of the group's extensive advocacy work is their "Think and Go Veg" workshops. These workshops demonstrate the connection between veganism and the health of the planet and all living things, but most importantly provide attendees with real-life, practical tools to make veganism work in their daily lives.

EVEN reaches thousands of people by frequently staffing information tables at conferences, health fairs, schools, farmers' markets, local festivals, library events, book signings, and natural food stores. They distribute magazines, DVDs, nutritional information, recipes, books, and food samples.



Happy vegans at a Peaceful Thanksgiving potluck.
(Matt, Cliff, Mary, Dick, and Eric) Photo: Stephan Nance

Throughout her decades of tabling, Lin has witnessed a profound shift in the attitude toward veganism among the general public. “When we were tabling fifteen or twenty years ago, finding a person interested in veganism was harder than finding smoke in a dust storm,” she says. “But we see great changes now. People come to us because they *want* to know. Oh, the times they are a changin’.”

Lin’s advocacy reflects her strong belief in the power of individualized support. She answers hundreds of emails per week, and regularly coaches new vegans (or their concerned parents) over the phone or in person, even devising family meal plans for them.

“Newbies can flounder without some added personal touch to get them over a hump or two,” she says. “Sure, people are easily convinced that veganism works, but they need to know how exactly it’s going to work for *them*. Offering customized follow-up motivates them—and delights us!”

Lin thinks it’s necessary to stretch out of one’s comfort zone as an activist. “While it may be fun and cozy to ‘preach to the converted,’ progress is only made when our minds and activities take off for parts unknown. Reach out to nonvegans. That’s why it’s called outreach. Discuss nutrition. Outline simple steps. Answer how-to questions. Show a video of where their food comes from! We can’t tell people who eat meat and dairy that they’re sitting in a barrel headed over a waterfall, but we can give them information so they gain the insights themselves. Learning for ourselves is the only way info sticks. Otherwise, progress is glacial.”



EVEN Volunteers

Back Row: Linda, Stacy, Jay, Linda, Sandy; Middle Row: Mary Faith, Lin, Hilliard, Mary, Jeanette, Leah, Jim; Front Row: Adam, Stephan, Robert, Heidi. (Not shown: Eric, Kate, Cliff) Photo: Stacey Willits

Web Presence

EugeneVeg.org is an information-packed, impeccably organized, aesthetically pleasing, inspirational website. There isn’t space here to give proper credit to Robert, who maintains EVEN’s site as a comprehensive collection of useful resources, and every page has ennobling quotes by forward-thinking, change-minded individuals, from poet R. M. Rilke to Dr. Ruth Heidrich to Alicia Silverstone. It’s much more than a website!



Robert Jacobucci

Funding

EVEN’s events are free and open to the public, so all organizational costs are covered by memberships, personal and business donations, and volunteer time and effort, by many kind, giving people. Quoting the great clergyman and writer, Basil King, Lin says, “Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid.”

Enduring Themes

Lin recognizes the immense power in even one person speaking the truth.

“Hotshots like Meat and Dairy—with money, madness, Monsanto, and Madison Avenue in their corner—are always jawboning to spin their lies into virtues they hope we’ll believe. It’s insanity! They play fast and loose with our lives and our world only because we let them. Our indifference leads to compliance which gives them the power to darken our doorstep at will. While their crooked path is not likely to straighten out, we need to learn to walk straight on our own. And search for higher ground!”

Lin would like everyone to remember, **“Each of us is only one, but we are one. Show up. Stand up. Speak up. The power within each one of us is awesome. Nothing trumps Truth. It’s Truth for goodness’ sake. Truth is always out there for those willing to look.”**

This series, by Assistant Editor Rebecca Barnett, empowers fellow vegan activists by sharing information. Ideas, strategies, and stories help leaders and members of groups that promote veganism more effectively serve their communities. Rebecca is an elementary science teacher, musician, and lifelong vegan.