



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE

Creating a healthier future »

## 2024 IMPACT REPORT

Thank you  
for leading  
the way





**You make it  
all possible:  
Silent  
Spring's  
research  
could not  
happen  
without  
dedicated  
partners like  
you.**



**Last July, when I joined Silent Spring Institute as Executive Director**, I was immediately struck by three things: One, the extraordinary passion of our interdisciplinary team. Two, the groundbreaking discoveries emerging from our research. Three, YOU, who make it all possible.

With your visionary support propelling our work forward, we are leveraging the latest tools and technologies to uncover the environmental causes of breast cancer at a pace never seen before. This is a transformative moment.

**Truly, *this vital research must be done*. And because of you, Silent Spring is leading the way.**

In 2024, your commitment enabled us to identify over 900 chemicals that increase breast cancer risk, many found in food packaging and plastics that you and your loved ones are exposed to every day. This study, which has been downloaded nearly 30,000 times, is changing how chemicals are prioritized in research and for regulatory action.

We also demonstrated that strong legislation in key states can dramatically reduce toxic exposures nationwide. And our work revealed the unique health risks faced by female firefighters on the job.

These are just a few examples of how you are helping to prevent breast cancer and ensure the health and wellbeing of our communities. Please read on to see the full scope of what your support has achieved – and the healthier future you're creating.

Your support inspires me every day – especially now, when our shared commitment matters more than ever.

With deep appreciation,

**Mary Beth Terry, PhD  
Executive Director**



## From Warning Labels to Real Change

HOW ONE STATE'S REGULATIONS ARE MAKING CONSUMER GOODS SAFER NATIONWIDE

### With growing concern

about the ubiquity of toxic chemicals identified in consumer products, many states have passed laws aimed at protecting people from harmful substances in everyday items like cosmetics, cleaning supplies, plastics, and food packaging. California's Proposition 65, for instance, is considered one of the most extensive toxics laws in the country.

### But does the law work?

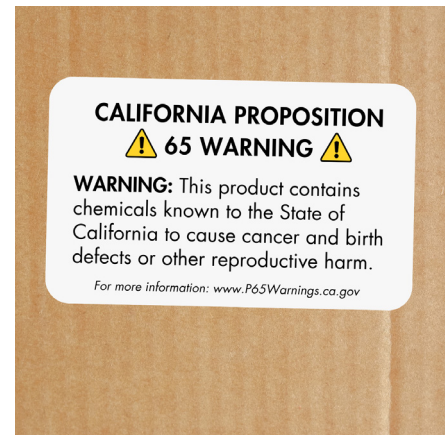
To answer that question, Silent Spring scientists went behind the scenes to investigate



whether the law has delivered on its promises. Under Proposition 65, commonly referred to as Prop 65, companies are required to warn people if their products could expose them to a chemical that causes cancer and birth defects. Close to a thousand chemicals are now on this list. Critics contend the law creates too many warnings with little impact on consumer behavior.

Yet, in interviews with business leaders at major manufacturers and retailers, Silent Spring Research Scientist Dr. Jennifer Ohayon found that Prop 65 has spurred companies to switch out toxic product ingredients to avoid having to place a warning. "That's a win for public health," she says.

What's more, her research found that when companies reformulate their products to comply with Prop 65, they tend to apply those changes across



all their products, not just ones sold in California. This aligns with an earlier study by Silent Spring, which found levels of toxic chemicals in people's bodies went down both in California and nationwide in the years following the chemicals' listing under Prop 65.

"In the absence of federal regulations, these findings underscore the important role that states, especially large ones like California, can play in protecting the broader public from chemicals that could harm their health," says Dr. Ohayon.

**Thank you for helping to drive toxic chemicals out of everyday items such as cosmetics, cleaning supplies, plastics, and food packaging.** Pictured here: Silent Spring Research Scientist Dr. Jennifer Ohayon, who is based in California and sees firsthand how Prop 65 makes products safer. (Photo taken on a California beach.)

# ADVANCING BREAST CANCER PREVENTION **TOGETHER**

**Silent Spring scientists identified more than 900 chemicals linked to breast cancer, paving the way for stronger protections worldwide.**

**This past year**, Silent Spring made a remarkable breakthrough in breast cancer research that is already making waves. We kicked off the year with the publication, led by research scientist Dr. Jennifer Kay, of a list of more than 900 chemicals that could increase breast cancer risk. These are chemicals commonly found in our products and our environment.

Now, we are seeing the ripple effect of this work, as it begins to shape policy, inspire new

research, and empower women to reduce their exposures.

## **Science in Action**

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences announced it would incorporate our list of breast cancer chemicals in their landmark Sister Study. The long-term study has been tracking environmental and genetic risk factors among a group of 50,000 sisters of women with breast cancer for the past 20 years.

In September, the Food Packaging Forum based in

Switzerland used our list to uncover nearly 200 breast cancer-relevant chemicals in food packaging. Their findings made headlines and inspired the organization to advocate for the removal of these harmful chemicals from food contact materials as a much-needed step for reducing breast cancer risk.

Later that fall, Silent Spring scientists contributed to the global conversation around plastics with the release of a study that found nearly half of the 900-plus chemicals — 414 in total — are used in plastics. The findings come at a critical time as the United Nations continues to work toward a treaty on reducing plastics pollution.

By identifying chemicals in plastics that influence the development of breast cancer, our research is helping inform international negotiations and push for solutions to protect public health.

## **Informing Global Policy**

To extend our work further, Silent Spring nominated 22 chemicals from our breast cancer list for review by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a leading organization in cancer research. This is a major win for raising global awareness about cancer risks, since policymakers and health agencies worldwide rely on IARC's assessments of chemicals to create more health



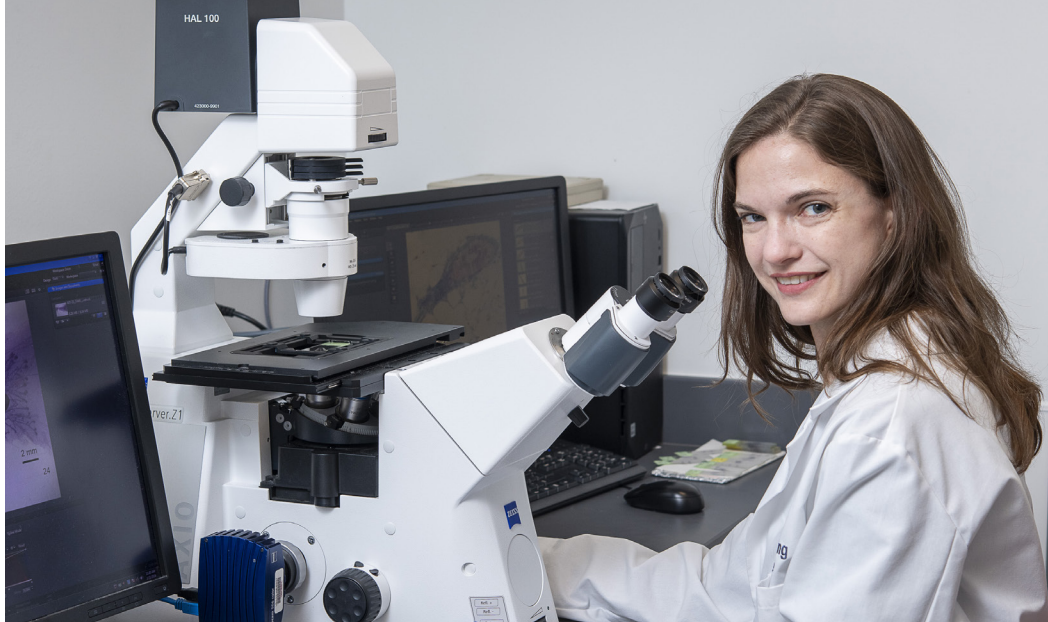


protective policies and improve cancer prevention.

“Our work has been instrumental in pushing the science into spaces where it can make a difference,” says Dr. Kay. “In order to lift the global burden of breast cancer, especially in young women who are increasingly affected, we need global action to reduce environmental exposures that are contributing to the disease.”

### **The Path Forward, Thanks to You**

Dr. Kay hopes her team’s research will provide a critical roadmap for regulators and manufacturers to identify cancer-causing chemicals quickly and replace them with safer alternatives. As she puts it: “By identifying these chemicals, we are giving decision-makers



**“Our work has been instrumental in pushing the science into spaces where it can make a difference.”**

**Dr. Jennifer Kay**  
Research Scientist

the tools they need to make choices that will reduce harmful exposures and reduce breast cancer risk for future generations.”

This groundbreaking research would not have been possible without the ongoing support of our donors. Your

commitment to advancing science and improving public health has helped make these important advances in breast cancer prevention.

**Together, we are paving the way for a healthier future for women everywhere. Thank you!**

**Did you know** that among people under 50, breast cancer incidence in women is six times higher than the rate of any cancer in men?

**Concerns about rising rates** of breast cancer in young women received a lot of media attention in 2024, with many attributing the trend to factors such as rising obesity rates or fewer women having children.

“Yet, as an epidemiologist who has devoted much of my career to studying this issue, I can tell you that assumption is wrong because it doesn’t match the data,” says Dr. Mary Beth Terry, Silent Spring’s Executive Director.

Instead, what’s becoming increasingly clear, she says, is that environmental exposures — toxic chemicals in the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the products we use — are likely driving this trend in early-onset breast cancer.

**How do we know that?** Thanks to you and the sustained support of our generous community of donors, we’ve identified toxic chemicals linked to breast cancer and tracked how they enter our everyday lives.

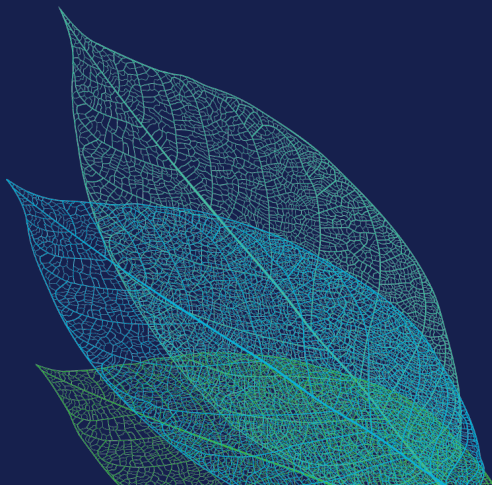
Save  
the  
Date

## SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE GALA CELEBRATION

Together, we will  
support and celebrate  
breast cancer prevention science  
that benefits us all.

Thursday, October 9, 2025  
6:30 p.m.

The Museum of Science  
Boston, MA



# Your Impact in 2024

BY THE NUMBERS



## Protecting Our Protectors

Our scientists identified **12** toxic chemicals that female firefighters are highly exposed to on the job that increase their risk of breast cancer. This data is being used to inform state and federal laws to ensure breast cancer is recognized as an occupational illness, which entitles firefighters to workers' compensation, disability, medical leave, and medical expense coverage if they are diagnosed with the disease.

## Speaking Up for Safety

We provided scientific testimony on **8** federal and state bills and proposed rules in 2024, including testimony on PFAS at the Massachusetts State House and before the U.S. Senate.



The New York Times

## The Disturbing Truth About Hair Relaxers

They've been linked to reproductive disorders and cancers. Why are they still being marketed so aggressively to Black women?

## In the News

Over **130** news stories mentioned or quoted Silent Spring's work in major outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *NPR*, *The Guardian*, and *Time*.

## Stronger Together

We strengthened our networks through partnerships with over **32** research institutions and more than **30** community groups, worker unions, and advocacy organizations, ensuring our research serves community needs.







## A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT YOU HELPED ACHIEVE

### Home Hazards Revealed

Our team visited hundreds of homes in 2024 through our household exposure studies. In Rochester, NY, we completed **241** visits to evaluate the effectiveness of lead remediation programs at reducing exposures to other chemical hazards in the home, while in Massachusetts, we completed **104** visits to investigate different sources of PFAS in and around the home.



### Knowledge that Heals

Our PFAS Exchange website serves as a vital hub for healthcare providers and communities impacted by PFAS pollution, reaching up to **7,700** visitors monthly from **94** countries. Since its launch, **30** healthcare providers have completed our specialized training course on PFAS for continuing medical education credit, while the training webinar has been viewed **1,267** times. This growing network of informed medical professionals can better support families facing these exposures.

### Hidden Risks Exposed

Silent Spring’s research identified more than 900 chemicals linked to breast cancer development; **189** of these chemicals are found in food packaging and **414** are present in plastics, demonstrating their widespread presence in everyday consumer products.



### What kind of world will you leave for future generations?


When you plan a gift to Silent Spring Institute, you protect future generations and ensure their wellbeing. For more information or to discuss other options for including Silent Spring in your will or estate plans, please contact Quinn Fey, Assistant Director of Development, at 617-332-4288 ext. 222 or [fey@silentspring.org](mailto:fey@silentspring.org).

**We deeply appreciate you and your generosity.**



### Science in Your Pocket

Silent Spring’s Detox Me app reached more than **426,000** downloads, providing science-based recommendations for reducing exposures to harmful chemicals. The free app translates decades of research into personalized guidance for healthier living.

 **DOWNLOAD** our Detox Me app at [detoxmeapp.org](http://detoxmeapp.org) — your guide to smarter, safer choices for you and your family.



In her sunlit studio, Wendy Weldon brings together her passions for art and environmental health. Her support of Silent Spring honors loved ones affected by breast cancer while helping protect families from environmental causes of the disease.

## “It feels so good knowing we’re supporting science that protects women from breast cancer.”

When breast cancer touched their lives, artists Wendy Weldon and James Langlois channeled their lifelong environmental awareness into action. Through Silent Spring Institute, they’re helping paint a healthier future for us all.

**For artists** Wendy Weldon and James Langlois, breast cancer is deeply personal. Wendy lost her mother to the disease years ago. Today, James watches as his sister faces stage 4 breast cancer.

“She’s so open about what she’s going through,” James shares. “But it’s heartbreaking to hear her ask, ‘How did I get it?’ We have no family history of

breast cancer. That’s the hardest part.”

The Dartmouth, Massachusetts couple, who’ve long been interested in the impact of chemicals on the planet and our daily lives, decided to turn their grief into action.

When Wendy discovered Silent Spring Institute and its groundbreaking research on environmental risk factors for

breast cancer, she knew she’d found her cause. “Silent Spring is the best option for me,” Wendy says. “I love how most of the scientists at Silent Spring are women, and how they share their research with advocates, policymakers, and clinicians, amplifying their impact.”

For both Wendy and James, their artwork and environmental advocacy flow from a desire to



help heal others. Wendy explains she once heard from a woman who said she saw a painting of Wendy's in the lobby of a clinic she went to during a health crisis. Something about the painting made the woman feel a profound sense of hope. James channels his "silent screaming" about pollution and other concerns into art meant to spark productive dialogue.

Their environmental awareness stems from their earliest days as artists, around the time Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published, and Wendy and James witnessed firsthand how even art supplies like turpentine could be harmful to people's health.

"Being earth-conscious since the early days of the '60s and '70s, we knew about chemicals in our environment," James reflects. "It's so important to be aware of the things around you that could make you sick. That's why we support Silent Spring."

Their passion stems from urgent questions that affect us all. "Women are nervous about having mammograms, but they do it because they need to know," Wendy reflects. "It's terrifying not knowing what hidden elements in our everyday life are impacting our health. And what about our kids? What about the clothes we put on them? What else don't we see that's harming us?"

By partnering with Silent Spring, Wendy and James are helping to expose hidden

threats we need to know about to protect our families' health. They've also found a welcoming community, experiencing the warmth of it firsthand at a recent Silent Spring gala. "It feels so good knowing we're supporting science that protects women from breast cancer," Wendy says. "It's amazing what they do with all of their research."

Their message to others is clear: "Pay attention to what's

important to you and support it," Wendy urges.

We're profoundly moved by donors like Wendy, James, and YOU. Your generosity and compassion mean you're part of a remarkable community of giving hearts working to protect families from the environmental causes of breast cancer.

**Your kindness today creates a healthier tomorrow for generations to come. Thank you!**



Wendy Weldon and James Langlois — pictured here with their dogs and artwork — are turning their personal experiences with breast cancer into powerful change at Silent Spring. Thanks to Wendy, James, and YOU for caring about prevention science!

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## YOUR IMPACT: Safer Drinking Water Nationwide

**In April 2024**, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the first federal limits on harmful PFAS chemicals in drinking water. “This announcement is a major step toward protecting the public from these toxic chemicals that have contaminated drinking water supplies across the country, putting millions of people’s health at risk,” says Dr. Laurel Schaider, Senior Scientist at Silent Spring Institute, who contributed scientific input in support of the limits.

She says the standards will have significant health benefits, including lowering rates of cancer and other diseases, and protecting pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children.

These regulations mark an important milestone in addressing existing contamination, but Silent Spring’s research shows we must do more to prevent PFAS from entering the environment in the first place.

In December, Dr. Schaider was invited to testify at a subcommittee hearing for the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on the health impacts of PFAS. She described the pervasiveness of PFAS in consumer products – from stain-resistant upholstery to dental floss – and the urgent need to reduce the unnecessary and risky use of these chemicals in everyday items.

**Your gifts at work:** Dr. Laurel Schaider, Silent Spring Senior Scientist, testifying on the dangers of PFAS before members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.





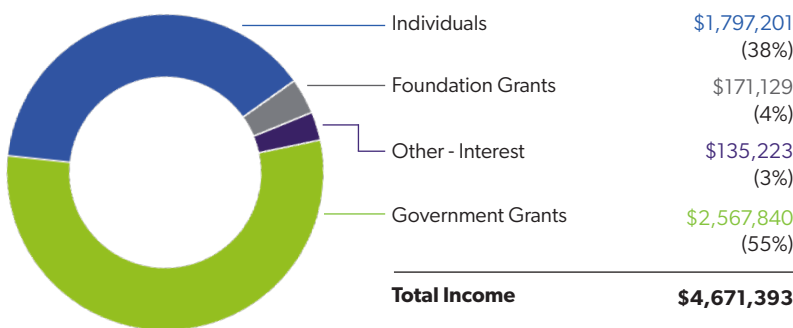


## FINANCIAL INFORMATION FISCAL YEAR 2024

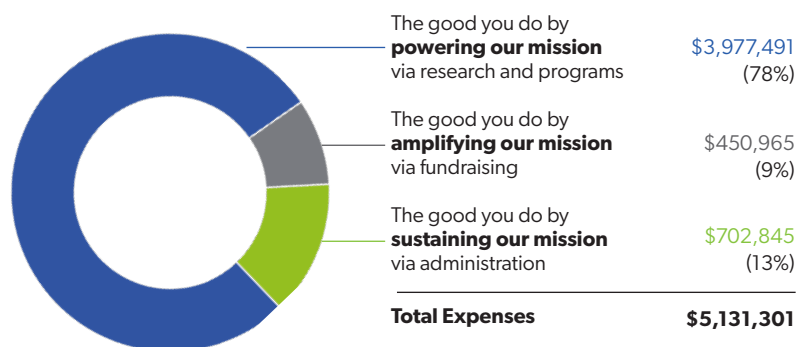
# POWERING OUR MISSION Together

**Your generosity** allowed us to make a strategic investment in our future. With careful planning and board approval, we allocated \$460,000 from our reserves to strengthen the infrastructure that powers our research. This one-time investment will allow us to keep paving the future of prevention, even in the face of uncertainty. We are deeply grateful for your generous support!

### SOURCES OF SUPPORT



### HOW WE USE OUR FUNDS



**Your commitment powers groundbreaking science that creates a healthier future for all people.** For more details about how your gifts are making a real-world difference, please contact Rachel d'Oronzio Sarvey, Director of Development, at: [sarvey@silentspring.org](mailto:sarvey@silentspring.org) or 617-332-4288 x215.



**Your support transforms research into action. Thank you for your commitment to our mission.**

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**SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE**  
Researching the Environment and Women's Health

