



# News from ISC

## Contents

- Profile of a Donor: Why I Give 2
- Kosovo Enters a New Era 2
- Redefining Moss Point 3
- Other News 3



Steve Nicholas, third from left, meets with ISC staff and partners in Guangdong Province, China.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

## From Commitment to Action

*Steve Nicholas, ISC's new director of climate and environmental programs, was previously Seattle's top sustainability officer. During his tenure, the city became an award-winning model for cities across the United States. At ISC, he will help other communities achieve their green goals.*

### **What are your proudest moments as director of Seattle's office of sustainability?**

My job was to help city departments translate the often fuzzy concept of sustainable development into effective on-the-ground action. It's been really rewarding to see how they have integrated sustainability into the way they design and implement programs, and deliver services to the residents and businesses of Seattle. For example, we helped the Department of Transportation understand that sustainable urban mobility is about creating a rich diversity of transportation choices—not just highways and bridges, but transit-friendly, bike-friendly and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and cleaner vehicles and cleaner fuels.

I'm also proud of the Seattle Climate Protection Initiative, for which we won the Innovations in American Government Award in 2007. It includ-

ed the Seattle Climate Action Plan, which I believe has been influential in many other cities—and it's working: Seattle's carbon footprint is shrinking. The initiative also included the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, an idea of Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels that created an unprecedented "movement of mayors" who not only pledged to reduce their own carbon footprints, but who also spoke in a louder, more coherent voice about the need for stronger federal policy. This movement—now comprising more than 900 cities—has made a big difference in terms of both the breadth and depth of the conversation about global warming in Congress and at the White House.

### **Will future growth threaten Seattle's progress on reducing carbon emissions?**

It certainly makes reducing Seattle's overall carbon footprint more challenging. But we saw absorbing more growth in people, jobs and housing units into already urbanized parts of our city as an act of climate-friendliness. Research suggests that the carbon footprint of a compact, mixed-use, transit-friendly urban development is about 25-30% lower than the carbon footprint of low-density,

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## PROFILE OF A DONOR

# Why I Give

*Edward McMahon is a Research Associate Professor at the University of Vermont—and a generous donor to ISC. He served for many years as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service, and as an international development nonprofit executive in Washington, DC. For the full interview, see [www.iscvt.org](http://www.iscvt.org).*

### What inspires you to give to ISC?

Three things make ISC unique in the international development field. The first is its emphasis on community building and empowering communities to promote social development. The second is ISC's ability to draw on incredibly talented people for the staff and the board.

Third is the culture in which ISC immerses itself here in Vermont. People at ISC understand what is special about Vermont and what makes that important in an international development context: our traditions of political participation, community involvement, town hall meetings, and the ability of people to get face-to-face time with their leaders. In so many countries around the world, people aren't used to having an impact in governing their own lives. Vermont's political culture is an asset that ISC shares globally.

The work that ISC does is important not just for the technical assistance it provides, but for providing solidarity, a sense of common endeavor. If you're a Macedonian organization trying to build bridges between the Albanian minority and the Macedonian majority—that's a scary type of work to do. There is no how-to book on creating meaningful social capital across deeply polarized societies. So the sense that people are not alone in facing up to this challenge is important.

### What draws you to international development?

I am trying to make the world a better place, to share information about how people can live in conditions of freedom, and it's so fulfilling. In this field you are forced to always be learning about the environments in which you are working—your antennae always have to be out picking up nuances. To me, that is what life is all about—it's not about sitting in your own comfortable shell.

To venture outside your shell, you don't have to travel halfway across the world. Obviously ISC gets this. The cultural skills you need to be able to walk into a situation in Guangzhou, China—being able to pick up on nuances in a different environment—are just as necessary if you're working in Mobile, Alabama or New Orleans.

### We are clearly facing some economic challenges. Why work internationally when we have problems at home?

It's when it's needed the most. I'd like to think that we recognize now that our future is inextricably intertwined with the rest of the world. Helping other peoples and other societies move toward achieving their potential is in our own best interests. We are affected if there are other Rwandas out there. You can make a very strong argument from a moral and also from a self-interested point of view that this is not Fortress America anymore. We cannot live in isolation. We're affected by global climate change. We're affected by communicable diseases. We're affected by refugee flows. So does it require stepping outside oneself a little bit? Yes, it does. 🍷

“I'd like to think that we recognize now that our future is inextricably intertwined with the rest of the world.”



*The award-winning 'Newborn' obelisk is unveiled after Kosovo declares its independence. “We chose the word 'Newborn' to globally pass on the message of the newest country being born,” the designers said.*

## THE BALKANS

# Kosovo Enters a New Era

## ISC helps citizens advocate for community needs

After many years of conflict and political uncertainty, Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008. And now, the new country must heal longstanding ethnic and political rifts while tackling serious problems like a faltering economy, corruption, environmental pollution, inadequate education and health care, and unemployment that stands at almost 60 percent.

In October, ISC launched a program in Kosovo to help ease the country's transition to an inclusive and democratic government. Like our programs in nearby Serbia and Macedonia, our goal is to help build a strong nonprofit sector that can advocate for and serve ordinary citizens, influencing public policy and ensuring that all ethnic groups are represented.

Although the challenges are immense, people remain optimistic. After many years of focusing on achieving independence—and working on issues important to the international community—Kosovo's citizens and the nonprofits that represent them are now able to tackle critical problems that affect their daily lives.

“We'll be able to encourage people to advocate for a whole range of close-to-the-heart needs at the community level rather than focusing on the overarching issue of Kosovo's status,” says Gretchen Elias, a senior program officer at ISC. For one of the poorest countries in Europe, this would be a great leap forward. 🍷



*Moss Point's Pascagoula River, famous for its wetlands and pelicans, was so dramatically altered by Hurricane Katrina's storm surge that many of the birds are only now starting to return.*

UNITED STATES

# Redefining Moss Point

## A city sets its sights on sustainability

When Hurricane Katrina decimated Moss Point, Mississippi, city leaders faced the daunting task of rebuilding with scarce resources and little experience managing an effort of this size.

Today, with the help of ISC, Moss Point leaders have a new vision for their community—one in which residents actively shape the city's future, eco-tourism prospers, and Smart Growth, neighborhood revitalization, and community design contribute to a more just, resilient, and livable city.

Since 2005, ISC has provided guidance to city officials on sustainable community planning and design, city management and leadership, civic engagement, and economic development, bringing in experts and partners when needed. We helped Moss Point officials implement an unprecedented city-wide outreach process in which they solicited each ward for public input on plans for a new waterfront downtown. And we have nurtured three nonprofits dealing with sustainability, housing, and development, helping them become more effective community partners. Today, despite many great challenges, Moss Point is a changed city with many possibilities for the future:

- Smart Growth concepts are being broadly integrated in the city's comprehensive planning processes.
- Housing, planning, and design services are accessible to the community since ISC helped

two resource organizations relocate to Moss Point (in a formerly empty historic building).

- Residents are now actively participating in day-to-day decision-making through Community Advisory Task Forces on Affordable Housing and Downtown Redevelopment that advise city officials on redevelopment.
- New private and public resources are flowing into a previously under-resourced city.
- Underserved groups are being heard and real progress has been made in reversing longstanding apathy in the community.

**“I’m proud to say that Moss Point has become a model for other cities.”**

“I’m proud to say that Moss Point has become a model for other cities for how to combine citizen involvement with teamwork that crosses political, social

and geographic boundaries to achieve a greater good,” says Moss Point Mayor Xavier Bishop. “Because of the work of ISC, we have begun to set our sights even higher than before.”

To that end, this fall ISC is launching a Sustainable Communities Network, a new forum to connect the most vulnerable communities along the Gulf Coast, give their leaders new opportunities to learn, and help them share information and resources. Our goal? To see healthy, strong, resource-efficient communities that can weather any storm. 🌟

## Other News

### Chinese Communities Take on Global Warming

This fall, ISC selected three communities to participate in our community-based energy efficiency project in Guangdong, China. Guanlan is switching factories from coal to natural gas, retrofitting energy inefficient buildings, and cleaning up its rivershed. Sanjiao wants to stop using toxic pesticides on its local farms, reduce fuel consumption by analyzing transportation, and improve the efficiency of a textile factory. With plans to build 150 factories in the next three years, Doumen wants to build green—to ensure factories are energy efficient and climate friendly from the start. “These communities will model a way forward to a lower-carbon economy and a healthier and more sustainable future,” says Matthew DeGroot, a senior program officer at ISC.

### ISC Website Wins Awards

Tag New Media, a Burlington, Vermont-based web design firm, has won three awards for their design of ISC's new site: a coveted silver W3 Award, a gold Horizon Interactive Award and a silver Summit International Award. Come take a look at [www.iscvt.org](http://www.iscvt.org).

