Frank Babka represented World Population Balance at the 2003 United Nations Population Awards in New York City on June 18th. Laureate in the individual category was Population Institute President, Werner Fornos, for his long-time advocacy on family planning issues throughout the world. Winner in the institutional category was the non-profit Family Planning Association of Kenya.

The Population Awards are presented annually by the UNFPA and consist of a medal, a diploma, and a monetary prize. The invitation-only ceremony and reception took place at the UN's compound in New York City.

Madame Nane Annan, wife of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, presented both awards. Also present were UN Undersecretary General Dr. Thoraya Obaid, the Executive Director of UNFPA, and her deputy, Stirling Scruggs, whom we featured at our May, 2002 World Population Balance Lecture. A number of dignitaries from the political and diplomatic arenas were in attendance.

In his acceptance speech, Fornos asserted that "It would be a grave mistake to assume that we have now won the battle to bring population into balance with the world's environment and resources... Those who claim that the problem of rapid human growth has been resolved stand guilty of knowingly or unwittingly coddling the comfortable and ignoring the afflicted. Much more work lies ahead to stabilize world population."

As World Population Balance’s Public Educator, Frank Babka has personally taught population information to over 45,000 stu-

What People are Saying About Our Talks

World Population Balance speakers continue to give hundreds of live presentations and media interviews throughout Minnesota and the surrounding region. We frequently speak at colleges, schools, places of worship, civic and various other organizations. In many instances we are returning to groups for the fifth or sixth time.

A recent participant admitted she had never heard of the population problem before. She had no idea that it is a major world challenge. Our speakers often reach people like her who have been completely unaware of the issue.

Following are comments from recent participants:

"You have brought a mega-issue to our attention. From this side of the world, we do not fully understand the extremity of the population crisis. Thanks for educating us more, so now we will pass this on."

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In July Nancy and I savored an experience that hundreds of millions of the world’s 6.3 billion people never have. We spent four fantastic days in a secluded place away from other people. We were in a cottage in the dunes of southeastern Lake Michigan.

I grew up less than forty miles away from this paradise and spent summers swimming several times each day, enjoying long walks up and down the beach, hiking back into the high dunes, watching the evening sun sink into the lake, and experiencing raging storms and high waves as they blew in from the west.

Over a hundred years ago my great grandfather, who farmed fifteen miles inland, brought his children to camp at this very same spot.

No matter where I have traveled around the world -- Africa, Asia, Europe, North America -- I feel most connected to the planet in these special dunes and shore along Lake Michigan. I feel most grounded there. The great sand dune a half-mile inland, Thunder Mountain, is the highest point in southwestern Michigan. Whenever I am there I feel refreshed and rejuvenated.

The change along these shores during the past two hundred years is quite amazing. During hundreds of earlier years there were no “permanent” structures or signs of human life for countless miles along the shore. Pottawatomie Indians (an Algonquin tribe) lived in the region and spent time along some sections of the lake. Thunder Mountain was a sacred place to them.

A century ago my Grandfather could walk hours and see no dwellings other than an occasional fisherman’s shack leaning against a dune. Even then there were no cabins or cottages for countless miles! Early in the 20th century the virgin pines were logged and shipped to Chicago to build homes.

By 1950 there were a few cottages along the shore, and many lots were still empty. Today most of the shoreline has a cottage every two to three hundred feet -- including on some fragile, unstable dunes that the winds and weather constantly shift.

Of course, empty lakeshore lots are becoming increasingly rare, and whenever a cottage or lot becomes available it is purchased quickly. Rapidly increasing demand for this fixed natural asset -- Lake Michigan frontage -- far exceeds the finite supply. Not only do most lots now have cottages; many of the newer ones are being built much larger than those of my youth.

The lake water does not seem as clean as it was 50 years ago. There is a slight oily feeling when swimming. That was not the case when I was a child (nor is it the case in Lake Superior when I swim there, less than a week ago). Lake Michigan is facing challenges from increasing numbers of invasive species, as well.

During our stay I pondered: How will this place look a hundred years from now? Will humans cause as much change during the 21st century as in the last? Will replacement dwellings be larger, imposing more upon the dunes? Will the interior land be carved into lots where more cottages will spring up -- two or four or six “deep” from the shore?

Will the dunes, these fragile treasures that have existed for many thousands of years, be so “developed” and peopled that they will succumb to vastly greater erosion and blow away in the wind?

I hope and pray this will not be the case. We have opportunities within our grasp to harness technologies that are more environmentally friendly -- for the benefit of all people across the planet, both today and in the future.

It is crucial that we: (1) humanely reduce birth rates to stabilize our numbers, (2) reduce our high consumption of resources and unprecedented, high levels of pollution, and (3) become true stewards of our precious, irreplaceable, tiny-blue-dot home -- planet Earth.

Together we can bring this vision into reality. Together we can make it happen. Join me in this vitally important mission!

e-mail: Paxson@WorldPopulationBalance.org

No matter what your cause, it is a lost cause unless we also stop population growth.
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"This was a topic which I would not have studied or researched, had you not spoken about it. Thank you for expanding my science-related knowledge."

"Amazing! Thank you for all of your work. It's so important and so worthwhile."

"This presentation was incredibly fascinating. The information and figures you told us were absolutely mind-boggling. I couldn't believe the figures for the net gain in the world population. You really inspired me to do my part to help alleviate the problem."

"The first video was amazing -- where are we going to put all those people? I had never considered how rapid population growth would endanger our world in the near future. It was definitely beneficial to hear from such an informed source."

"The video was amazing -- I am in a history class right now, and it was very cool to see how the population changed during the times we're studying. Thank you so much for speaking to us and for your noble work of raising awareness about this issue."

"It is amazing that such a subject is not introduced until high school and college. We are the people who have the power to do and advocate, but everyone should be aware, worldwide."

"The video on Minnesota was a real eye opener to me and has inspired me to think about what needs to be done in our world today."

"What a great topic! I had no idea how vast the repercussions of overpopulation can be. Thank you, on behalf of all of us, for trying to educate our generation about what we can do to help secure our own future and the futures of our children."

Above: In late May, passersby in the downtown Minneapolis Crystal Court encountered an exhibit called "The Family of Woman" created by the U.S. Committee for the United Nations Population Fund. The traveling exhibit portrays and describes the conditions faced by women in developing countries and explains how UNFPA's program of education and empowerment benefits women, their families, and their societies. The entire exhibit can be viewed online at http://www.familyofwoman.org.

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Students throughout the Upper Midwest during the past five years. In addition, he supports development projects in Africa and several charities. He recognizes that population stabilization is key to sustainable, long-term improvements in standards of living throughout the world. To book Frank for presentations, call him directly at 952-797-9843.
State of World Population Report Released

Lower birth rates and slower population growth over the last three decades have contributed to faster economic progress in a number of developing countries, according to The State of World Population 2002 report. This UNFPA report highlights the important role of slowing population growth in achieving the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.

Larger families and rapidly growing populations obstruct development and prolong poverty, at both the household and national levels. When poor families are given more opportunities, they choose to have fewer children than their parents did. This decline in fertility leads to potential economic growth within one generation, opening a once-only “demographic window” that has already helped the economies of several countries in East Asia and other regions.

About one in every five people lived in absolute poverty in 1980. Had all countries reduced net fertility by five births per thousand women of reproductive age during the 1980s, says the report, poverty incidence would have been reduced by a third, or to one in eight people. A fall of 4 per thousand in the net birth rate would translate into a 2.4 per cent decline in those living in absolute poverty in the next decade.

UNFPA’s State of World Population report has been published annually since 1978. Each year, the report focuses on questions of current interest and concern for the future. The report is available online, at http://www.unfpa.org.

Learn to Visualize Large Numbers

Is it a challenge imagining a million of something, let alone 6.25 billion people? A new Web site called the MegaPenny Project is just the teaching tool you need. MegaPenny takes advantage of the fact that a row of sixteen pennies is a foot long and a stack of sixteen is an inch high. Beautiful illustrations will show you exactly what a thousand pennies look like, then ten thousand, a million, and so on up to a quintillion!

You’ll find the MegaPenny Project at http://www.kokogiak.com/megapenny/.