



## Taking it to the Streets *The Artist's Way*

Convincing pedestrians to stop and talk about your issue is an art, as Eve S. Mosher is proving on the streets of New York this summer.

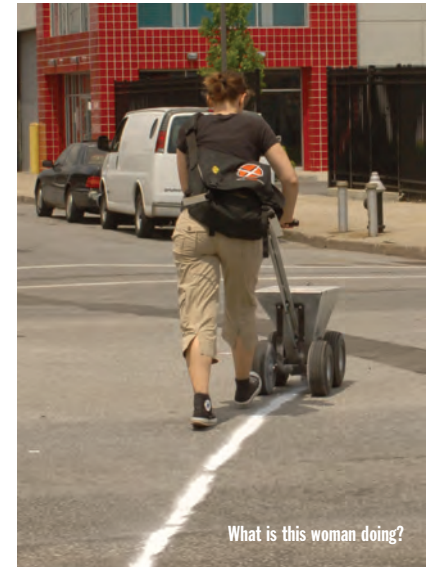
**H**it the sidewalks of just about any major city and you're bound to run into them: earnest young men and women with smiles on their faces and pamphlets in their hands.

"Do you have a moment?" they ask, and before you can even open your mouth, they're already into their spiel about homelessness, AIDS, Darfur – you name it.

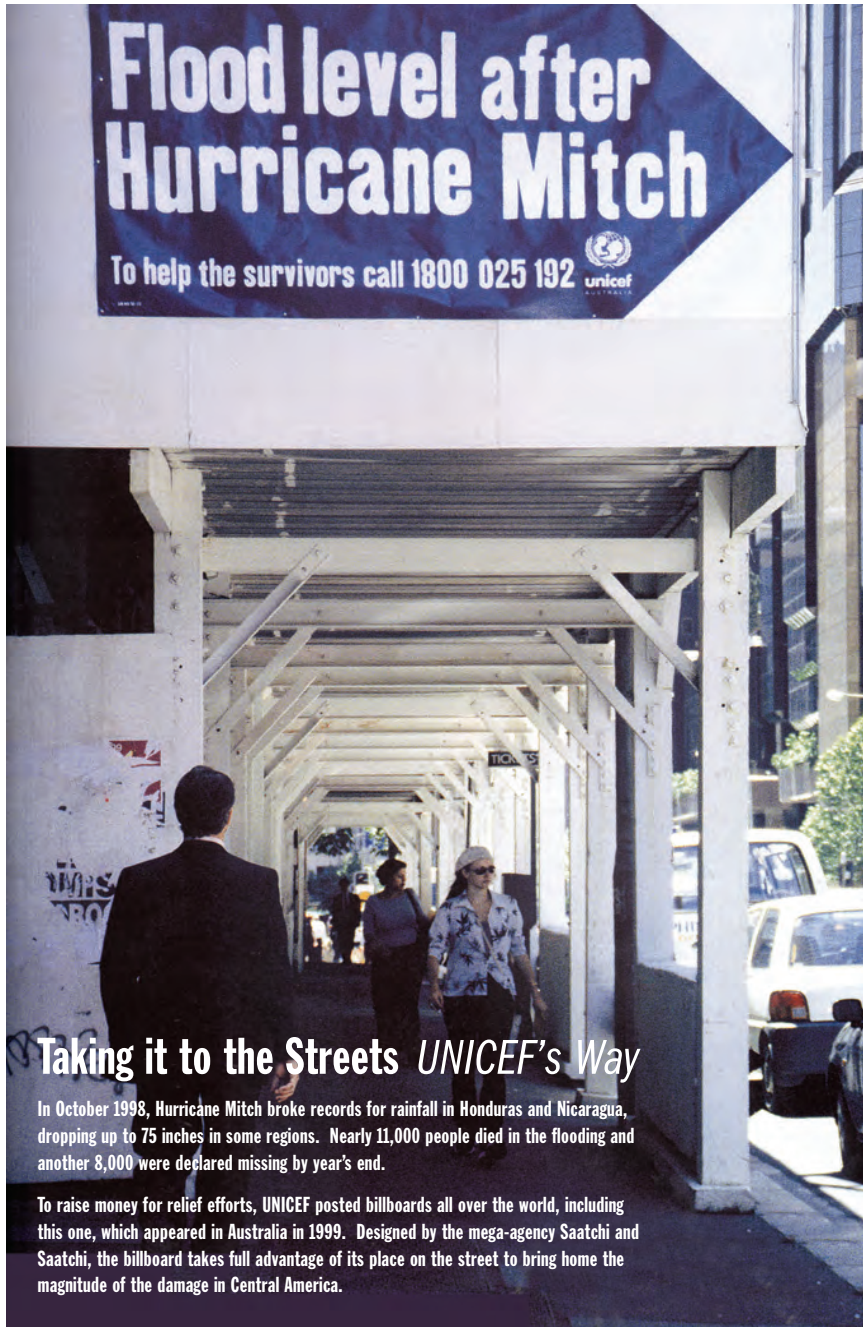
These appeals – so urgent and heart-rending – can become overwhelming over time, so even the most compassionate among us can be forgiven for avoiding eye contact and scurrying across the street. Which has to make you wonder: in an age of too much information and too little time, how does a good cause convince anyone on the move to stop, listen, and maybe even give?

Since May, Eve S. Mosher has been working the streets of Brooklyn to raise awareness and spur action on global warming. More artist than

activist, Mosher brings a different sensibility to civic engagement, but the responses she's getting should make activists everywhere take notice. In one of America's busiest cities, Mosher isn't stopping people to talk about global warming. They're stopping her.



What is this woman doing?



### Taking it to the Streets *UNICEF's Way*

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch broke records for rainfall in Honduras and Nicaragua, dropping up to 75 inches in some regions. Nearly 11,000 people died in the flooding and another 8,000 were declared missing by year's end.

To raise money for relief efforts, UNICEF posted billboards all over the world, including this one, which appeared in Australia in 1999. Designed by the mega-agency Saatchi and Saatchi, the billboard takes full advantage of its place on the street to bring home the magnitude of the damage in Central America.

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*Free-range thinking™ is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Lori Matsumoto.*



**a goodman**

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

444 north larchmont blvd, suite 102  
los angeles, ca 90004

► Originally from Houston, Eve Mosher received her Master of Fine Arts from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and for the last ten years her artwork has been inspired by and often composed of elements from the natural world. (You can see samples of her work at [www.mudandsticks.com](http://www.mudandsticks.com).) With a bachelors in Environmental Design as well, Mosher was probably destined to take her work outside the galleries, and while she doesn't like to be overtly partisan, she will say that the "political climate of the last few years" ultimately pushed her in this direction.

Last year, she began considering outdoor projects such as greening rooftops and designing community gardens, but eventually her focus descended all the way to the sidewalks and streets of Brooklyn. Having heard the steady drumbeat of reports about global warming (and particularly the increased threat of coastal flooding), Mosher decided that her next project would

transform this looming but invisible threat into something people could see every day.

In August 2006, she started writing grant requests for "High Water Line," a public artwork that would show New Yorkers precisely how far inland nearby waters would reach during severe storms. With data from NASA's Goddard Institute as her guide, Mosher proposed drawing a chalk line through sections of Brooklyn and Manhattan at ten feet above sea level, the boundary that federal and state agencies use to project damage from storm surges. If global warming continues unabated, current research indicates, these surges could come as often as every four years by 2080.

The first grant came through in December 2006, "so I knew I had to make this happen," Mosher says. She used the money to purchase 3,000 pounds of chalk, environmentally-friendly pigment (to tint the chalk blue, making the line more noticeable), and a four-wheeled line-maker – "The Heavy Hitter" – more commonly used to outline baseball diamonds.

Before she could start walking the chalk, though, Mosher had to talk the talk, meeting with nine community governing boards to promote interest in her project and assuage any concerns. She also contacted officials at city departments of transportation and parks to obtain necessary permits, but

"there aren't any permits for chalking," Mosher says with a chuckle. With all bases covered, she began laying down a 4-inch wide chalk stripe in the Spring Creek section of Brooklyn on May 17, 2007, the start of what will eventually be a 70-mile long line.

The "performance," as Mosher refers to the project on her blog, is rarely a one-woman show. She is often accompanied by an intern who will hand out "action packets" to passersby listing personal steps they can take to reduce their contribution to global warming. She has also been trailed by a videographer and reporters, most notably from *The New York Times*, which published a story about Mosher on June 16th. But it is the average man and woman in the street who approach her every day that keeps Mosher on this particular path.

"The project, for me, is a little bit of a rollercoaster ride every day and every week," she wrote recently on her blog. "For every one person who is a skeptic or annoyed about the chalk on the street, there are the 10 or more that are so excited about the project and the information that they high five me on the curb, or call out to say hello as I [continue] down the road. Sometimes I am utterly, utterly exhausted by the end of the day, but as soon as I put down the next morning's first stripe of chalk or have a kid run up to ask 'What are you doing?' I feel energized and ready to take on the day's path."



Talk to Mosher (as this Brooklynite did) and you'll receive an "action packet" outlining specific steps to help curb global warming.



A line grows in Brooklyn.

The chalk line survives only a day or two before pedestrians, cars, or weather wears it away, but Mosher remains optimistic that her impact on the people she interacts with will last much longer. And I'm hopeful that Mosher's story will make public interest groups re-think the way they conduct street outreach. Rather than trying to find a hip new way to say, "Hey buddy, got a minute?" perhaps the more useful question would be: what can we *do* that will make people want to talk to us? ■

(Special thanks to Eve S. Mosher and The Canary Project for providing the photographs for this article. To follow Mosher's progress, visit [www.highwaterline.org](http://www.highwaterline.org).)