

## EDUCATION

# UW-Madison professor Tracey Holloway wants to educate moms on climate change through work with Science Moms



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As a scientist, Tracey Holloway has spent a lot of time thinking about how climate change is going to affect the world.

As a mother of two young boys, she spends a lot of time thinking about what the world will be like when her youngest son — now only 10 months — turns 30.

"It always seemed like 2050 was so far into the future, but now my baby's going to be 30 in 2050, and that's not that far away," she said.

Holloway, a professor at the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has been studying air quality and pollution for nearly 20 years. Now, she's teaming up with other women scientists to help make understanding climate change accessible, forming a group called Science Moms.

It's important to her to make the science seem closer to home, and more digestible and relatable to parents, especially mothers. The group aims to show climate change through the lens of having children and being a mother at the same time as being a scientist.

"We're not all men in white coats in a laboratory somewhere," she said.



Tracey Holloway and her son, Peter. *Courtesy Of Tracey Holloway*

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Science Moms is a \$10 million campaign that includes television and digital advertising in swing states such as Wisconsin, produced by a consortium of creative agencies working on climate change, known as the Potential Energy Coalition. The campaign hinges on the thought that mothers tend to be most interested in climate change, but may not have access to reliable information on the topic.

Also participating in the campaign are Katherine Hayhoe, co-director of the Climate Center at Texas Tech in Lubbock; Melissa Burt, a research scientist in the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University; Emily Fischer, an atmospheric chemist and associate professor in the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado University; Ruth DeFries, a professor of ecology and sustainable development at Columbia University in New York and a MacArthur "genius" award recipient; and Joellen Russell, the Thomas R. Brown Distinguished Chair of integrative science, professor of geosciences, planetary science, hydrology & atmospheric sciences at the University of Arizona.



Tracey Holloway, right, works with a group of students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison *Courtesy Of Tracey Holloway*

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Holloway didn't get her start in climate science until late in college. She thought she'd pursue law or business after graduating with an applied mathematics degree, but a summer job at NASA changed her mind.

"I thought it was so cool how these ... mathematic methods and computers could be used to understand the Earth and space," she said. "The whole thing made me feel excited about going into science."

After finishing her undergraduate degree from Brown University, she got a doctorate in atmospheric and oceanic sciences from Princeton University, where most of her study focused on how pollution from one country can affect another.

"I just found it really a good way to spend my life, thinking about trying to link the best available science to problems that really matter for people," she said.

Here in Wisconsin, she hopes Science Moms can help residents see that the issue of climate change shouldn't be so politicized.

"I think when it comes to climate, there are so many solutions on the shelf that are ready to be deployed, and that are good for our economy, and that create

jobs, and that lead to new business opportunities," she said. "I think this doesn't have to be a right or left issue."

She'd like to see people recognize the problem and take simple steps to move in a different direction, such as raising climate change to legislators so they take action.

She'd also like to see Wisconsin take advantage of its natural resources, turning bio-resources into cleaner energy.

"We're not producing fossil fuels within our state, and there are a lot of reasons to think that our state could really benefit from changes taking steps to solve climate change," she said. "In addition to the fact that it's moving us toward a more stable climate for our kids."

So far, the response to Science Moms has been positive, she said. She's heard from friends and strangers that they've seen the commercials and they've connected with the online resources on the group's website, including books to help parents and children better understand climate change.

But the most important thing the movement has done so far is getting people talking about the issue of climate change.

"The number one thing they can do is to talk about it, to talk with each other about it, to talk to their local representatives about it to make it less political," she said. "Changes don't depend on one person taking the bus or one person turning off their lights, they depend on broader social change to implement the many, many different types of climate solutions that are out there."

Holloway said now is the time to provide equal access to climate information because there is still time to help slow down the changes the Earth could see in the future. She's an optimist that things will get better for the Earth as scientists continue to share their knowledge, just like her group is doing.

"The mission of Science Moms is really to get people talking about this, and to get people to feel like their voice is going to make a difference in the conversation," she said. "Because it will."

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