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## Filmmaker to speak Thursday in Piscataway school district lecture series

By *JARED KALTWASSER*  
*Staff Writer*

An award-winning filmmaker will talk about the battle over control of the global water supply Thursday night as part of the school district's 2009 Peggy Friedman Memorial Lecture Series.

Filmmaker Alan Snitow will show clips from his 2004 documentary "Thirst" and speak about the film and his 2007 book by the same name.

"Thirst" documents local resistance to the privatization of local water systems in Stockton, Calif., India and Bolivia. Snitow said water privatization is a dangerous trend.

"There is a principle here, and the principle, I think, is this is a fundamental life-giving resource and it's also a monopoly resource — there's only one set of pipes," Snitow said in a telephone interview last week. "There's been a long tradition of . . . legal doctrine that says water is something that is too basic a service to be consigned to corporate profit-making and short-term thinking."

Snitow said large multinational water companies first tried to buy up local water systems in the developing world, but backed out after finding strong opposition and unstable economic conditions.

Instead, Snitow said, they began buying up water systems in the United States, particularly in small and mid-sized cities. He said the firms were aided in large part by a 1997 Internal Revenue Service rule change that allowed private companies to lease water systems for 20 years, instead of the previous limit of five years. Snitow said the new rule could help water companies amass too much political power.

"Once you have 50 percent or 40 percent of these towns around the country, you create a regulatory and governmental nightmare," he said. "You begin to have these companies completely controlling the policy."

He said corporate control of water companies also can have a major effect on conservation efforts.

"Private water companies make their money by selling water to you, they don't make their money by conserving water," he said. "So they have an incentive not to press for conservation."

The lecture series is held each year in honor of former school board member and Rutgers University teacher Peggy Friedman. Friedman died of complications from lung cancer in 2006. The series began in 2006-2007.

Superintendent of Schools Robert Copeland said Friedman was the conscience of the board.

"She was the person who would always ask the difficult questions about whether we had considered what was right and who it was for and were we doing the right thing — not just for kids, but for employees and staff and for the community," Copeland said. And ultimately, Peggy was the kind of person who asked whether we were doing the right things for society as a whole, he said.

Copeland said the purpose of the lecture series is to create well-rounded students with a conscience and to provide unique learning opportunities for the district's high-school students.

"I think that this provides a unique opportunity for people who are renowned and esteemed in their field to be able to come face to face with high-school students," Copeland said. "This is normally the type of event that takes place at a college campus."

## Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** Peggy Friedman Memorial Lecture Series

**WHO:** Filmmaker Alan Snitow

**WHERE:** Piscataway High School, 100 Behmer Road, Room F100

**WHEN:** 7 p.m. Thursday

**HOW MUCH:** Free; open to public

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [www.pway.org](http://www.pway.org), [www.thirstthemovie.org](http://www.thirstthemovie.org)