

# EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 20, No. 2 ♦ Summer 2002



## Better Pueblo Incineration Repackaged Shouldn't the Polluters Pay for Superfund?

The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement  
Center for Health, Environment and Justice

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# ABOUT CHEJ

The Center for Health, Environment, and Justice is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that provides organizing and technical assistance to grassroots community organizations nationwide. The center was founded in 1981 by Lois Gibbs, who together with her neighbors won the relocation of more than 900 families from their neighborhood after it was contaminated by chemicals leaking from the Love Canal landfill in Niagara Falls, NY. Hundreds of people living near contaminated sites around the country contacted Lois as her efforts and those of her neighbors captured national attention and proved, for the first time, that toxic waste is not an abstract issue but one that's in everyone's backyard.

The center's mission is to help people build democratic, community-based organizations to address public health and environmental threats. We believe strongly that the best way to solve local problems is from the bottom up, when the people directly affected speak for themselves and have a meaningful role, as equals, in any and all decisions that affect their lives, homes and family. Our focus and resources are devoted to helping local community based organizations form, grow, and become effective in achieving their goals. We do this by providing information, advice, training, and support. We also refer callers to other grassroots groups who are working on the same issues or fighting the same polluter.

CHEJ can help your newly formed group:

- ◆ learn how to conduct successful meetings
- ◆ raise funds
- ◆ define a strategic plan to accomplish goals,
- ◆ network with others
- ◆ hold news briefings and press conferences
- ◆ identify experts to assist with technical or scientific issues and questions

For more established groups, CHEJ can provide guidance and assistance on issues such as keeping people involved over the long haul, organizational structure and board development, one- to five-year strategic planning, building working coalitions, developing campaign and issue strategies, media training and assistance, and expanding beyond your existing geographical area.

CHEJ has staff scientists who can answer many of your questions and who can review technical documents and tests results you need help with. The center also has a unique library of books, reports, government documents, subject and corporate files, and videos that may have just the information you need.

Currently, CHEJ is coordinating three national campaigns:

- ◆ *Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign*, which is working to educate the public about the health threat posed by dioxin and to move all levels of government to take steps to eliminate the sources of dioxin
- ◆ *Child Proofing Our Communities*, devoted to protecting children from pesticides and toxic chemicals in schools and day care facilities

We invite local groups to become part of these campaigns. Don't hesitate to contact us.

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## THANK YOU!

We want to say, "Thank you very much" to all of you who took the time to fill out the reader survey we included in our last issue. Your feedback will help us produce a better magazine. We'll be getting back to you soon on the results of the survey.

## WELCOME!

CHEJ would like to welcome our newest staff member, Paul Ruther, who will be coordinating the Child Proofing Our Communities campaign. Paul has been a grassroots political organizer and activist for fifteen years, primarily on Central American issues. He has also worked professionally in the co-op movement. Welcome, Paul!



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BY LARRY YATES

# BETTER PUEBLO

In Pueblo, Colorado, an exciting coalition of environmentalists, labor organizers, people from faith-based organizations, farmers, and just plain civic-minded people came together in the late 1990s, and has already begun to change the way the community thinks about environmental, labor, and other public policy issues. The coalition—Better Pueblo—emerged when activists opposing the military’s plans to incinerate chemical weapons and a union fighting for better pay and working conditions at a local steel mill found common ground and decided to work together to accomplish what they were having hard time getting done on their own.

## TAKING ON THE MILITARY

Pueblo is the site of the U.S. Army’s Pueblo Chemical Depot—a storage site for 2,600 tons of aging, World War II chemical weapons. When in 1985, the Army announced that it would dispose of those weapons by incinerating them on-site, there were few dissenting voices and no formal opposition.

This changed only slowly. In 1988, Ross Vincent, an activist who had worked on environmental issues in Louisiana and elsewhere, moved to Pueblo. Keenly aware of the risks of incineration, he reached out through the Sierra Club network to find support. In 1991, he attended the first “Citizens’ Summit” on chemical weapons disposal in Richmond, Kentucky, at which concerned citizens from all eight U.S. chemical weapons stockpile sites, as well as from other sites around the world, founded the Chemical Weapons Working Group (CWWG). Since then, the CWWG has helped communities like Pueblo push the Pentagon to replace incineration of chemical weapons with safer alternative technologies.

During the 1990s, the CWWG—through local activists like Vincent—fought a seesaw struggle to get the Pentagon to seriously study non-incineration disposal. When necessary, the CWWG network went “over the Army’s head” to Congress so the Pentagon would take alternative technologies seriously. The result, the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment adopted in 1997, known as ACWA, is widely considered to be a model process for genuinely involving citizens in a technically complex environmental decision. The ACWA dialogue process enabled affected citizens, state regulators and Department of Defense officials to work together to develop criteria for selecting technology to destroy chemical weapons. That process has moved forward several non-

incineration technologies appropriate not just for destroying chemical weapons but for remediating other hazardous wastes—without the risks of incineration.

By 1999, thanks to the CWWG and the ACWA process, a national network had formed to make the case that there are safer ways to destroy chemical weapons than incineration. In Pueblo, however, local officials and civic leaders were still in step with the Army’s plans. Vincent knew that something had to change in Pueblo. But he needed allies to make it happen—and not just from environmental groups.

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### *BETTER PUEBLO’S AGENDA INCLUDES*

*“ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, WORKER RIGHTS AND SAFETY, CLEAN AIR AND WATER, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE.”*

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## PROBLEMS AT THE STEEL MILL

Rocky Mountain Steel Mills, now owned by Oregon Steel, has operated in Pueblo for more than a century and is one of Pueblo’s larger employers. But the United Steelworkers working there saw some serious flaws with the plant. Oregon Steel, after buying the mill in 1993, cut back on worker safety and environmental protection and pushed for more overtime. In 1997, Colorado’s Air Pollution Control Division found numerous air emissions violations at Oregon Steel, and the mill’s owners agreed to pay a penalty, replace worn equipment, and take other anti-pollution steps. The state, however, did not enforce the agreement. Later that year, the Steelworkers went out on strike to protest the company’s unfair labor practices and a substandard contract offer. When they ended their strike three months later, Oregon Steel said their jobs had been filled. Besides taking legal action to get their jobs back under safer conditions, the Steelworkers also took on the mill’s environmental practices, in line with their national union’s policy that “protecting our children’s future and our own jobs from the threat of environmental destruction is a job for all levels of the union.”

In 1997, the Steelworkers hired Charlie Skidmore, the Assistant State Legislative Director for the United Transportation Union and one of the 30 railroad workers fired during the strike, to reach out to environmentalists. Fortuitously, Skidmore turned to Ross Vincent. Over green chili and beer,

they agreed to work together, envisioning what Charlie calls “a coalition I’ve always dreamed of”—consisting of environmentalists and labor and other key groups in the community.

Skidmore and Vincent then brought together a small group of labor activists, Sierra Club members, and members of CCAP (Citizens for Clean Air and Water in Pueblo and Southern Colorado, a local community group fighting polluting projects). At one early key meeting, they were joined by telephone by a key Steelworkers official who emphasized the union’s commitment to the environment. Soon about a dozen activists were meeting regularly, usually at 6 a.m. breakfast meetings. A key addition to the group at this point was Larry Howe-Kerr, a staffer for the Catholic Diocese of Pueblo. This was the group that became Better Pueblo, though the group evolved so gradually that no one can even remember who came up with the name.

Better Pueblo’s original target was Oregon Steel, and the group played an active role in pushing state and federal regulators to ensure Oregon Steel met its Clean Air Act responsibilities. But chemical weapons incineration became the issue that really forged the group into an effective force in the community.

## GETTING THE ARMY TO CHANGE ITS MIND

In 1999, most decision-makers and media in the Pueblo area accepted the Army’s message that incineration of chemical weapons was safe. Incineration seemed inevitable to those locally “in the know.” When Better Pueblo’s members began to speak up on the issue, they were asked why they were even bothering to do so. Better Pueblo took the position that, no matter what the outcome, the community deserved to have public hearings and a careful and openly-discussed consideration of possible environmental impacts. This message was especially powerful when it came from unexpected sources—like the Catholic bishop of Pueblo.

As the Army’s decision began to loom over Pueblo, 15 or 20 people—the core of Better Pueblo—spent hours preparing their joint response to the plans for incineration. Representatives from a neighborhood group near the Depot, as well as farmers and ranchers concerned about incineration’s impact on their livelihoods, joined in the effort. Better Pueblo activists spoke up at hearings and organized public events. Their hard work changed the debate: incineration was no longer seen as inevitable. In May of 2001, the Commissioners of Pueblo

County voted to favor non-incineration technologies. In early 2002, as the Pentagon moved closer to a decision, Colorado’s governor backed that local position. So did the state legislature, which changed state law so that local governments had incentives to support non-incineration disposal methods.

In March 2002, Under Secretary of Defense Aldridge announced that the chemical weapons at the Pueblo Army Depot would be destroyed by a water-based neutralization process—hydrolysis—rather than by incineration. In a CWWG press release, Vincent stated that the people of Pueblo and the Depot staff could now “move ahead quickly and in harmony to destroy the 780,000 mustard-agent-containing rounds stored here.” Looking beyond Pueblo, he noted that the decision also meant “that incinerator salesmen can no longer argue persuasively that incineration is ‘state-of-the-art.’” Craig Williams, Director of the CWWG, called for the same decision in other communities, like Anniston, Alabama, where the army has built a chemical weapons incinerator and where plans are underway to distribute gas-mask like hoods to the general population. “There is absolutely no justification to further poison this or the other communities that store these weapons,” said Williams.

## CLEANING UP THE MILL

The activists in Better Pueblo hadn’t forgotten Oregon Steel. As the new century began, they continued to apply pressure on the state of Colorado to do a better job of enforcing environmental regulations. Community involvement in the struggle refuted the “sour grapes” charges leveled against the union, while labor involvement silenced the “anti-jobs” accusation against environmentalists. And the involvement of the Catholic Church, with no institutional ax to grind, made the effort even more credible. Prodded by this activism, state and federal environmental agencies took a stronger stand on the steel mill’s violations.

The result was a consent decree which, as EBY goes to press, has received court approval and has been largely incorporated by the state into an enforceable Title

V permit. The consent decree requires Oregon Steel to replace the mill’s furnaces with cleaner and more efficient new ones, install full-time monitoring for particulate emissions, pay for an independent full-time inspector located in Pueblo, and put \$1.5 million into local environmental projects. Vincent

*continued on page 10*



*Community representatives at an April hearing to discuss the destruction of Pueblo’s chemical weapons through water-based technology. Ross Vincent is in the middle. Photo by Chris McLean for the Pueblo Chieftain*

BY LOIS GIBBS

# SHOULDN'T THE POLLUTERS PAY?

I have often been called the “mother of Superfund”—the federal law passed in 1980 as a result of the Love Canal dumpsite disaster. When Superfund first passed, I was proud to be associated with the new program. The program was the result of efforts by a blue-collar community—demonstrating how organized local efforts can make a significant difference nationally. Love Canal residents felt good about the fact that they had made it easier for families living near toxic waste sites to be relocated or have their communities cleaned up.

When President Carter visited Niagara Falls in October of 1980, he explained to me the rationale behind the law. The Superfund program would be funded from a tax on oil and chemical companies. When the EPA determined that a site was a danger to human health and/or the environment, the agency would undertake testing and cleanup of the site. When there was a responsible party that had the resources to pay the costs of cleanup, the agency would ask the polluter to pay. If the corporation refused, the EPA could use the fund to do the cleanup, then take the corporation to court and sue for three times the cleanup costs. If there was no viable corporation that could reimburse the agency for the cleanup, the EPA would use the fund to cover the costs.

## A SLOW BEGINNING

Soon after President Reagan took office in 1981, Love Canal families and activists across the country watched in horror as the Superfund law was reinterpreted and misused.

Rita Levelle, the first Superfund Program Administrator, refused to release the list of thousands of potential toxic sites submitted for inclusion in the program. It was only after Congress became frustrated and demanded that Levelle provide the names of 400 sites that the first list was established. Levelle took the list of sites, which were rated according to a hazard rating system and ranked from the most to the least threatening, and gave Congress the names of the first 400. By this action, it was established that to qualify for Superfund cleanup, a site would need a hazard rating of 28.5. If Congress had asked for 600 or 700 sites, the rating needed to receive Superfund status could have been much lower.

After sites were identified, Levelle and Ann Gorsuch Burford, EPA's administrator, were pressured again by Congress to move forward on the site assessments and cleanups. What happened next ended both women's careers at the EPA. The Superfund program moved forward in dozens of sites across the country—but the sites that received action were located almost exclusively in Republican-controlled districts. Democratic districts received little or no assistance. At first, the EPA's explanation was “coincidence.” Congress investigated both Levelle and Burford; both resigned and Levelle served a federal prison sentence for lying to Congress.

## ENHANCING SUPERFUND

With Burford and Levelle gone, Superfund began to move forward. There was renewed hope that the program would be run effectively. In 1986,



*President Jimmy Carter with Lois Gibbs at Niagara Falls in 1980 announcing that the federal government would pay for the relocation of 900 families from Love Canal.*

the Community Right-To-Know Act was added to the law, giving everyone the right to have information about what chemicals were stored, used, and transported through their communities. The right-to-know provisions, like Superfund itself, were the result of community organizing—this time in cities and states across the country. Technical assistance grants were also added to the program, allowing \$50,000 per site for community organizations to hire the scientists and other technical advisors they needed to participate in decisions on testing, cleanup options, and human health impacts. The public participation part of the program grew, as did the emphasis on permanent cleanup technologies in place of moving the wastes from one site to another. The push for these new policies came from labor and grassroots organizations across the country—not Washington. As a result of grassroots efforts, several states also established their own superfund programs.

### CORPORATIONS STONEWALL

Despite these victories, corporate efforts to avoid paying cleanup costs and to dismantle the program have seriously limited the effectiveness of Superfund. The original intent of the program was to make the polluter pay in accordance with the common principle of civil law: If a citizen damages someone else's property or causes physical harm to another person, the offender must compensate the victim for their loss.

Not surprisingly, corporations fought this principle from its inception. During the Reagan administration, the program was manipulated by corporate lobbyists, who persuaded the EPA to negotiate with the polluters before testing or cleanup. Corporate lawyers and consultants gained considerable control over the program, delaying action on most superfund sites. Corporations facing huge cleanup costs began suing local governments and small businesses contending that under Superfund's liability clause everyone who disposed of anything on the site could be held responsible for the cleanup. The big corporations also sued their insurance companies, which refused to cover the costs of Superfund cleanups. Corporate firms then launched a public relations campaign to discredit the program, claiming that only lawyers and consultants were benefiting from it. The campaign included TV commercials portraying the local pizza restaurant as a victim of the liability clause.

In 1995, the corporations were successful in convincing the Republican-controlled congress to let the taxes on oil and chemical companies expire, gutting the trust fund. Since the beginning of the program, this fund has been used to pay for about 30 percent of the cleanup of about 1500 sites. During the early 1990s, the tax was bringing about two billion dollars a year into the fund. Thus, since 1995, industry has saved at least 14 billion dollars that could have been used to clean up toxic sites and protect the health of communities.

The end of the trust fund means both that the costs of the program must be shifted to taxpayers and that fewer sites will be cleaned up. In 1999, the taxpayers paid \$350 million to fund cleanups, and the Bush administration is proposing

that taxpayers pay \$700 million in 2003. The Bush administration has also announced that only 40 sites will be cleaned up in 2002—half of the number of sites completed in each of the last four years of the Clinton administration. Without the reauthorization of corporate taxes to pay for Superfund's trust fund, the program will almost certainly continue to shrink.

### SO WHAT DO WE DO?

The Superfund program offers a clear example of how corporations have acquired too much control in this country, abused the democratic system, and cost taxpayers critical dollars that should be used for other social needs, such as schools, health care, and affordable housing.

The key lesson from the history of this program, however, is that grassroots groups can effectively challenge corporate power. This is evident in both the establishment of the program in 1980 and the provisions added over the years, such as the right-to-know, technical assistance grants, permanent cleanup alternatives, and broader public participation.

Our immediate goal should be to ensure that Congress reauthorizes the tax on corporate polluters. Groups should be talking with their legislators about re-establishing the tax on oil and chemicals. We should be asking our representatives where they stand on the issue of taxpayers' dollars being used for cleanups that polluters should be paying for while our schools are in need of repairs and social programs are being cut back. Then, we need to go back to our communities and let voters know who is willing to stand up to the corporations and who isn't.

Finally, it is clear that we need to pass state and local laws instead of just looking at federal legislation. At the state and local level, people have more power and control. As we've seen with the right-to-know laws, if enough cities and states establish laws, the federal government will follow. And if corporate lobbyists succeed in further weakening the federal program, we'll still have state programs to fall back on. ■

## CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN UP TOXICS

U.S. PIRG has been leading the fight to get the administration and Congress to reauthorize corporate taxes to pay for Superfund. In April, the campaign released *Can Superfund Continue To Protect Public Health? How the Bush Administration Has Slowed the Pace of Cleanup at the Nation's Worst Toxic Waste Sites*, which documents the administration's efforts to shift the cost of Superfund to taxpayers and reduce the number of cleanups. U.S. PIRG is calling on the EPA to release the list of Superfund sites that will be affected by underfunding the program. For more information on what you can do and to view the report, visit the U.S. PIRG web site at [www.pirg.org/enviro/superfund](http://www.pirg.org/enviro/superfund).

BY STEPHEN LESTER

# INCINERATION REPACKAGED

Grassroots groups have been very successful in defeating incinerator proposals. Since 1997, only two trash incinerators have been built in the U.S. (Dearborn, Michigan in 2000 and Anahuac, Texas in 2002). Groups have been successful because they organized and got the word out about what incineration really means for communities: toxic emissions and residual ash, high construction costs, and the destruction of valuable resources. And they have successfully promoted the alternatives to burning waste: recycling, composting, and recovering waste components.

The incinerator industry has, in fact, learned something from the successes of grassroots community groups: If they want to build incinerators, they're going to have to come up with new ways to spin them. So what we're seeing are all sorts of "new" ideas and proposals.

The hottest area of activity is in plants designed to produce energy. In the aftermath of the California energy crisis and the 9-11 terrorists attacks, strong sentiments to reduce our dependence on foreign oil have resulted in a rash of proposals to build energy-generating plants that don't rely on oil. Many of these plants are referred to as "green energy" or "eco-energy" projects. Some are called "renewable energy" projects. To a lesser extent, we are seeing an old favorite—waste-to-energy plants.

Waste-to-energy projects are especially devious because there are legislative efforts in Massachusetts and at the national level to define garbage incinerators as a source of "renewable" energy. If these efforts are successful, the most common incinerator used to burn household garbage—the mass burn incinerator—will be included with solar and wind projects as renewable energy sources!

These new proposals have several common characteristics:

they are being put forward to solve the solid waste "crisis"; they are being sold as an alternative to incineration; and many recover energy. While these plants are not technically incinerators, they cause many of the same pollution problems. The old rule still applies: If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and sounds like a duck, there's a good chance it's a duck.

## BIOMASS CONVERSION

One of the most popular renewable energy projects is the "energy from biomass" proposal. Biomass traditionally refers to fuels derived from wood, agriculture and food-processing waste or from crops grown specifically to produce electricity. However, in this new wave of non-incineration proposals, we're seeing a variation that involves converting household trash into a biomass-like fuel. These projects generally entail collecting household garbage at the curb, without source separation or recycling, and then removing metals, glass, plastic and other waste items that are not conducive to biomass processing. The remaining waste, consisting largely of mixed paper, food, wood and yard waste, is then run through a "biomass" conversion process that generates a fuel product.

Some proposals are designed to generate ethanol for sale. The concern here is purity of the ethanol product. Historically, bioconversion processes have been used mostly with agricultural waste streams that are more uniform in composition, have higher cellulose content and fewer material handling problems than municipal solid waste streams. It is not at all clear that this new application can produce a high quality ethanol product that can be marketed, especially given the range of contaminants present in household garbage.



Photo by CHEJ's Barbara Sullivan

The more common fuel product proposed with most biomass plants is called “refuse derived fuel” or RDF. In this instance, the biomass waste is converted into pellets that are sold as fuel to be burned in incinerators or boilers to recover energy. In these cases, you still have toxic emissions and residual ash contaminated with heavy metals and dioxins, though at slightly lower levels than in a mass burn incinerator.

This process has not been used with municipal solid waste on other than a small pilot scale and it is likely that the costs have been underestimated, perhaps substantially. But the major problem with this process is that it would destroy vast quantities of materials that could be either recycled or composted.

## PYROLYSIS AND GASIFICATION

Two other technologies being promoted as clean alternatives to typical trash incinerators are pyrolysis and gasification. Pyrolysis is a thermal destruction process that burns waste in the absence of oxygen. A plasma arc is often used to generate the heat at high temperatures. This process produces a mixture of gases, liquids and solids, some of which will include toxic chemicals depending on the make-up of the original waste mixtures. With household trash, the emissions and solid residuals can be expected to include heavy metals, dioxins, and other contaminants typically found when household trash is burned.

Gasification is a similar thermal destruction process, only in this case small amounts of oxygen are present during the heating process, which also occurs at high temperatures. In this process, often called “starved-air gasification,” a gaseous mixture is produced that will again include toxic chemicals depending on the make-up of the original waste mixture. If household trash is gasified, emissions will again include heavy metals, dioxins, and other contaminants.

Both of these technologies are considered to be in the developmental stage with regard to their application to

household trash. As a practical matter, the health and environmental concerns that these processes raise seem no different than if the waste were burned in a traditional incinerator. With both of these systems, toxic gases are formed during the treatment process that are similar to those found during the combustion of household trash in a traditional incinerator and are released out a stack. Some—but not all—of these emissions may be captured by pollution control equipment. With pyrolysis, solid residue remaining after the treatment may contain toxic chemicals similar to those found in ash from traditional incineration.

## CO-GENERATION PLANTS

Co-generation is the production of heat and electricity by the same energy plant. In a conventional power plant, coal, oil, or natural gas are burned at high temperatures to generate steam. The pressure from the steam turns a turbine that produces electricity. Only about 30 percent of the energy of the original fuel is converted to steam pressure in this process. The rest is wasted. In a co-generation plant, the excess heat is captured as low temperature steam is given off by the turbines. This steam can be used to generate heat but cannot be transmitted very far. It is used mostly for nearby factories such as pulp and paper mills that require low temperature heat for their production lines or for space heating in buildings.

The new wave of proposals include co-generation plants that burn fuels other than coal, oil, or natural gas. Some proposals are for burning “biomass” such as wood waste, agricultural waste, peat moss and a variety of other wastes, including household garbage that has been converted into “biomass” as described above. While these plants may generate less sulfur oxides or greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, depending on the fuel burned, they are still incinerators that generate emissions, some of which will include toxic chemicals, depending on the makeup of the fuel that is burned. With household trash, the emissions and solid re-

## RESOURCES

1. *Waste Gasification, Impacts on the Environment and Public Health*, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, April, 2002. Available from BREDL, PO Box 88, Glendale Springs, NC 28629, (336) 982-26921 or on the web at [www.bredl.org](http://www.bredl.org).
2. *Learning Not to Burn, A Primer for Citizens on Alternatives to Burning Hazardous Waste*, Chemical Weapons Working Group and Citizens' Environmental Coalition, June, 2002. Available from CEC at 425 Elmwood Avenue, Suite 200, Buffalo, NY 14222, (716) 885-6848 or on the web at [www.kodakstoxiccolors.org](http://www.kodakstoxiccolors.org).
3. *Non-Incineration Medical Waste Technologies, A Resource for Hospital Administrators, Facility Managers, Health Care Professionals, Environmental Advocates, and Community Members*, Health Care Without Harm, August 2001. Available from HCWH, 1755 S Street, NW, Suite 6B, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 234-0091.
4. *How to Shut Down an Incinerator – A Toolkit*, Health Care Without Harm, 2000. Available from HCWH, 1755 S Street, NW, Suite 6B, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 234-0091 or on the web at [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org).
5. “Municipal Waste Incineration, A Poor Solution for the Twenty-First Century,” presentation by Dr. Paul Connett, Professor of Chemistry at St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Waste-to-Energy Management Conference, November 24-25, 1998, Amsterdam. Available on the web at [members.netscapeonline.co.uk/colemanjac1/connett1.html](http://members.netscapeonline.co.uk/colemanjac1/connett1.html).
6. Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives/ Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance (GAIA), 782 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Berkeley, CA. 94710, [gaia@noburn.org](mailto:gaia@noburn.org), FAX: (510) 883-0928.

siduals can be expected to include heavy metals, dioxins, and other contaminants.

## LIMITATIONS OF AIR POLLUTION CONTROLS

Most, but not all, incinerators and waste burners have air pollution control equipment that is designed to remove different pollutants generated during the combustion process. Electrostatic precipitators remove large particulates, scrubbers remove acid gases, baghouse or fabric filters remove small particles, and activated charcoal beds remove volatile gases. None of these or any other air pollution control equipment is capable of removing 100 percent of the pollutants present in the emissions of an incinerator or waste burner. In fact, no matter what air pollution controls are used, some toxic chemicals will be released into the community. This is very important since many pollutants generated by incinerators and waste burners are carcinogenic and produce health effects even at very low levels.

## RECYCLING VS INCINERATION

One of the most serious problems with these new technologies is that they compete with waste reduction, recycling, and composting programs for materials. As much as 80 percent of solid waste can either be recycled and composted, or incinerated—but not both. It's an either/or proposition. If

you build an incinerator, you foreclose your recycling and composting options for the lifetime of the incinerator (usually 20 years or more). Conversely, if you develop a successful recycling and composting program, you'll likely starve the incinerator by diverting trash. This is why many incinerator companies require guarantees on the amount of waste a community must send to an incinerator

Recycling not only reduces waste; it conserves energy, preserves natural resources, and reduces pollution. Raw materials processing, such as wood pulping, is extremely energy-intensive, and both the generation of energy and the production process itself produce toxic pollution. Reprocessing materials uses only a fraction of the energy needed in primary production and creates much less pollution.

## CONCLUSION

Biomass conversion, pyrolysis, and gasification—like all incineration—are doomed technologies. These processes generate hazardous emissions and toxic ash or residue, are very expensive, compete with recycling programs, and destroy valuable resources. They will not succeed as long as an organized citizenry refuses to accept these impacts on their communities.

Trust your instincts. Take a close look at any proposed technology and ask hard questions, such as the ones provided in the box. If the vendors can't—or won't—provide you with written answers to these and other questions, then step back and ask yourself why. It's usually either because they don't have the information or because they know you won't like the answers. ■

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. How does the process work?
2. What waste products, air emissions, or residues are produced during the process? Have these emissions/residues been tested? If so, can you provide a copy of the results? How are these waste products/emissions managed?
3. What new waste products, if any, are produced during the process? If new products are formed, has their toxicity been tested? Can you provide a copy of any testing that has been done?
4. What wastes can or cannot be treated by this process? On what type of waste does this system work best?
5. How much waste can be processed at any one time by the system?
6. What is the backup plan for managing the buildup of garbage when the system is not working either because of mechanical breakdowns or routine maintenance?
7. Has the process been used in communities before? Where? If so, what was the result? Has a plant ever been built and operated at the proposed size? If so, where?
8. What will be done with the end-product materials? What's the nature of the market for the end-product(s)? What is the plan to address the buildup of end-product if the market should collapse or slump?
9. Will this process interfere with recycling efforts?

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## BETTER PUEBLO

*continued from page 5*

describes the permit as “the first real enforcement tool local citizens have ever had in efforts to deal with pollution from the mill.”

## BETTER PUEBLO IS HERE TO STAY

In just four years, Better Pueblo has emerged as a formidable force, playing a crucial role in two important victories. Better Pueblo's contribution to getting the state to enforce environmental standards at Oregon Steel means that one of the biggest employers in Pueblo will be providing safer jobs and operating a lot more cleanly in the years to come. And getting the Army to abandon incineration to destroy Pueblo's chemical weapons not only protects Pueblo residents but increases the chances that other communities around the nation fighting chemical weapons incinerators can win too.

While members of Better Pueblo take tremendous satisfaction at this year's victories, they are also looking forward to further changes. With a “breather” from the day-in and day-out pressure of the chemical weapons issue, the group is beginning to think about ways to build on the considerable trust that the group has earned in the community and to develop a structure that encourages more people to become involved. ■

# Action Line

## ARKANSAS

◆ Last year, **Citizens Advocating Safe Environment (CASE)** succeeded in getting both local and regional government to reject the expansion of a Waste Management-run landfill near Fayetteville. This spring the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) overturned those decisions on a technicality, giving Waste Management the go-ahead. The community, however, continues to keep the pressure on. A whistleblower recently notified the ADEQ that there was a "big hole in the bottom" of one section of the landfill, that another section had caved in, and that in one week 15,000 gallons of fluid had leaked. ADEQ moved quickly, shutting down the landfill and imposing a \$558,000 fine. CASE, which has been critical of the landfill's operations for some time, welcomed ADEQ's action and was joined by the **Sierra Club** in calling for prosecution of Waste Management. **CHEJ** has been providing organizing and technical support to the group, including reviewing the violation notice prepared by ADEQ and data from groundwater monitoring samples taken from around the landfill.

## CALIFORNIA

◆ With the support of the **Environmental Health Coalition**, Barrio Logan residents have organized to demand the closing or relocation of two metal plating companies in the neighborhood. In March, San Diego County finally moved against one of the plants, Master Plating, which has a long history of violations, including illegal dumping of hazardous waste and improper storage of toxic chemicals. The county filed a lawsuit to close the plant and a county judge ordered the chrome plating operations shut down while officials determine the level of chromium being emitted. (Nickel and copper plating operations, however, will continue.) Land-use zoning laws in Barrio Logan allow polluting industries to be located in residential areas. Residents are working with city officials on changing the zoning laws and on developing a plan for cleaning up polluted properties.

## CONNECTICUT

◆ A huge coalition of 150 organizations across the state has campaigned for

## WHAT IS ACTION LINE?

At CHEJ, we see Action Line as the heart of *Everyone's Backyard*. This is the place where we tell the stories of the grassroots groups we're working with. We strive to call attention to the movement's creative energy and accomplishments. We also see Action Line as a way to share strategies and actions that work and to stay up-to-date on industry trends and tactics.

Although we rarely mention our role, CHEJ is providing organizing support or technical assistance to most of the community groups we report on. For other Action Line stories, we draw on a large network of friends and supporters, developed during twenty years of working with grassroots groups. We encourage contributions from organizations that, like CHEJ, support grassroots organizing and from community groups themselves.

nearly five years to clean up the state's dirtiest, coal-fired power plants, known as the "Sooty Six." Last year, legislation to clean up the plants came within one vote of passing in the state senate. This spring, both the house and senate voted overwhelmingly to pass a bill that will force the plants to comply with current standards. Governor Rowland signed the bill into law. According to the U.S. EPA, 97 percent of Connecticut residents breathe unhealthy air. The Sooty Six, located in Bridgeport, Norwalk, New Haven, Montville, Middletown, and Milford, have historically emitted more than 80 percent of the sulfur dioxide pollution emitted by all major industrial polluters in the state. Due to a loophole in the 1977 Clean Air Act, the Sooty Six had not been required to meet the same standards as modern plants. The new law forces the older, coal and oil-burning power plants to meet modern air pollution standards for sulfur dioxide pollution, ensuring that an additional 8,900 tons will be removed from the air each year. The standards must be met on-site beginning January 1, 2005, without the

use of pollution credit trading, which allows the dirtiest power plants to look cleaner on paper by purchasing emissions credits from less-polluting plants. This on-site cleanup stipulation sets a national precedent. "The Sooty Six cleanup is not only a tremendous victory for clean air, it is a victory for the thousands of citizens who participated in this five-year-long battle," said Alyssa Schuren, co-coordinator of the **Connecticut Coalition for Clean Air**.

*Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

◆ For over 40 years, residents of the North End of Manchester have suffered noxious smells, burning eyes and throats, and sleepless nights due to the Balf/Ticon asphalt plant operating in the middle of their neighborhood. It was so bad that parents would cover their children's heads with jackets as they ran from the car to the house to avoid vomiting from the odors. Parents started **Manchester Area Residents Concerned about Health (MARCH)** and uncovered information that proved that the plant was releasing cancer-causing fumes and violating several state laws. MARCH rallied neighbors, met with elected officials, and held public meetings and press conferences to keep the pressure on the plant and state officials. In a huge victory, the state responded to MARCH's work by ordering the asphalt plant shut down. The state says the plant will be unable to reopen due to a current moratorium on the construction of any new asphalt plants in the state, which citizens' groups throughout Connecticut worked to pass in 1997.

*Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

## FLORIDA

◆ In Polk County, **Citizens of Polk Supporters (COPS)** are mobilizing against a proposal for a power plant by the notorious energy firm Reliant. After consulting with **Public Citizen** and with **CHEJ** organizing staff, COPS made Reliant's bad behavior a major local media issue. The press has covered both Reliant's involvement in California's bogus energy crisis (Reliant's profits there exceeded Enron's) and Reliant's donations to Polk County officials and mainstream organi-

zations. This spring, one hundred concerned residents packed the Orange Manor Mobile Home Park to raise these issues with the mayor and a Reliant representative. Residents went on to collect almost 1,000 signatures throughout the county to give to state officials who must review a local planning amendment that would allow Reliant to build on its preferred site.

## GEORGIA

◆ Congratulations to the **Environment, Children, Health Organization (ECHO)** in Jones County for stopping a rezoning proposal that would have allowed Kinetic Resources to build two medical waste incinerators! The group worked hard handing out educational brochures, holding meetings, and organizing a letter-writing campaign to the local paper. After the **Stop Dioxin Exposure** campaign provided the group with materials prepared by **Health Care Without Harm**, ECHO sent copies to the county commission-

ers, while continuing to generate pressure within the community. At the end of April, county commissioners voted unanimously against the rezoning proposal, killing the plan to build the incinerators. Under the proposal, the incinerators would have burned 75,000 pounds of medical waste a day.

## IDAHO

◆ Barbara Miller, founder of the **Silver Valley People's Action Coalition** in Kellogg, has received national recognition for her work on behalf of local communities coping with lead poisoning, including a prestigious Ford Foundation leadership award last year. An aggressive advocate for a thorough cleanup of lead-contaminated areas in northern Idaho, Barbara has antagonized mining interests and local government—both vehemently opposed to the U.S. EPA's plan to expand its Superfund cleanup of Kellogg to the entire Coeur d'Alene Basin. Two local newspapers, owned by an industrialist with mining interests, have waged a ruthless campaign to

discredit Barbara and anyone else who attempts to call attention to lead contamination in the area. Last year, the *Shoshone News-Press* called on the public to prevent Barbara from being awarded the Ford Foundation prize and printed a letter urging that she be tarred and feathered. In March, a local judge sent Barbara to jail for five days—ostensibly for charges related to an ongoing child custody dispute. The same judge sent her to jail three years ago for voting in the wrong precinct and, in the custody case, has stripped Barbara of her house and other financial assets.

Waste from a century of mining has polluted a vast area in northern Idaho and is contaminating waters all the way to the Columbia River in Washington. A U.S. EPA Human Health Risk Assessment done in 2000 showed that as many as 30 percent of the children in the Cour d'Alene Basin suffer from lead poisoning. The EPA cleanup plan would remove close to 60 percent of the metals along dozens of miles of

## STERICYCLE: STOP BURNING MEDICAL WASTE!

Stericycle shareholders and corporate executives were greeted at their annual meeting in Rosemont, IL on May 15 by community leaders from across the country demanding an end to the burning of medical waste and by demonstrators wearing papier mache bellies to show that incineration is a threat to future generations. The community leaders were abruptly kicked out of a press conference as hotel staff unplugged the phone on reporters and peaceful demonstrators were threatened and intimidated outside. The intimidation did not stop the activists from delivering the message to Stericycle's shareholders that incineration is bad for business and bad for the health of communities across the nation. Several community leaders carrying proxies entered the shareholder meeting to give first-hand testimony about the health threats their communities face as a result of being home to a Stericycle incinerator.

Stericycle, the nation's largest medical waste management company, burns millions of pounds of medical waste a year in 11 communities. Medical waste incineration is a leading source of dioxin, mercury and other air pollutants that have been linked to cancer, diabetes and learning disabilities, among other illnesses. While Stericycle promotes itself as being a strong environmentally responsible company, it continues to operate medical waste incinerators and to acquire new ones.

In April, **Health Care Without Harm** launched its campaign to get Stericycle to clean up its operations and phase out incineration by releasing *Stericycle: Living Up To Its Mission?* a report that assesses the environmental performance of the company and makes recommendations for improvement. For more information on the campaign and for the text of the report, see [www.noharm.org/stericycle](http://www.noharm.org/stericycle).



*Demonstrators greet Stericycle executives and shareholders at their annual meeting. Photo courtesy of Health Care Without Harm.*

## Action Line

## Action Line

# NORCO RESIDENTS WIN RELOCATION FOR ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD!

Residents of the Diamond neighborhood in Norco, Louisiana have won their fight for relocation of the entire community! Two years ago, Shell offered to buy out half of the 220 homes near the Shell Chemical facility, but residents of the African-American neighborhood continued to insist on relocation for everyone. In March, **Concerned Citizens of Norco** and the **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** released "Family Divided," a report that described how Shell was dividing the Diamond community and destroying family and social relationships by offering to buy out only half the neighborhood. Community pressure and meetings with residents pushed Shell to change its position and offer a buyout to all Diamond residents! *Photo: The Louisiana Bucket Brigade. Courtesy of LABB.*



streams and rivers in the basin and remove contaminated soil from at least 1,000 homes. Businesses and local government in Idaho, however, oppose the cleanup plan as a threat to tourism. Several town councils in northern Idaho have joined a lawsuit to block the cleanup, and Idaho's congressional delegation is demanding that more studies be done before the EPA can proceed.

Refusing to be intimidated, Barbara continues to make the case that the cleanup is necessary both because there are "real health problems" and because it's "the greatest economic opportunity this county has ever seen." Not one to waste time, Barbara used her two weekends in jail to write a grant proposal asking the EPA to fund an intern to help her continue her work for the Silver Valley People's Action Coalition.

## LOUISIANA

◆ A dozen grassroots groups across the state are calling for the U.S. EPA to audit the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The groups are focusing on DEQ's operation of the air pollution credits "bank." Problems with the bank were acknowledged by the U.S. EPA and DEQ more than a year ago. The groups are **Alliance for Affordable Energy, Alliance against Waste and Action to Restore the Environment, Caring Parents of**

**Geismar, Concerned Citizens of Livingston Parish, Concerned Citizens of Iberville Parish, Louisiana Bucket Brigade, Louisiana Communities United, Louisiana Democracy Project, Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Louisiana Labor Neighbor, Myrtle Grove Community, and North Baton Rouge Environmental Association.**

## MASSACHUSETTS

◆ The standing-room-only crowd at the Upton town meeting in March had reason to cheer. Thanks to the hard work of the community group **Citizens for the Preservation of Upton (CPU)**, voters overwhelmingly approved a by-law prohibiting dangerous medical waste facilities from being built in their town. CPU began their campaign when they found out that developers had proposed to build a medical waste incinerator in Upton last spring. CPU researched the effects the proposed plant would have in their community and discovered that it would have released dioxin and mercury, among other toxins, into the town's air. The group educated their neighbors about the dangers of the plan and called for a special town meeting to prohibit incinerators from being built on residential, commercial, agricultural, or business-zoned land. The prohibition passed unanimously.

*Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

## MICHIGAN

◆ **Families Against Incinerator Risk (FAIR)** in Ypsilanti continues to fight to shut down an existing sewage incinerator and stop a proposed new one. FAIR won the support of the Ypsilanti City Council for ending sewage incineration in their community. But local officials from Ypsilanti Township have continued to support the incinerator, so FAIR organized a petition drive and brought in 4,300 names of Township voters—1,000 more than needed—to force an election to recall the pro-incinerator officials. The decision to continue to incinerate has been opposed by the American Lung Association, the **Michigan Environmental Council**, and the **Ecology Center of Ann Arbor**, as well as the entire Ypsilanti City Council.

◆ Activists with the **Ecology Center, Environmental Health Watch, Lone Tree Ecology Center**, and **Michigan Environmental Council** have launched an intensive public education and organizing campaign in both Midland and the downriver community of Saginaw to call attention to dioxin contamination from Dow Chemical. Earlier this year, activists learned through Freedom of Information Act requests that in 1996 and 1998 the state Department of Environmental Quality

## Action Line

## TOXIC COMEDY IS GREAT ORGANIZING TOOL

Groups across the country working on toxics issues used screenings of Judith Helfand's comedy *Blue Vinyl* to call attention to the toxic chemicals used in PVC production and the history of corporate disregard for the safety of workers and communities.

North Richmond, CA: An enthusiastic audience came out for a screening sponsored by **Greenaction** and the **Center for Environmental Health**. After the film, people raised one good question after another about community involvement and organizing. Henry Clark of **West County Toxics Coalition**, Ethel Dotson of **Communities for a Better Environment**, and Michelle Ozun, a local bucket brigade representative, spoke about working with communities. *Contributed by Julie Parker (co-producer of Blue Vinyl)*

Boston, MA: The Boston screening played to a packed house on Wednesday, April 24 at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Over 400 people enjoyed the movie and a question and answer session by Judith Helfand, then eagerly signed postcards to EPA Administrator Whitman demanding that the Dioxin Reassessment be released. *Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

Duluth, MN: Two hundred guests turned out for the screening held by the **Institute for a Sustainable Future**, including building professionals, elected officials, and the health department. A prescreening pizza party with Cajun music playing in the background spiced things up a bit, and awards were presented to the local Duluth Hospital Clinic, a nature center and a wastewater treatment plant, for their environmentally

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(DEQ) had found elevated levels of dioxin in Midland soil. Most of the contamination was found downriver of Dow's Midland headquarters near schools, parks, playgrounds and along the banks of the Tittabawassee River (a recreation area). In some cases the dioxin levels were the highest recorded in the state — 80 times higher than the current state cleanup standards allow. Activists are also working with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the state DEQ on a site investigation that could potentially lead regulators to find the company responsible for extensive dioxin contamination from their past operations. Currently, activists are negotiating the public participation role in this process.

◆ **The Ecology Center, Sierra Club, Hamtramck Environmental Action Team (HEAT)**, and other environmental groups worked hard on a bill just passed unanimously by the Michigan senate that should tighten rules in Michigan and will require a review of alternatives to incineration. The legislation explicitly states that standards should be set according to the Clean Air Act, which contrasts with U.S. EPA's current practice, and will not allow any new permits to be issued for medical waste incinerators for several years. Within 18 months, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will have to produce a report for the legislature that includes alternatives to incineration of medical waste. The alternatives will focus on cleaner, safer and healthier technology for both the public and environment. Supporters said that not only will this legislation prevent any new incinerators from opening, but it will also raise standards for the last remaining incinerator in Michigan (in Hamtramck), which has been plagued with violations.

*Contributed by the Ecology Center*

## MISSISSIPPI

◆ **People Effected Against Chemical Eugenics (PEACE)** continues to press for investigation and testing of the drinking water in the McSwain community. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and U.S. EPA continue to insist that there is no possibility of drinking water contamination impacting the McSwain community. On the Saturday before Easter, PEACE was joined by members of **People for the Rights of Mississippians** on a picket line outside of

## Action Line

the Jackson office of the DEQ, demanding better action to protect residents. The demonstration brought together African-American and white Mississippians who have suffered neglect at the hands of the DEQ. "We're being poisoned and DEQ doesn't seem to care. We hope this will wake them up," a McSwain resident said. The groups' signs included "MS DEQ doesn't care about you" and "Chemicals are killing us."

## MISSOURI

◆ Months of community pressure and mounting evidence of the extent of lead contamination in Herculaneum have forced the Doe Run Company to agree to buy out the homes of residents living close to the lead smelter, the largest in the nation. A state health study released in March showed that more than 50 percent of the children within a half mile of Doe Run's lead smelter had elevated levels of lead and that a mile from the smelter, a fifth of the children still showed elevated levels. Under its agreement with the state, Doe Run will buy out homes within 3/8 of a mile from the smelter. Twenty families with children under six will be relocated this year, and the company will buy out another 140 homes over the next year and a half. Residents are frustrated that the buyout plan will take so long and that the plan excludes many families who have children with lead poisoning.

Doe Run has moved aggressively to refurbish its image and to discourage the community from pushing to extend the cleanup. In May, the company released an "independent" study claiming that lead concentrate levels along the transport road pose no significant health risks to children or adults in the community. The study was prepared by Gradient Corporation, an industry consulting firm that promotes itself as bringing "sound science to bear on costly environmental problems." A citizens group that seems to have considerable resources and to consist primarily of Doe Run employees has been distributing literature contending that the smelter poses no health threat.

Residents are working with the **St. Louis Lead Prevention Coalition** and a new group, **People at Risk (PAR)**,

## Action Line

## Action Line

which focuses on mining pollution issues in the region, to address the community's health needs and to strategize to obtain relocation for more families in Herculaneum.

### MONTANA

◆ After two years of investigating the extent of asbestos contamination in Libby, much pushing from an assertive Community Advisory Group, and a request from Governor Martz in January, the U.S. EPA announced in February that it was making Libby a Superfund site. W.R. Grace's mining operations on the outskirts of the town yielded vermiculite ore that contained tremolite, a particularly dangerous form of asbestos because it consists of sharp needle-like fibers that easily penetrate the linings of the lungs. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has screened 7,500 residents in the town and surrounding areas the last two summers and found that 30 percent have lung abnormalities. The ATSDR considered declaring a public health emergency, which was needed to allow it to remove the insulation from people's homes, but was opposed by W.R. Grace because of the company's concerns about its liability for a product in homes around the nation. In May, the EPA, however, announced that it would move forward with the removal of the insulation without formally declaring a health emergency. The cleanup plan calls for the removal of asbestos insulation from about 800 homes and removal of asbestos from yards, as well as cleanup of specific contaminated sites in the town.

### NEBRASKA

◆ A 20-square mile section of central city Omaha, including about 5,000 homes, is slated to become a Superfund site because of lead contamination from a smelter, battery factories, lead paint in older homes, and highway traffic. (A school is built on the site of one of the former battery factories.) The U.S. EPA plans to clean up the soil over 10 years, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development plans to remediate a few hundred homes. The **Lead Safe Coalition** in Omaha is pressing for a

faster, more complete and better coordinated cleanup.

### NEW YORK

◆ The **Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition** (CCC) has succeeded in getting the New York Department of Health (DOH) to conduct additional studies in the area most affected by local polluters and to narrow a cancer study to the area of the community directly affected by landfill and quarry activity. In addition, the DOH has committed to creating a panel comprised of resident representatives and personnel from the DOH and other agencies and local governments that would meet once a month to collaborate in the Bellevue area. CCC gives a lot of credit for its success to the support it has received from the **Coalition of Impacted Neighborhoods** (COIN), which includes the **Citizens' Environmental Coalition** (CEC). CCC also joined the CEC and other groups at two key meetings. One, with a powerful state legislator from the area, pressed for a revitalized state Superfund program. The other brought together environmental justice leaders from all over the state, allowing CCC members to meet other activists working on auto-immune disorders, a special concern in the Cheektowaga area.

◆ **United Neighbors Concerned About General Electric and Dewey Loeffel Landfill (UNCAGED)**, which is fighting for the cleanup of the PCB-contaminated dump, finally got the opportunity to meet with General Electric face to face. After GE had agreed to meet with local governments, UNCAGED insisted on being at the table, and local officials supported them. At the meeting, UNCAGED representatives surprised GE with their detailed knowledge of area sites and the area's geology, and then asked GE staff point blank why they don't just clean up the site. GE staff did not respond. UNCAGED came out of the meeting determined to continue to press GE to meet with the community and respond to the community's needs. The landfill contains almost 40,000 tons of PCBs, heavy metals, and other hazardous substances and has contaminated local water resources.

◆ **Friends of Westland Hills** is fighting to get cleanup of a long-closed construction and demolition dump in an inner city

### TOXIC COMEDY

*continued from page 14*

friendly practices. The following night, another *Blue Vinyl* screening was open to one and all. *Contributed by Institute for a Sustainable Future*

Missoula, MT: The **Women's Voices of the Earth** hosted a screening followed by a panel discussion at the University of Montana UC Theatre in Missoula. People posed lots of great questions, especially about health effects and alternative building materials. The crowd signed postcards to EPA Administrator Whitman and a local petition asking Smurfit-Stone Container (pulp and liner board) mill to stop burning plastic scrap from the corrugated cardboard it processes. Currently the mill is burning up to 15 tons of plastic everyday and an estimated one-ton of it is PVC. *Contributed by Women's Voices of the Earth*

Buffalo, NY: **Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Great Lakes United, University of Buffalo Green, Coalition for Economic Justice and Western New York Council of Occupational Safety and Health** attracted a diverse group, from labor workers to environmentalists to community residents, to their screening at the Hallways Arts Center. After the film, community members were eager to get involved with the upcoming EPA public hearings on the Dioxin Reassessment. *Contributed by Citizens' Environmental Coalition*

Seattle, WA: On April 28, the Jewish Film Festival partnered with a handful of environmental groups including the **Washington Toxics Coalition, Northwest Jewish Environmental Project, the Wilderness Society and the People for Puget Sound**. At the end of the screening, there were a panel of experts to answer further questions and discuss how the community could become actively involved in eliminating dioxin exposure and other environmental threats.

## Action Line

Albany neighborhood. What began as a fight to prevent a school from opening on the site, mainly for non-environmental reasons, has expanded into a campaign to clean up an entire area now used as a park, which includes ball fields used for Little League. After local residents found asbestos on the site, the school board investigated and found lead, mercury, and volatile organic compounds – but still plans to build the school.

◆ **Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus**—a group of teachers, local residents, and environmentalists—are feeling empowered: they've succeeded in shutting down both the high school and elementary school incinerators in Franklinville! After the group successfully pressured the superintendent of schools to close the incinerator at the local high school, the school district shifted the burning of the high school waste to the elementary school incinerator. The group stayed with the issue and this spring forced the new superintendent to shut down the elementary school incinerator as well. The incinerators had burned high levels of plastic, ex-

posing children to toxic fumes. Congratulations!

## NORTH CAROLINA

◆ **Friends of the Green Swamp** (FOGS) gained 100 members in its spring membership drive and sold a lot of T-shirts and other items at the Wild Game Cook-Off. Over 200 people attended a Department of Water Quality Public Hearing on the proposed Green Swamp landfill, and FOGS reported that “with the exception of a few trained seals that [the landfill developers] brought with them to read canned speeches, everyone that spoke was against the landfill.” More than a third of the speakers at the meeting in Columbus County came from neighboring Brunswick County, and they are also asking for a hearing in their county. FOGS supporters will be following up with letters. FOGS also placed a large and attractive commemorative sign in the Green Swamp near the area designated as a national landmark by the U.S. Park Service.

◆ To get attention-organize! For 60 years, fine carbon dust from Great Lakes Carbon plant has covered virtually everything in Morganton. The company has

thrown unused materials into two dumps, one at the plant and one in town. The local newspaper has ignored the environmental issues, even this spring when the plant announced that it wanted to donate part of the plant's dumpsite to the town for a children's soccer field. Then residents organized a group to oppose the plan—and the newspaper immediately called to ask for an interview.

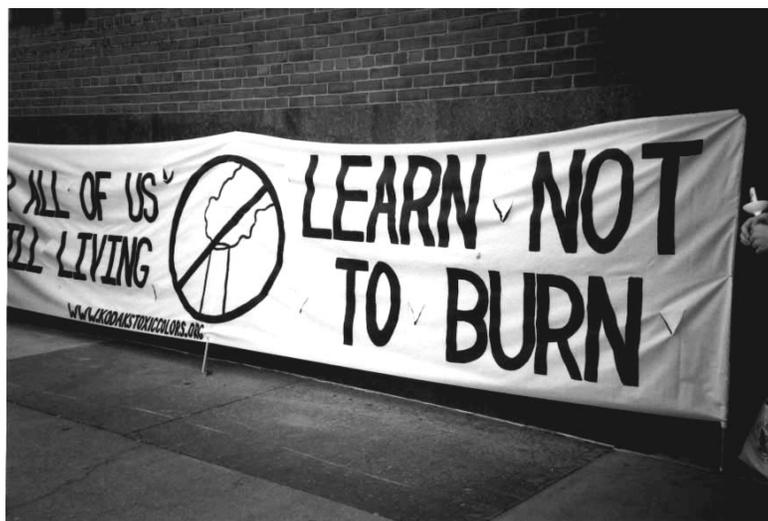
## OHIO

◆ **Advocates for Children's Health of Sylvania** (ACHS) is fighting to clean up, and ultimately to close, an 80-year old school where a roof leak is the apparent source of a serious mold problem. Local officials have kept documents from them and made false statements. A majority of parents, whose children have no symptoms at this time, fought to get the school reopened after a limited remediation effort. Working with the teachers' union, ACHS will continue to press for real remediation.

◆ Residents of Cheshire, a small town on the Ohio River, have negoti-

## CAMPAIGN TARGETS KODAK'S INCINERATORS

New York's **Citizens' Environmental Coalition** (CEC) and **Kandid Coalition** (KC) are leading a corporate accountability campaign against Eastman Kodak to reduce the company's toxic emissions. In March, the groups organized a press conference to release letters signed by over 60 organizations calling on the New York State Department of Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to address the high rates of children's brain cancer in the Rochester community. In April, they organized a Statewide Day of Action for Clean Air at Kodak calling on Kodak's CEO Daniel Carp to make a commitment to phase out the company's hazardous waste incinerators. Activists organized nine events in seven cities across the state. Rallies and press conferences were held in key cities, while activists handed out flyers in front of corporate chain stores that sell Kodak film. The campaign followed this up in May with a candlelight vigil for justice outside of Kodak's annual meeting. Participants showed up in black funeral attire with faces painted white. The protest was joined by over 60 members of **Employees Committed for Justice**, ex-Kodak employees who are concerned about Kodak's discriminatory hiring practices. Inside, shareholders voted on a resolution, which CEC and a former employee had introduced, calling on the company to disclose the financial liabilities posed by their pollution. The resolution has the support of New York State Comptroller Carl McCall. For information on the campaign, see [www.kodakstoxiccolors.org](http://www.kodakstoxiccolors.org).



*Photo courtesy of Citizens' Environmental Coalition.*

## Action Line

ated a settlement with American Electric Power (AEP), giving up their rights to sue the company in exchange for a buyout. Emissions of sulfuric acid from AEP, the state's largest coal-burning power plant, have made the town uninhabitable. Last summer, blue clouds of sulfuric acid gas descended on the village more than a dozen times, causing headaches, burning eyes, sore throats, and chemical burns on the mouths of local residents. Three schools located near the plant and attended by close to 1,000 students are outside the boundaries of the settlement. The **Buckeye Environmental Network** has released information about the toxic threat to these schools to the school boards and to local media.

◆ **Environmental Community Organization (ECO), Communities United for Action (CUFA)**, and a variety of activists, concerned neighbors, lawyers, and educators have persuaded the Cincinnati Board of Health to say "No" to Waste Management. The company had applied for a license to operate a 1,500 ton-per-day solid waste transfer station in Winton Hills, a densely populated low-income, African-American neighborhood in the heart of Cincinnati that is surrounded by polluting facilities. In February, the board ruled against Waste Management after several Ohio citizen groups presented evidence about the company's troubled record operating the Elda landfill at the same site and other facilities around the state, as well as its national record of legal violations. This was a second victory over Waste Management: the Ohio EPA ordered the Elda landfill closed in 1997 because of high levels of methane gas and groundwater contamination after a campaign led by CUFA exposed the company's polluting practices.

*Contributed by Environmental Community Organization*

## PENNSYLVANIA

◆ Members of Philadelphia's **Community and Labor Sunoil Tracking Team** traveled to Washington, DC in April to draw congressional attention to levels of pollution in the community. The Sun Oil facility recently expanded to produce low sulfur gasoline, result-

ing in an increase in pollution and health problems. The group returned to an explosion and fire at the plant, which produced a whole new wave of digestive and upper respiratory problems in the neighborhood.

## PUERTO RICO

◆ At the beginning of April, the **Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques** (Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques) and other groups opposed to the U.S. naval base in Vieques carried out civil disobedience actions to stop U.S. military exercises. Protesters entered the bombing range to act as human shields and halted the exercises for at least one day. As the exercises began, 150 U.S. members of the **National Puerto Rican Coalition**, who were in Vieques to show solidarity with the protesters, were tear-gassed by U.S. marines from within the naval base. Members of the Coalition had held a peaceful march and were boarding school buses when U.S. forces began firing canisters over the naval fence, injuring nearly a hundred people. Back in the U.S., the group has demanded a Justice Department investigation into the incident. Last year, President Bush publicly pledged that the Navy would be out of Vieques by 2003, but Congress has passed legislation barring the Navy from closing the site until an equivalent facility can be found. More than a dozen members of Congress and other elected officials have written individually to President Bush to ask that he put his promise in writing as an executive order.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ **Community Organization for Rights and Empowerment (CORE)** is leading the fight in Holly Hill to stop the expansion of a cement plant. The plant is a major employer in the community, but more and more community members, including plant employees, have been coming for-



*U.S. forces attacked peaceful marchers with tear gas at the naval base in Vieques. Photo courtesy of Vieques Libre ([www.viequeslibre.org](http://www.viequeslibre.org)).*

ward to express concerns over health problems generated by the cement dust.

◆ **Allendale County Citizens Opposed to Landfills**, which shut down the county landfill, is now mobilizing to prevent the landfill from being reopened to accept auto fluff—the non-metal components of cars, including PCBs, plastics, and mercury and lead. Hugo-neu-Proler, a large metal recycling company based in New York City, has offered to clean up the existing contamination at the site (which they are not responsible for) in exchange for being able to create a new landfill cell for dumping the auto fluff. Community leaders have received and used information

## Action Line

## GAG COMES TO WASHINGTON

In Hazleton, Pennsylvania, spring has been a busy time for **Group Against Gas (GAG)**, which is fighting for relocation because massive underground oil spills have contaminated their homes. In March German filmmaker/TV journalist Thomas Weidenbach, filmed GAG with **CHEJ** organizer Larry Yates. GAG got two days of press attention out of the visit, including coverage on three different TV stations. The group let the U.S. EPA know that Weidenbach's film will be shown at the United Nations Sustainable Development summit in Johannesburg, where 65,000 world leaders, reporters, and others are expected.

EPA staff based in Hazleton continued to downplay the seriousness of the spill and to press ahead with its plans to pull out of Laurel Gardens. The EPA is planning to revise the number of homes affected by the gas spill from 450 homes to 9 and has suggested to GAG members that it's their own yard signs that are responsible for the "stigma" of the neighborhood.

Weary of this treatment, a full busload of GAG members came down to Washington, DC to make their case directly to EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman. The meeting was the result of months of efforts by GAG, and the group came well-prepared. GAG members spoke to Whitman and the senators and congressman representing Hazleton for an hour—twice the scheduled time—explaining the facts about the spill and how their trust in the EPA has been destroyed. A particularly powerful tool was a map GAG members created showing the homes where deaths and illnesses have occurred. During the meeting, other GAG members picketed and chanted outside the Hart Senate Office Building, joined by Washington area supporters.

After hearing them out, Whitman appointed one of EPA's assistant administrators as liaison to GAG, and changed her schedule again to speak briefly to the whole GAG group, promising to communicate "every step of the way," and assuring them she recognized that their lack of trust in the EPA was "for a good reason." Senator Specter told the group that on EPA's part there had been "a dereliction of duty without any question." Representative Kanjorski, noting that Laurel Gardens residents had been called "unreasonable" while the spill perpetrators "got away with it," sketched a plan for a buyout of all residents wanting it. Both legislators promised to give "as much staff time as it takes" to help GAG resolve the Laurel Gardens situation.



*GAG members demonstrate outside of Senate office building while other members of the group meet with EPA Administrator Whitman. Photo courtesy of GAG.*

from **Citizens Against Pollution and Industrial Tyranny (CAPIT)** in Owego, New York, which was successful in shutting down an auto fluff dump.

**CHEJ** has been providing technical support to the group, including preparing questions to raise concerning the closure of the landfill, reviewing data from groundwater monitoring wells, and identifying additional testing needed at the site.

### TEXAS

◆ Quick organizing by Jefferson resi-

dents forced International Paper to withdraw its application to burn tires instead of natural gas at its Jefferson facility. Last fall, the lieutenant governor had written to the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission (TRNCC — affectionately known as "Trainwreck") to urge the issuance of a temporary permit for a trial burn of tires. TRNCC wrote back suggesting a way for International Paper to shorten the permit review process. Jefferson residents, facing a complicated and intimidating situation, contacted **CHEJ** and got advice that "changed the focus of our efforts." They organized a group and contacted the lieu-

tenant governor, who is from near Jefferson. He told them he only supported a test burn, and assured them there would be a public hearing in Jefferson. A week later, International Paper withdrew its application.

◆ Seabrook residents have won part of their case against American Acryl, which is planning to build a chemical complex that would produce acrylic acid and butyl acrylate, as well as operate a hazardous waste incinerator on its property. The company has sought to have the plant's emissions data

## Action Line

sealed as a trade secret, and in 1999 the state attorney general issued a ruling supporting the company. Now State District Judge Margaret Cooper has ruled against the company—a major victory for our right-to-know. The company has projected that it will release 4.5 million tons of chemicals into the air annually.

### UTAH

◆ The **Chemical Weapons Working Group** (CWWG) is working with employees of the U.S. Army's chemical weapons incinerator in Tooele. Internal documents obtained by CWWG with the help of whistleblowers at the incinerator reveal that employees have been exposed to lethal chemical agents. In 1999 Tooele incinerator managers told a federal judge that these problems were fixed. However, CWWG director Craig Williams stated, "A confirmed nerve agent release in May 2000 and the reports from courageous employees... demonstrate that these serious safety and environmental issues have not really been addressed."

### VIRGINIA

◆ **Loudouners Against Power Plants** won its two-year battle over a proposed Leesburg power plant when Houston-based energy company Tractabel withdrew its plans. Tractabel told the *Washington Post* that it is now more lucrative to buy power plants than to build new ones. However, it seems clear that a key factor in their decision was that community resistance so delayed the plant that Tractabel missed the window of opportunity to benefit from energy deregulation in Virginia. Loudouners Against Power Plants gained and held the solid support of their county government with a strong presence at county meetings, and also had such a presence at public hearings in Richmond that a second round had to be scheduled. Bridget Bangert, a leader of the group, told the *Post* about the fight, "It feels like it's consumed every moment of my life for two years. Now we can breathe a sigh of relief — pun completely intended."

◆ The U.S. EPA is rushing to "finish"

the Superfund cleanup at Avtex in Front Royal, and has brought in a public relations firm, Decision Quest, which is using job offers as well as a confusing "participation" process to, in one local activist's word, "snow" the public. Neighbors of the Avtex site were surprised to find out that deer hunters were allowed to use the site at night, and have protested to the EPA and the owners. The site is across the street from a residential neighborhood, and the neighbors found out about the hunting when they heard shots after dark at the Superfund site.

### WASHINGTON

◆ For the last three years, activists have been fighting the proposed massive expansion of Glacier Corporation's gravel mine on Vashon Island in Puget Sound. (Glacier is a subsidiary of Taiheiyo Cement, a Japanese firm whose claim to a "global environmental conservation policy" is based on their "waste recycling" cement plants.) After being bogged down in regulatory moves for several months, the fight is picking up again. **Hands Around Maury** (HAM) held a "turn up the heat" meeting in May to revive and organize the opposition. One hundred island residents turned out, and the meeting put a new action plan into effect, with committees ranging from a "spy network" to neighborhood canvassing. One task that volunteers committed to was calling in to the

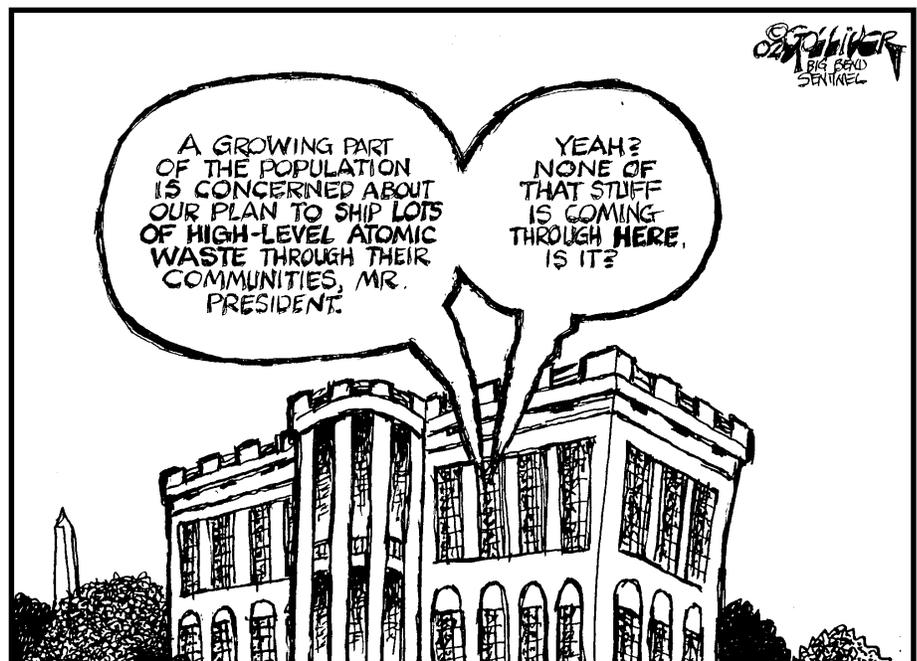
governor's regular citizen call-in show—and three days later, two of the volunteers actually got through to the governor, who was caught off guard.

◆ Residents of Yelm continue to effectively contest a proposed facility to treat "sewage/sludge/municipal biosolids" on the grounds that the facility would not only be a health hazard, decrease property values, and create odors, but that the proposal is "contradictory and confusing." Hundreds of local residents have come out to meetings to oppose the facility, and Thurston County staff recently sent back a planning document to the company proposing the facility saying that it "wasn't acceptable."

### WISCONSIN

◆ **Stop Unnecessary Road Expansion/Highway J Citizens Group** (SURE) is already seeing some results from their recent radio ad campaign. The governor has been inundated with calls opposing the highway expansion project. SURE has also collected almost 6,000 signatures on a petition. As a result, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has decided to immediately install groundwater monitoring wells along Highway 164 in Ackerville, which intersects an area

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## Action Line

# CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

C A M P A I G N P A G E

*Child Proofing Our Communities is a locally-based, nationally connected campaign aimed at protecting children from environmental health hazards in schools and child care settings by raising awareness, empowering community members, and encouraging concerned adults to take action at the local levels. The campaign is currently working on improving indoor air quality; reducing the toxicity of building materials; reducing the use of pesticides; preventing the location of school buildings on or near chemically contaminated areas; and cleaning up schools located on or near contaminated land.*

## REPORT PRODS CONGRESS

The campaign continues to reap significant attention from the January release of *Creating Safe Learning Zones: Invisible Threats, Visible Actions*. The report, produced by the campaign's School Siting committee, revealed that almost 1,200 public schools in five states were located within a half-mile of a contaminated site. The report has even garnered attention from several Congressional offices. In February and March, on behalf of campaign members, CHEJ Executive Director Lois Gibbs and Organizing Director James Tramel met with Representative Hilda Solis (D-CA) and staffers from the offices of Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Senators Jim Jeffords (I-VT), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Hillary Clinton (D-NY), and Charles Schumer (D-NY). Senate hearings on the issue of school siting are tentatively scheduled for later this year and present a unique opportunity to enact legislation to limit the widespread practice of building schools on or near contaminated sites and to clean up those schools already built in such areas. In May, Senator Clinton wrote a strongly worded letter to Administrator Christine Todd Whitman urging the EPA to "establish environmental guidelines for the siting of public schools...to ensure that our children have a clean and healthy environment in which they can grow and thrive."

## CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

Another exciting outcome of the report's release was the campaign's role

in facilitating a symposium on children's health, which was hosted by Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland School of Public Health in Baltimore on June 11 and 12. The symposium addressed the levels at which children are harmed by pollutants and the appropriate methods to test and clean up school property. The gathering produced exciting discussions among academic researchers on children's health, environmental engineers who design school cleanups, and organizers who work with communities. Three work groups were formed who will prepare brief discussion papers addressing the symposium topics. We hope that the symposium is the first step in a process that will lead to a change in the way exposure to contaminants is assessed and monitored in order to give our children the protection they need.

## CAMPAIGN TO RELEASE HEALTHY BUILDINGS PRIMER

Not to be overshadowed by the School Siting committee, the campaign's Healthy Buildings committee is hard at work on its own publication on constructing environmentally healthy schools. The guide will address

such frequently occurring problems as toxic mold, indoor air quality, lead, and pressure-treated wood.

The guide will be released in early summer as a pilot to various groups to review and field test. After we incorporate information collected during the pilot period, we will release the primer nationally this fall. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the primer for use in your community this summer, please contact Campaign Coordinator Paul Ruther at [childproofing@chej.org](mailto:childproofing@chej.org) or 703-237-2249, ext. 21. The primer will be distributed free of charge—the only caveat being that we want your feedback on its usefulness, accessibility, and how to make it even better.

## CONGRESS FAILS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM PESTICIDES AT SCHOOL

The School Environment Protection Act (SEPA) has died again in congressional committee. The bill was an amendment to the Farm Bill but was withdrawn at the beginning of May due to opposition in the House Agriculture Committee. The version of the Farm Bill passed by the Senate in February had included the legislation. SEPA

would require schools to adopt a school pest management plan (SPMP) that minimizes health and environmental risks in school buildings and playgrounds. The legislation would also require public schools to notify parents and staff three times a year concerning their pesticide programs and notify parents and staff before every application if they request it. Signs would have to be posted 24 hours before and after pesticide applications. The campaign to develop and



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# STOP DIOXIN EXPOSURE

C A M P A I G N P A G E

*The Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign is a national grassroots effort to eliminate dioxin and initiate a public debate on the role of government in protecting the health of the American people. Dioxin is the highly toxic by-product of industrial processes involving chlorine. The campaign works with hundreds of community organizations to pressure corporations, hospitals and government agencies to modify or shut down dioxin-emitting facilities, such as waste incinerators, paper mills and chemical manufacturing plants.*

## DIOXIN RELEASES AT UNSAFE LEVELS

On May 23, the U.S. EPA released the Toxics Release Inventory Data (TRI) for the year 2000. According to the EPA, manufacturing and chemical producing facilities released 99,814 grams (about 1,100 grams TEQ) of dioxin into the environment in 2000. One gram TEQ of dioxin is enough to exceed the acceptable daily intake for more than 40 million people for one year.

2000 was the first year that industrial facilities were required to report the amount of dioxin they released. The new data indicate that dioxin releases from industrial facilities may be several times what EPA has previously estimated. And these reported releases are only a fraction of the dioxin that is being released into the environment every day. The TRI does not include a number of dioxin sources, including the three largest: municipal waste incineration, backyard burn barrels and medical waste incineration.

The bottom line is the average adult already has enough dioxin in their body to cause adverse health effects. There is no "margin of safety" for exposures to dioxin—any additional exposure is too much.

## GAO REPORT ON DIOXIN REASSESSMENT

At the end of April, the Government Accounting Office released *Environmental Health Risks: Information on EPA's Draft Reassessment of Dioxins*. The report was commissioned by Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and John Breau

(D-LA) in 2001. Concerned about the potential impact the EPA's Dioxin Reassessment would have on the food and agriculture industries as well as consumers, the senators asked the GAO to look at three areas: 1) the data EPA used to estimate human dietary exposure to dioxins in the U.S.; 2) how the reassessment objectives, processes, analytical methods, and conclusions on the health risks of dioxin compare with the World Health Organization; and 3) the extent the draft reassessment reflects the views of the independent peer review panels that reviewed it in 2000/2001.

The significance of the report is that it endorses the work that the EPA has done thus far and gives the EPA a green light to complete and release the long-awaited Dioxin Reassessment. Both the chemical and food industries have been trying to delay the release of the report. One of their tactics has been to call for more research; another is to challenge the way the EPA arrived at its conclusions. The GAO report concludes that the EPA and the World Health Organization used similar methodology and reached similar conclusions. The GAO report also indicates that while there are some limitations to the data on dioxin levels in the food supply, the risk assessment methods used by the EPA are internationally accepted scientific methods. All of this provides support for the view that there is no need for further delay in completing and releasing the Dioxin Reassessment to the American public. To view the entire GAO report, visit our web site at [www.chej.org/Newreports.html](http://www.chej.org/Newreports.html).

## POPs IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2002

On April 11, Senator James Jeffords (I-VT) introduced the POPs Implementation Act of 2002. This legislation is intended to serve as the domestic implementing authority for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), an international treaty to phase out a dozen of the world's most toxic pollutants. Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) introduced the Republican version on May 13. Jeffords' bill is significant because it gives the EPA the authority to implement the treaty in its entirety, whereas the Republican version would block the process for adding other toxic chemicals to the 12 banned by the Stockholm Convention—a crucial part of the treaty. In addition, Jeffords' bill includes a provision that requires the EPA to submit the final Dioxin Reassessment to Congress within 90 days of the enactment of this legislation. U.S. members of the International POPs Elimination Network are starting to develop both a Capitol Hill-based and grassroots-based lobbying strategy. Stay tuned to our web site or contact our office for how to get involved.

## CONFERENCE ADDRESSES IMPACT OF U.S. CHEMICAL WARFARE IN VIETNAM

In March, the first U.S.-Vietnamese Conference on Agent Orange was held in Hanoi, sponsored by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). CHEJ's Science Director Stephen Lester attended, presenting a paper on the activities of grassroots, community-based organizations in dioxin-contaminated communities around the U.S.

Vietnamese scientists presented their research on the impact of what they considered "chemical warfare waged by the US on the country of Vietnam," focusing on births defects, miscarriages, and other reproductive problems in areas the the U.S. Army sprayed with Agent Orange and other herbicides from 1961 to 1971. Other presentations identified hot spots of contami-

*continued on page 23*

# RESOURCES

◆ *Green of Another Color: Building Effective Partnerships between Foundations and the Environmental Justice Movement* should be read both for its analysis of the environmental justice movement and its critique of foundation grantmaking. The authors, Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy, view the environmental justice movement as critical to the struggle not only for environmental protection but for democracy and social justice. However, as Faber and McCarthy document, it is also “the most underfunded social movement in the United States.” The authors offer detailed recommendations for grantmaking strategies that will help ensure that funds reach community-based organizations and support organizing efforts and movement building. The report also frankly addresses the lack of racial and cultural diversity within the philanthropic community and its impact on funding practices. (Available online at [www.casdn.neu.edu/~socant/Another%20Color%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.casdn.neu.edu/~socant/Another%20Color%20Final%20Report.pdf))

◆ The Grassroots Recycling Network has developed several excellent educational materials to support its Zero Waste campaign. The materials include two videos by Paul Connett: *Zero Waste: Idealistic Dream or Realistic Goal?* (28 minutes), in which waste experts introduce in an informal and engaging way some of the key ideas of zero waste; and *Nova Scotia: Community Responsibility in Action* (32 minutes), which looks at innovative recycling, reuse, and composting programs being implemented in Canada. In the booklet “A Citizen’s Agenda for Zero Waste” (27 pp.), Paul Connett and Bill Sheehan provide a detailed introduction to zero waste practices drawing on communities worldwide that have passed zero waste legislation or implemented creative resource recovery programs. Finally, a well-designed Zero Waste Briefing Kit succinctly lays out the principles of the campaign and includes facts, figures, and case studies. (For these and other materials, see [www.grrn.org](http://www.grrn.org) or contact the Grassroots Recycling Network at 706-613-7121 or [zerowaste@grrn.org](mailto:zerowaste@grrn.org).)

◆ In *The State of Children’s Health and Environment 2002*, John Wargo and Linda Evenson Wargo provide a thorough introduction to environmental threats to children’s health. The authors summarize trends in children’s health in three areas: asthma, birth defects and developmental disabilities, and cancer, providing clear descriptions of the broad range of pollutants, neurotoxins, and carcinogens that children are exposed to. A central concern of the work is the inadequacy of government regulation of toxic substances. The authors recommend practical steps that parents can take to minimize their children’s exposure to environmental hazards. John



Wargo is the author of *Our Children’s Toxic Legacy: How Science and Law Fail to Protect Us from Pesticides*, for which he won the 1997 American Medical Writers Association Award of Excellence in Medical Communications. (Children’s Health Environmental Coalition, February 2002, 71 pp., \$18.00; available online at

[www.checnet.org](http://www.checnet.org).)

◆ In *Environmentally Induced Illnesses: Ethics, Risk Assessment and Human Rights*, Thomas Kerns makes a powerful case for a rights-based approach to protecting human health. Kerns, a professor of philosophy who specializes in medical ethics, reviews what we know about the public health threat posed by chronic low-level exposure to toxic chemicals, presents a brief but sharp critique of environmental risk assessment, and lays out in some detail an alternative approach grounded in moral rights and duties. The precautionary principle and the right to know are central to Kerns’ human rights approach, and he offers specific proposals for translating these principles into public policy. (McFarland & Company, 2001, 294 pp., \$39.95)

◆ The Bush administration seems to be aiming at nothing less than dismantling three decades of federal environmental regulation. In *Rewriting the Rules: The Bush Administration’s Assault on the Environment*, the Natural Resources Defense Council documents actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies to subvert environmental regulations and explains the critical role in this assault being played by the Office of Management and Budget, which is using its new authority to roll back existing rules and bottle up new ones. The report includes a detailed chronology of over 100 actions taken by the Bush administration that have weakened environmental protections in the U.S. (Natural Resources Defense Council, April 2002, 57 pp., \$7.50; available online at [www.nrdc.org/legislation](http://www.nrdc.org/legislation)) ■

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## ACTION LINE

*continued from page 19*

contaminated by the Ackerville landfill, and conduct tests for trichloroethylene (TCE) and arsenic contamination. The monitoring wells and testing have been a longtime demand of the group. SURE and its allies celebrated their win by holding a press event at the site. A second round of radio ads followed, focusing on “protecting the health and safety of our families and children.” SURE is now working with the **Sierra Club** to prepare television commercials and a video documentary. ■

# WITH SPECIAL THANKS

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice remains an advocate, educator, organizer and leader in the grassroots environmental movement through the generous support of our members, Partners, Guardians and key foundations and institutions. CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions who made critically important donations to support our work between March 8, 2002 and June 17, 2002. Our members number in the hundreds, and are therefore too many to name. However, each gift, no matter what the size, is very much appreciated.

## INDIVIDUALS

### GUARDIANS' CIRCLE

(gifts of \$1,000 or more)

### Community Protectors

Andris Salter

### PARTNERS' CIRCLE

(gifts of \$100-999)

### Neighborhood Advocates

Chen Yu Hu

Harold & Sara O'Connell

### Family Protectors

Judi Friedman

Gary & Cynthia Gillen

Randy Schwartz & Edward

Gralla

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### Health Defenders

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William Gibson

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Thomas Peterson

Elyse Pivnick

Zoe Rothchild

Nancy Sampson

William Shelton

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Martha Vinick

Brad & Ann Wallace

### Matching Gifts

C.R. Bard

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

Montanans Against Toxic  
Burning (MT)

Pennsylvania Environmental  
Network (PA)

Sustainable Resources (MN)

Women's Voices for the Earth  
(MT)

## INSTITUTIONS

Methodist Federation for Social  
Action

## STOP DIOXIN

*continued from page 21*

nation that remain throughout the country. Many of the U.S. and international presentations provided general summaries of the adverse health effects associated with exposure to dioxin in communities around the world. Following the conference, NIEHS held a closed meeting with Vietnamese scientists to hammer out an agreement on joint research to be done by the U.S. and Vietnamese governments to address the impact of the spraying. The Vietnamese are asking the U.S. to clean up identified hot spots and to provide humanitarian aid to address the many health problems, while the U.S. is only willing to fund basic research projects.

NIEHS intends to make all of the papers presented at the conference available on their web site. For more information, see the NIEHS web site at [www.niehs.nih.gov/external/usvcrp/project1.htm](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/external/usvcrp/project1.htm).

## TOXIC COMEDY A BIG SUCCESS

On May 5th, HBO premiered the toxic comedy, *Blue Vinyl*, a story of one woman's search for a non-toxic alternative to her parents' blue vinyl siding. Over the course of her search, the audience meets community people living on the fenceline of PVC manufacturing plants, workers who turn raw PVC into consumer products, scientific experts who talk about the dangers of dioxin, alternative building experts promoting non-PVC alternatives, and the widows of laborers in Venice, Italy

who died making toxic PVC. Despite the important and poignant message about the hazards of PVC, *Blue Vinyl* is an accessible, funny and delightful film that audiences love. If you are interested in holding a *Blue Vinyl* screening in your community, please email the Stop Dioxin Exposure campaign at [dioxin@chej.org](mailto:dioxin@chej.org).

Thus far, over 60 community groups across the country have planned more than 80 viewing events to help educate the public on the dangers of PVC and dioxin. For details on community events that have already taken place throughout the U.S., check out the box in Action Line on page 14.

**For more information on the Stop Dioxin Exposure campaign, please visit our web site at [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org).** ■

## CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

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pass SEPA has been spearheaded by **Beyond Pesticides** (National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides).

Keep a close watch on the SEPA bill, as we will all have a chance to fight for its passage again. Until then, we'll continue to work on state and local policies that protect children from pesticides.

**For more information on the Child Proofing Our Communities campaign or to read our report *Creating Safe Learning Zones*, please visit our web site at [www.childproofing.org](http://www.childproofing.org).** ■

# Almost 25 Years Since Love Canal

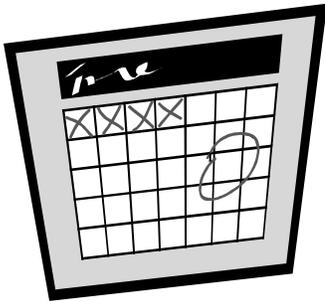
CHEJ and the grassroots environmental movement have begun the COUNTDOWN to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Love Canal—the community struggle that woke up the nation to the threat posed by toxic pollution. The community at Love Canal won the relocation of 900 families—and started a broadbased grassroots movement that has changed the country. The movement's accomplishments are many:

- Federal, state and local regulations have been passed to clean up toxic pollution.
- Commercial landfilling of hazardous waste has declined.
- Right-to-know laws have been enacted that force corporations to reveal their polluting practices.
- The recycling rate nationwide has almost tripled.
- The demand to eliminate pesticides in schools has gained momentum across the country.



The movement is now at a milestone—and ready to move on to the next phase.

*You can be part of the launching of this next stage by participating in the yearlong campaign to educate and organize for public health.*



CHEJ and other leaders will be developing and circulating a platform—based on the precautionary principle—that we hope will become a guide to public policy. We need your participation to develop this platform—and to make the campaign a success. Events will be held to celebrate local victories, raise funds and educate the public and policy makers.

Don't be surprised if someone from CHEJ contacts you about the campaign. Your voice and participation will play a vital role in our efforts. Stay tuned for more information—we're only nine months away from the campaign launch date!

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