

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

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CHEJ CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY



MOVING AWAY FROM TOXIC CHEMICALS



The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement

www.chej.org

Center for Health, Environment & Justice

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Center for Health,
Environment & Justice, Inc.
P.O. Box 6806
Falls Church, VA 22040-6806
(703) 237-2249
chej@chej.org - www.chej.org

On the Cover:
**CHEJ "30TH ANNIVERSARY
ILLUSTRATION"**

Illustration by: Gregory Kolen II

STILL AT IT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

As CHEJ celebrates its 30th Anniversary, I celebrate nearly as many years of my own activism, and, like CHEJ, look forward to the years to come.

When I first learned that Waste Technologies Industries (WTI) was planning to build a hazardous waste incinerator in my East Liverpool, Ohio neighborhood in the 1980s, I was heartbroken and angry. As a lifelong resident, I love my community, and from the schools to the post office to the churches, I know everyone's name and story. I co-founded Save Our County to lead a movement to block WTI's plans, even though standing up to a major corporation was far outside my comfort zone.

Despite our protests, WTI built the incinerator. The governor at the time, George Voinovich, approved a moratorium in 1984 on building future hazardous waste facilities within 2,000 feet from homes and schools. That moratorium still exists today, as does the WTI incinerator in my neighborhood, just 320 feet from homes. It is built in a valley on the Ohio River and its smokestack is nearly level with a school, just 1,100 feet away. Air inversions are common in the valley, which means the air becomes trapped and can't rise as usual, keeping the pollution over our homes with no place to go. The incinerator emits a varied mix of chemicals, including dioxin, a known carcinogen, and mercury, a neurotoxin.

After WTI succeeded in building and opening the facility, I changed my focus to shutting it down. It's a battle I'm still waging today, nearly thirty years later, with CHEJ's help. I've been arrested three times for civil disobedience, twice alongside actor Martin Sheen during protests against WTI. I persevere because I love my community and I've realized that if we don't stand up for ourselves, no one will. I have seen too many of my friends and neighbors die from health conditions caused by the facility. I can't stop now.

East Liverpool was defined by the US EPA as an environmental justice community, which I hoped meant they would help us in the battle for our lives against WTI. Unfortunately, the designation has meant absolutely nothing at the local level. It's as if they're saying "Yes, you're an environmentally overburdened community. Yes, you're a community of color. Too bad." Despite multiple disappointments and setbacks, I believe my community can thrive once again, after WTI is shut down. WTI may take away the health of my friends and environment, but they will never take away my hope for a better future.

By Alonzo Spencer, Chairman of Save Our County and Chair of CHEJ's Board of Directors

As CHEJ celebrates our 30th year of empowering communities and building grassroots leadership, look for more stories by grassroots leaders like Alonzo about how people have come forward to meet the challenges facing their families and communities.

ABOUT CHEJ

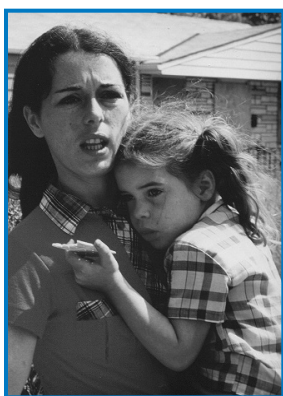
CHEJ mentors a movement building healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm caused by chemical and toxic threats. We accomplish our work through programs focusing on different types of environmental health threats. CHEJ also works with communities to empower groups by providing the tools, direction, and encouragement they need to advocate for human health, to prevent harm and to work towards environmental integrity. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for families living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ to continue the journey. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 11,000 groups nationwide. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help families and communities prevent harm can be found at www.chej.org.

CHEJ CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

"Dallas" was the Number One TV Show. Abba was hot. Basketball players wore shorts that were really... well... short. And Lois Gibbs made her first visit to a foundation, asking them to support a new organization she was starting to help other communities going through their own Love Canal.

"Why do you, a local leader and housewife, think you can make such a significant change?" they asked her. "You did a great job in your own community, but the nation is quite a different challenge."

Thirty years since that first visit to a skeptical funder, we can look back and appreciate how far we have come in shifting to a precautionary approach to environmental health. CHEJ has assisted more than 11,000 communities since our founding in 1981, and we've built coalitions that have helped pass groundbreaking policies, such as the 1986 Community Right-to-Know law. As we celebrate our 30th Anniversary this year, we will be sharing stories about many of the heroic community groups and leaders we've worked with, and about our grassroots victories. Highlighted below are some of the milestones we celebrated during our first thirty years.

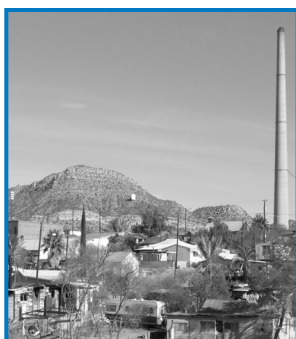


1978: Lois Gibbs begins the fight for environmental health at Love Canal in New York.

1980: Superfund: Considered a direct outgrowth of the work at Love Canal, the Superfund program is created to tax polluting industries and create a revenue fund for cleaning up abandoned toxic sites. After this legislation passed, CHEJ helped

create the demand for a Superfund Technical Assistance Grants program, which Congress passed in 1986. The TAG program provides \$50,000 to communities to hire technical experts to enable citizens to participate in assessing site contamination. As of 2011, over \$27 million has been granted to communities across the country.

1981: Lois Gibbs files incorporation papers for CHEJ,



then the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste.



1986: National Community Right-to-Know law passes, requiring industries to report their emissions of certain toxic chemicals to EPA's Toxic Release Inventory and enabling citizens to know what chemicals are released, stored, and disposed of in their communities.

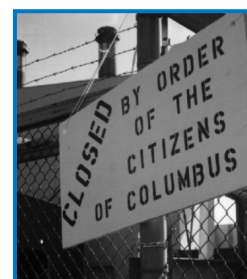
1986: CHEJ holds the first of a series of **National Conventions** that celebrate the achievements of grassroots community-based groups and the grassroots movement, while also developing strategies to continue these successes. These conventions provided unparalleled leadership training and skill building workshops that helped people understand what it takes to win. As many as 1,000 people attend the convention in 1989.

1989: CHEJ initiates its **Community Leadership Development Grant Program** ("mini-grants") which provides small grants to grassroots community-based groups for training and skill-building. Over a seven year period, CHEJ funds 229 groups with over \$580,000.

1990: McToxics Campaign: CHEJ kicked off a campaign in 1987 to get McDonald's to stop packaging their food in Styrofoam. Toxic chemicals are released during the production, use, and disposal of Styrofoam, not to mention the large amounts of Styrofoam that end up in the landfill after mere minutes of use. The campaign brought together children, schools, religious communities, and everyday citizens. In 1990, McDonald's announced that it would no longer use Styrofoam packaging, and dozens of counties, churches and government agencies followed their example.



1994: Columbus Incinerator: CHEJ teamed up with local residents in Columbus, Ohio and successfully shuts down the Columbus incinerator, the largest emitter of dioxins in the country. The surrounding neighborhood suffered many adverse health effects, including cancer, brain disease, and reproductive abnormalities.



Continued on page 10



BE SAFE Campaign

BE SAFE is a nationwide initiative to build support for the precautionary approach to prevent pollution and environmental destruction before it happens.

Major Green Purchasing Victory!

New York's consumers, state workers, and environment received a green holiday gift in late December when the state approved the nation's most comprehensive Green Purchasing policy that avoids "bad actor" chemicals in products. CHEJ and a coalition of health, labor, and environmental groups worked for four years to convince the state to adopt this policy.

The Interagency Committee on Procurement approved the policy requiring all NYS agencies to consider avoiding 85 chemicals in products purchased by the state. Relying on federal priority lists, the list includes persistent, bioaccumulative toxic chemicals (PBTs) like mercury, known and suspect carcinogens like benzene, brominated flame retardants (PBDEs), perfluorinated compounds (PFOAs), and bisphenol A (BPA). This is the most comprehensive chemical avoidance purchasing list in the country. It will have a major impact on greening the marketplace with New York's annual buying power of \$9 billion.

During the public comment period, 80 organizations and unions submitted letters of support. CHEJ especially thanks the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of General Services, Grassroots Environmental Education, Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition, and WNY Council on Occupational Safety & Health for their work on this policy. To obtain a copy of the Chemical Avoidance List and the state's Green Purchasing Executive Order, go to <http://www.ogs.state.ny.us/EO/4/Default.asp>. For more information, contact anne@chej.org.

NY Valentine's Day of Action – Have a Heart! Go PVC-free!

This Valentine's Day, CHEJ worked with students at college campuses across New York to organize a statewide Day of Action for PVC-Free Campuses. Students at college and university campuses all across the state let their administrations know that their schools should stop purchasing PVC for use in building and school supplies. Students delivered petitions, postcards, letters, and photos with PVC-Free demands to their schools' administration. You can check out photos on CHEJ's website: www.chej.org.

Toys R Us' Broken Promises

Over two years ago, Toys "R" Us pledged to reduce the use of toxic PVC and offer more PVC-free products to American families. Unfortunately, they've broken their promises. This past holiday season, CHEJ published a report that found PVC in 72% of toys tested, and toxic organotins in 20% of toys we tested. Organotins, which were introduced to replace toxic metal stabilizers like lead in PVC, are also toxic and have been found to leach from PVC. Toys that tested positive for PVC include Barbie, "Toy Story 3" Woody and Buzz Lightyear figures, and even a Disney doll. After we wrote the report, we solicited experts as part of a Commission of Inquiry into Toxic Toys for both their review and opinions on our report findings. The Commission was chaired by Dr. Peter Orris from the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. We released the report with our allies at the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Safer Chemicals Healthy Families coalition, and the commission chairman. In February, Moms Rising sent a card to Toys "R" Us headquarters along with a petition bearing the signatures of nearly 15,000 moms, dads and others, calling on them to go PVC-free.

A CALL FOR CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

TOXIC Toys R Us

PVC Toxic Chemicals in Toys and Packaging



A Report to the
National Commission of
Inquiry into Toxic Toys

You can learn more and read the report at our website, www.ToxicToysRUs.org.

BY MIKE SCHADE, PVC CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR, CHEJ

MOVING AWAY FROM TOXIC CHEMICALS – TOP TEN STRATEGIES TO WIN



Photo by Adrian Kinloch

In recent years, some of the biggest wins of the environmental health movement have been due to cutting-edge strategies to press multi-national corporations and institutions in key sectors to shift their purchasing away from the worst-of-the worst chemicals and plastics like bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates, polyvinyl chloride plastic (PVC or vinyl), and toxic flame retardants. These combined victories have created a time when the chemical industry is on the defensive, and momentum is building for federal chemical policy reform.

CHEJ has been at the forefront of this movement, shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies, and during this 30th Anniversary year, we want to reflect on the top-ten key strategies that groups have employed to shift markets and put safer products on the shelves.

1) It's About Our Health

Just about every winning campaign has focused on the health impacts of unnecessary toxic chemicals in consumer products and kids' toys. These draw on emerging science linking toxic chemicals to chronic diseases on the rise, like breast cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, reproductive health problems, and asthma. We've also been successful by pointing out how these toxic chemicals trespass into our infants' bodies and moms' breast milk – without our knowledge or consent. Health-affected groups have been key leaders and spokespeople in the fight for a toxic-free future.

2) America is # 1?

Americans like being #1. So many of us have been successful by pointing out how the U.S. is lagging behind the rest of the world – such as when phthalates were legal in toys in the U.S., but banned in Europe, or how Canada declared that BPA was “toxic”, while the U.S. Food & Drug Administration said it was perfectly safe. This has been a very powerful story that helped lead to significant market changes.

3) Show Me the Money

Money talks. When giant institutional purchasers in the healthcare sector, thanks to the work of Health Care Without Harm, started asking suppliers to get mercury out of thermometers, the entire supply chain in the U.S. went mercury-

free. Institutional and faith-based shareholders in the Investor Environmental Health Network have highlighted the financial and business risks associated with toxic chemical exposure. This past December, CHEJ played a leading role in getting New York state to approve the nation's most comprehensive Green Purchasing policy to avoid “bad actor” chemicals in products, leveraging the state's \$9 billion annual purchasing power.

4) Attention Wal-Mart Shoppers: There's a Toxic Spill in Aisle 3

Another winning strategy has been to leverage the market power of multi-national retailers like Wal-Mart, Target, and K-Mart. When CHEJ wanted to get PVC out of packaging and shower curtains, we targeted the biggest retailers in the U.S. that were using toxic PVC packaging, which led to a ripple effect among the big-box retailers.

5) Are There Sex Hormones in My Daughter's Baby Bottle?

Connecting toxic chemicals in our bodies to the products our children are playing with, chewing on, and interacting with has been very powerful. Examples include when CHEJ and allies tested baby bottles and found how bisphenol A (BPA) was leaching out, or when we found that the “new shower curtain smell” was actually a toxic soup of over 100 chemicals escaping into the air inside your home. Product testing has been a powerful tool, and one we need to continue wielding in new and creative ways.

6) Warning – This Chemical is Known to the State of California to Cause Cancer and Birth Defects, or Other Reproductive Harm

States are the laboratory for change. Thanks to strong statewide environmental health alliances and networks, numerous states have passed legislation banning chemicals of high concern in children's products. Eighteen state legislatures have already passed 71 chemical safety laws in the last eight years by an overwhelming bipartisan margin. In 2011, bills are being considered in 30 states that include: bans on BPA and hazardous flame retardants in consumer products; requirements that children's product manufacturers use only the safest chemicals; and resolutions urging Congress to overhaul the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) – the federal law that allows dangerous and untested chemicals to be used in everyday products and materials. Pressure from the states is helping convince companies and retailers to get chemicals out of their products, and at the same time, has helped set the stage for federal chemical policy reform.

7) Taking Advantage of Recalls

A few years ago you couldn't turn on the news without hearing about another children's toy or product being recalled. The environmental health movement jumped on this opportunity, and groups all around the country quickly mobilized to introduce legislation in key states to ban toxic chemicals in kids' toys, and connect the recalls back to our broken chemical safety system.

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ACTION LINE

Action Line is the heart of Everyone's Backyard. This is where we tell the stories of grassroots groups that reflect their creative energy and accomplishments. It is also a way to share strategies, actions, and industry trends. Although we do not always mention our role, CHEJ is providing organizing and technical assistance to many of these groups. For other stories, we draw on a large network of contacts and organizations that we have developed during more than 25 years of operation. We welcome and encourage contributions.

California

The debate over the use of smart meters in California heated up when a group of concerned citizens in **West Marin County** blocked Pacific Gas & Electric workers from entering their neighborhood to install smart meters. A smart meter is an electrical meter that records consumption in intervals of an hour or less and communicates that information daily to the utility company for monitoring and billing purposes. These meters are being promoted as a way to address energy independence, global warming, and emergency resilience issues. Communities in California are saying they should have a voice in deciding whether to place these devices in their homes. The meters emit microwave radiation that some groups are concerned about. The residents are asking federal and state governments for a moratorium on installing smart meters until further study and research can be done to address their concerns.

Florida

Signs were posted by **Save Our Aquifers (SOA)** in the cities of Rockledge and Cocoa reading "Enough Already" and "Keep Arsenic Out of Our Groundwater." SOA continues to oppose plans to use wells to inject 180 million gallons of treated wastewater into the aquifer that provides the towns with their drinking water. The project has been put on hold because of concerns that the water stored in the aquifer will not meet EPA drinking water limits of 10 ppb for arsenic once it is mixed with the waste water without additional treatment, which would make the project too costly. The Rockledge



Residents erect signs to tell city officials where they stand on storing waste water underground.

City Council is expecting an engineering report on arsenic problems in other wells around the state. It seems that the oxygen-rich wastewater leaches arsenic from the limestone formation that forms the aquifer where it is injected. SOA is cautiously optimistic as it continues its efforts to stop this threat to their drinking water.

Georgia

Congratulations to **Citizens for Public Awareness**, the Georgia chapter of the Sierra Club and activists who celebrated the decision by GreenFirst, LLC to end its interest in building a "renewable energy" facility in Elberton County citing "economic concerns." The proposed \$400 million 50 MW incinerator would have burned wood waste from the timber industry and municipal solid waste, and converted the heat generated into energy. The proposal generated fierce opposition as local residents organized quickly and let their local politicians and government representatives know that they wanted nothing to do with the plant.

Kentucky

Congratulations to **Kentuckians for the Commonwealth**, the **Kentucky Environmental Foundation**, and other environmental groups who reached a settlement agreement with the East Kentucky Power Cooperative to stop construction of two multi-million dollar coal-burning power plants in Clark County. Instead, the power company will focus on ways to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy options. One Clark County resident said, "It creates an opportunity for our cooperative to become a leader in developing affordable, accessible clean energy and energy efficiency programs that can create jobs across the region while meeting the needs of their customers." This agreement will not only create jobs for the region, but it will also reduce financial risk for customers and benefit the health and environment of the people of the region.

Maryland

Residents in **Fredrick**, about 40 miles north of Washington, DC, have been organizing to address a rash of cancers that they believe are due to activities at the Ft. Detrick military base where Agent Orange was tested from the 1940s to the 1960s. The Army recently revealed that the military sprayed Agent Orange on the base into the open air and that there are six hazardous waste dumps on the base. Dioxin,

a highly toxic contaminant found in Agent Orange was also found in residential soil near the base. Groundwater contamination has been a problem for nearby residents for years. The county Department of Health is looking into whether a cancer cluster exists. The Army has asked the National Academy of Sciences to conduct an independent review of the health studies conducted thus far.

Massachusetts

Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign, Concerned Citizens of Franklin County, and numerous other local groups joined together with the **Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)** and community groups from across five continents for a Global Day of Action against waste and incinerators. These advocates identified incinerators as a primary source of climate pollution and are pushing a 'zero waste' policy to save money, energy and resources. Meg Sheehan of Stop Spewing Carbon said, "...burning biomass and garbage for so called 'clean energy' is a taxpayer and ratepayer rip-off. At a time when our nation is struggling with a huge budget deficit and rising health care costs, giving our money to incinerators that cause illness and death makes no sense." Incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per unit than coal power plants. GAIA proudly proclaimed that no new garbage incinerators have been built in the U.S. in over a decade, multiple proposals to burn waste have been stopped, and the largest incinerator in the world has recently shut down.

Michigan

The **Lone Tree Council (LTC)** of Bay City sent an angry letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in response to a study released by the University of Michigan on dioxin. The UM study, which was funded by Dow Chemical, a major source of dioxin emissions for more than 50 years in Midland, was not peer-reviewed nor published. The LTC felt it was "inappropriate and premature" to release the results of the study to the residents in the community before it was peer-reviewed, and urged the EPA to address the limitations of the UM study, including "its interpretation, and its limited utility in setting appropriate public health guidance." CHEJ sent a letter to EPA in support of LTC.

Minnesota

Congratulations to **Neighbors Against the Asphalt Plant (NAAP)** in Roseville who convinced their city council to vote 4-0 to deny a conditional use permit requested by Bituminous Roadways to build an asphalt plant in the midst of a residential neighborhood. NAAP quickly gathered information about the dangers of asphalt plants and successfully organized their efforts to target their politicians and decision makers. One city council member acknowledged that he had received over 800 emails opposing the asphalt plant.

ACTION LINE

Need organizing help?

Visit www.chej.org/assistance
or call 703-237-2249

Missouri

Congratulations to the **Carter Carburetor Citizens Advocacy Group** in St. Louis who convinced EPA to give the group a technical advisor to help them sort through a 644 page report on the contamination at an old carburetor manufacturing site heavily contaminated by PCBs. Levels as high as 270,000 ppm have been found in soil. Although one building on the site was destroyed 10 years ago, the site has been left untouched for 25 years. Now there is renewed interest from various stakeholders to clean up and redevelop the site. CHEJ reviewed the technical report and provided comments to the group which helped convince EPA to grant the group's request for a technical advisor. CHEJ is also helping the group build capacity and develop a cohesive message and plan.

Montana

The **Clark Fork River Technical Assistance Committee** (CFRTAC) is adjusting to a major cutback in the amount of grant funds they will receive from the EPA Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program this year. The group is dealing with the largest Superfund site in the country, which includes three distinct "operating units" that are separated by nearly 100 miles from the headwaters of the Clark Fork River near Warm Springs to the Milltown Dam in Missoula. Because of the size of the site and the multiple operating units, EPA had given the group \$100,000 in each of its previous two grant requests. This time the group received the more typical TAG grant of \$50,000. CFRTAC is one of the longest standing TAG recipients. Since the program started in 1986, more than \$27 million have been given to community groups at Superfund sites to help provide technical assistance to communities. The TAG program provides funds (up to \$50,000 per year) to community groups at Superfund sites to hire their own technical advisor.

New Mexico

Nuclear Watch New Mexico and other local groups in the Santa Fe area helped ensure that substantial improvements were made to the hazardous waste permit that was issued to the Los Alamos National Laboratory in late December. The permit allows the lab to store hazardous waste on-site and to treat the waste by stabilization,

but not burn high explosive waste in the open air. The facility generated about 225,000 pounds of hazardous and mixed waste in 2008. Some of the improvements in the permit included requiring LANL to prepare a formal community relations plan that will be developed in consultation, with and annually reviewed by, affected communities and interested members of the public, requiring the lab to notify interested persons by email about certain actions and submittals, and providing on-line access to all documents as well as at a physical location in the community.

New York

The **Clean Air Coalition of Western New York** (CAC) announced the selection of the first 15 Lois Gibbs Fellows who will receive activist training designed to foster relationships between grassroots leaders and decision makers. CAC Executive Director Erin Heaney said, "Gibbs is emblematic of the fellowship program's philosophy - that ordinary individuals can make an extraordinary difference when they organize their neighbors." CHEJ's executive director was on-hand to help celebrate the inaugural class by conducting one of the first training sessions.



Lois Gibbs visited Buffalo, NY to kick off CAC's fellowship named in her honor.

The **Ilion Project**, a community group in Ilion, sent a detailed report to state environmental and health agencies in December urging them to investigate nine suspected or known toxic waste dumps in their town. One waste dump may be under the town's elementary school, and another may be next to the town's high school. CHEJ staff took a tour with one of the community leaders of the Ilion Project and saw suspicious 55 gallon drums in the stream next to the high school. The Ilion Project held a well-attended community meeting to develop a strategy on how to get the state to take action.

North Carolina

The **CTS Citizens Monitoring Council** in Asheville delivered a series of demands to government officials

in a report listing actions it says local, state, and federal agencies need to take to halt the spread of a plume of trichloroethylene (TCE) that is affecting residents living around an old electroplating plant. The report identified residents at risk from vapor intrusion and ground water contamination, and recommended designating the CTS property a Superfund site and relocating one family whose house is immediately adjacent to the site. The group is also demanding that results of previous testing be made available to residents. The group is hoping that the report and public attention will finally get the government to clean up the site after more than 20 years of inaction.

The **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League** is continuing its efforts to coordinate a statewide network of groups fighting biomass plants, also called waste-to-energy facilities. The groups are doing publicity campaigns with leaflets and radio ads and spreading the word about the hazards of this new form of incineration, outlined in a recent report by BREDL. Last week, BREDL's report was featured in an *Albany Times-Union* editorial cautioning NY Governor Cuomo to go slow on embracing this new technology.

Ohio

Representatives of **Save Our County** (SOC) in East Liverpool met with the East Liverpool Health District Board to discuss the possibility of conducting a local health study. This meeting followed a conversation between a research scientist from the University of Cincinnati that CHEJ introduced to SOC who is interested in conducting a human health study in East Liverpool. This spring the scientist will meet with East Liverpool residents to hear their concerns and to discuss different kinds of research that could be done. This same scientist is conducting an extensive study of the impacts of manganese on children in Marietta. Manganese was found in high levels by the USEPA in air monitors stationed at elementary schools in both East Liverpool and Marietta.

Residents from **Clyde** have been waiting for answers as to why some 39 children have been diagnosed with cancer in their area. They suspect that an underground system of caves and water in the area called "karst" may have something to do with it. The water within this karst formation is likely to be contaminated, and it has been known to communicate with the groundwater in the past, but no one knows the extent. The residents believe that testing the karst to determine whether it is communicating with the groundwater is critical to the childhood cancer investigation. They also want to know if the karst formation has been contaminated by the injection of hazardous waste into the ground by Waste Management not far from town.

ACTION LINE

Oregon

Neighbors for Clean Air (NCA) continue to organize as they expanded their efforts to educate and share information about the multiple sources of air pollution in the northwest section of the city of Portland. NCA's goals include reducing air emissions and improving air quality in the city. The group launched a new interactive website that shows 16 point sources of pollution, the location of nearby schools, and places where odors have been reported. The website allows viewers to report new odors. There is a petition viewers can sign that calls on the state to set air standards that protect children against air pollution spikes as well as more routine emissions. CHEJ is providing technical assistance and organizing support to NCA. You can view their website at <http://www.whatsinyourair.org/>.



Find out what's in your air from www.whatsinyourair.org.

Texas

CHEJ Board member and Director of **Citizens for Environmental Justice (CEJ)** Suzie Canales never thought she'd get a private meeting with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson when she accepted an invitation to attend the White House Forum on Environmental Justice. She got a private session with EPA's top official after she stood up in the main auditorium near the end of a long day of presentations and chastised the podium of government officials by saying "I didn't come all this way to be talked to. I came here because I thought I was going to be able to voice concerns." She told the panel that the government needs to stop talking about environmental justice and act. Following her outburst, an aide escorted her out of the main auditorium to meet with Jackson. Canales gave Jackson a report written by CEJ that criticized EPA's efforts to achieve environmental justice. She beseeched the EPA director to stop the endless studies and take action to help people exposed to toxic chemicals.

Wisconsin

Local residents, including both tribal and non tribal members of the **Oneida Nation**, are organizing to oppose plans by Alliance Federated Energy to build a pyrolysis gasification plant on tribal land in Ashwaubenon near Green Bay. **Greenaction** and the **Indigenous Environmental Network** are providing assistance to the local residents. Groundbreaking for the plant began last October, but a stop work order was issued by the Oneida Nation in late November that is still in place. The residents are continuing to organize opposition in an effort to stop construction of the plant.

Wyoming

The **Powder River Basin Resource Council (PRBRC)** in Sheridan is pushing the state legislature to address a new report released this past year that found that almost 70 landfills in the state have pollution leaching from the facility. PRBRC is pushing the state to identify how many of these sites need cleanup and to determine how much it is going to cost. One estimate pegged the bill at upwards of \$250 million. ♦



In Memoriam

The movement has lost three extraordinary leaders in the past few months. Each will be deeply missed.

Hazel Johnson – Considered the “Mother of the Environmental Justice Movement,” Hazel founded **People for Community Recovery** in the early 1980s to address health problems in the Altgeld Gardens section of southeast Chicago. Her neighborhood was surrounded by so many toxic waste dumps and industrial facilities that she described her neighborhood as being the center of a “toxic donut.” Hazel was 75 years old.

Julia Bonds – Godmother of the anti-mountain top removal movement and Executive Director of **Coal River Mountain Watch**, Julia (Judy) gave birth to a new generation of clean energy and human rights activists across the nation that are inspired and refocused to take on the fight. She spent over a decade as a full-time crusader in central Appalachia fighting the devastating impact of mountaintop removal. Julia was 58 years old.

Richard Goldman – Environmentalist and philanthropist, who together with his late wife Rhoda, created the Goldman Environmental Prize that awards a prize based on the premise that ordinary people are capable of doing truly extraordinary things. Considered the green Nobel Prize, the award is given to grassroots leaders annually on six continents. Past winners include Julia Bonds and CHEJ's Lois Gibbs.

“The Story of Electronics” analyzes the process of electronics from creation to waste. Annie Leonard, creator of the **Story of Stuff**, has applied her considerable talents to telling the story of how the production, sale, and disposal of electronics impact our lives and the planet. This video calls for the redesign of products so that everyone, including the planet, benefits. As the story unfolds, we learn how electronics are currently ‘designed for the dump’ to be thrown away once they become faulty, instead of the ‘take back’ design that allows for components to be replaced without replacing the entire product. Leonard believes that the ‘take back design’ will show electronic companies that what they are currently doing is not only destructive to the planet but to the individuals who are making these products. To view the video, go to <http://storyofstuff.org/electronics/>.



A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Child Proofing Our Communities

EPA's School Siting Guidelines – The Good and the Bad

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a draft for public comment of a new policy for school siting this past November. School siting is the process of selecting a location to place a new school facility. Many schools across the country are decades old and in need of repair or replacement. School districts are also faced with budget shortfalls and have few funds to build new schools. In order to cut costs, school districts may opt for purchasing property that may seem like a great deal upfront, but long-term costs to make sure the site is suitable for children can quickly escalate. The EPA created the school siting guidelines to aid in the process of site selection.

To help the public understand the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed guidelines, CHEJ held a series of four conference calls in January and February. We also circulated a sign-on letter, supported by over 1,500 groups and individuals that provided comments to the EPA and submitted more detailed comments from CHEJ alone.

School Siting has been a project of CHEJ since 2000. Over this time, CHEJ has pushed EPA to take on the issue of school siting guidelines. We participated in EPA's School Siting Task Group of the agency's Children Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC) that was specifically formed by EPA to review the initial draft of the guidelines. We have been instrumental in pushing EPA to release the document that is out for public comment. CHEJ applauds the EPA for producing these guidelines. We are pleased that the document emphasizes the need to establish a school siting committee at the very beginning of the process, and that EPA recognizes the importance of public participation throughout the school siting process. We are also pleased that EPA has included a thorough and comprehensive environmental review process. But there is still so much that can be improved. CHEJ's comments raised these concerns among others:



Healthy Schools

1. EPA should include distance-based siting criteria to avoid locating schools near contaminated sites and air polluting facilities.
2. The guidelines overemphasize the use of smart growth features in selecting candidate school sites, giving guidance on where to build schools, but not on where to avoid building schools.
3. EPA should consistently state that unrestricted residential use standards should be used for cleaning up contaminated sites used for schools.
4. EPA needs to provide more information on effective cleanup options and their costs.
5. EPA needs to improve the disjointed and limited-access format of the guidelines.

View a copy of CHEJ's sign-on letter at: <http://www.epa.gov/schools/siting/>.

EPA plans to finalize the school siting guidelines by the end of 2011. We anticipate that the guidelines will be a good tool for communities to use as a base to enact stronger policies in their states.

For more information, contact Makia Burns at (703) 237-2249 x 21 or mburns@chej.org.

1995: CHEJ holds **Dioxin Roundtable** meeting in response to the EPA's release of the draft dioxin reassessment that found dioxin to be more toxic than previously thought when it was considered the most toxic man-made chemical ever tested. Forty grassroots leaders from across the country help shape a national campaign to stop dioxin exposures.



Photo by Steve Mauer

Katelya Carter, a child from Pensacola who lives in the Mt. Dioxin relocation area, attends an EPA hearing on relocating the community

A local group called Citizens Against Toxic Exposure fought to relocate 358 families from the environmentally unsafe community. After struggling for justice, CHEJ helped the group place a full page ad in *USA Today*, asking President Clinton for relocation. Two days later, the EPA agreed to evacuate the community. Pensacola marked the EPA's first major relocation of residents.

1996: CHEJ organizes the **Third Citizens Conference on Dioxin** which was held in Baton Rouge, LA. Grassroots community groups from all walks of life and all parts of the country came together to share ideas and information and develop strategies to reduce exposure to dioxin. Workshops focused on nine strategy tracks that are published in a "cookbook" of ideas to stop dioxin exposures. Nearly 600 people attended.



2000: CHEJ's **Childproofing Our Communities** campaign is formed to increase public awareness of children's unique vulnerability to toxic chemicals.

2002: CHEJ's **BE SAFE** campaign is formed to build support for the precautionary approach.

2007: Target: After 230 press conferences, protests, and events at Target stores across the country, the retailer agrees to phase out PVC in their products and packaging. More than 40,000 consumers contacted the company with their concerns, and their voices were heard! Following the announcement, a "domino effect" leads other retailers and manufacturers to begin develop and implement precedent-setting PVC policies.

2010: Chemical Avoidance List passed in New York State: CHEJ's Be Safe campaign organizes support that targets 85



Photo by Linda Ferguson

harmful chemicals to be phased-out in all state purchasing contracts. This is not only the most comprehensive chemical avoidance purchasing list in the country, but it sets a precedent for other states to follow and will have a major impact on greening the nation's marketplace.

Our fight is not done. Americans are concerned not only about environmental chemical contamination, but also toys, shower curtains, automobiles, and other common consumer products. One campaign and one community at a time, CHEJ is stitching together a network of grassroots groups, consumers and others to make our communities and our products safer.



Your contributions have made our accomplishments possible. Happy Anniversary! ♦

With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between November 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages, because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated. Thank you for your support!

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MOVING AWAY FROM TOXIC CHEMICALS, continued from page 5

8) No One Likes Being Last

Report cards and rankings of companies have been an excellent tactic. When Greenpeace first started publishing their Guide to Green Electronics, there were very few electronics on the market that were free of PVC and toxic flame retardants. The report card helped create a race to the top where electronics manufacturers are competing with one another to improve their scores, and are regularly coming out with new products free of the worst toxic chemicals. Today, almost all of the leading electronics manufacturers have products free of PVC and toxic flame-retardants.

9) Lifecycle of Chemicals and Environmental Justice

Many chemicals, like those released by the PVC lifecycle, are poisoning environmental justice communities from production, to use, and disposal. These are low-income communities and communities of color. Connecting the vinyl chloride groundwater contamination to the lead in your kid's toy to the dioxin in the incinerator has enabled us to organize and connect groups and issues together.

10) Promoting Safer Alternatives

Americans want to buy safe and healthy products for their children and families. Activists have published many resources for consumers, such as the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics and Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Database. This enables you to find out whether there are toxic chemicals lurking in your cosmetics, and how to find safer products for your family. Other examples include CHEJ's Back to School Guide to PVC-Free School Supplies and our new This Vinyl School interactive website: <http://www.chej.org/thisvinylschool>.

Looking to the Future

These strategies and tactics have been successful in getting toxic chemicals out of baby and children's products, cosmetics, medical devices, electronics, and other products. Here at CHEJ, we're excited to see how the environmental health movement will continue to use these strategies in the years to come, as we also develop innovative strategies to fight for a toxic-free future for all. ♦

CHEJ
P.O. Box 6806
Falls Church, VA 22040
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