

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 21, No. 1 ♦ Spring 2003



Taking on Dow in Its own Backyard

Lesson from Love Canal: How to Create a Democratic Group Structure

Contamination Brings Together Workers and Residents in Philadelphia

Quick Organizing Blocks Landfill in Georgia

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 two national campaigns:

- ◆ *Alliance for Safe Alternatives*, which is working to shift the market away from products such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic that are made with or create persistent toxic chemicals during production, use, or disposal
- ◆ *Child Proofing Our Communities*, which is devoted to protecting children from environmental health hazards 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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CHEJ E-ACTION BULLETIN

Are you receiving CHEJ's monthly E-Action Bulletin? Our e-mail bulletin provides the latest news about community groups we are working with, updates from the Child Proofing and Safe Alternatives campaigns, and suggestions for ways to get involved. If you'd like to receive the CHEJ E-Action Bulletin, please contact us at info@chej.org or sign up online at www.chej.org.

WELCOME!

CHEJ would like to welcome Sara Meehan, our new membership coordinator. Sara graduated from Trinity College in Washington, DC with a degree in environmental policy and comes to us with a strong development background. Prior to CHEJ, she was working with the Human Rights Campaign in their major donor department and has previously worked as a grant writer. If you should have a question about CHEJ memberships, events, or publications, please contact Sara at 703-237-2249, ext. 25 or info@chej.org.



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Residents of the Hickory Woods community in Buffalo, New York, which was built on contaminated land, have waited long enough for Mayor Masiello to keep his promise to relocate them. For related story and photo, see Action Line, page 14. Photo by Lois Gibbs.

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

GROUP STRUCTURE

BY LOIS MARIE GIBBS

This fall, we'll celebrate the 25th anniversary of the victorious struggle at Love Canal. This is the third in a series of articles on organizing lessons learned in that struggle that remain relevant today.

Twenty five years ago, I was elected president of the Love Canal Homeowners Association. That night, after the election, a terrible sense of fear ran through me. I had never been in charge of anything in my life, but now, because people knew me from my door-to-door petitioning, I was somehow in charge of their lives. Dear god, I thought, what could my neighbors be thinking? The only "chair" I was interested in was at my kitchen table with my family.

Most people in this network never knew me as the shy, nervous, and totally insecure person I was in 1978. I knew nothing about organizing a group, let alone about what structure to use. Yet, it was this terrible fear that drove me to take the right path at Love Canal. In retrospect, I became a good leader because I built and shared power and gave people a voice and a real sense of ownership over the direction of the organization. Here's what I did.

Out of fear that I would make bad or wrong decisions that could cost lives, I decided not to make any decisions. That's right; I decided to find a way to get everyone else to make decisions. If *they* were wrong, then I wasn't going to feel guilty about people getting sick or left trapped in the neighborhood.

So I went about setting up work groups and committees. Decisions were actually made at the group meetings where hundreds of people came and debated issues, plans, and strategies. I served more as a facilitator, spokesperson and cheerleader for the various committee efforts and the group as a whole. The action committee took the decisions and ideas from the meeting and carried them out. The fundraising committee raised about \$10,000 through the two years of efforts. Street representatives took care of keeping the neighborhood up-to-date on activities and news, and so on.

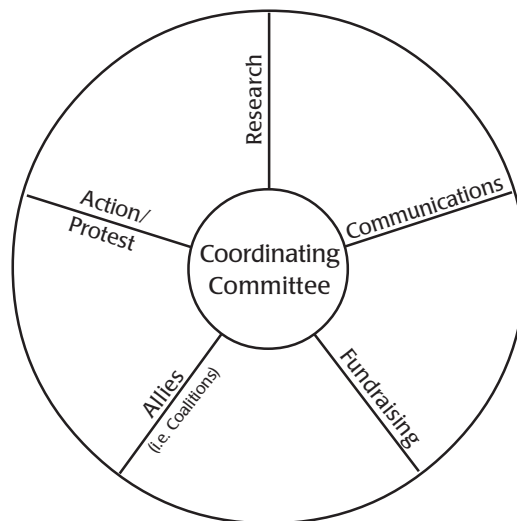
When people asked me to make a decision about something, I told them to go to the appropriate committee and ask it to take the matter under consideration and bring it before the whole group at the next big meeting. Deflecting was easy.

The result was a model that encouraged participation and shared decision-making. What emerged was a truly democratic organization. I now think of the model as being like a bicycle wheel with each spoke representing a work group or committee. At the hub of the wheel is the coordinating committee (see diagram).

The coordinating committee consisted of two members from each of the work groups. These members were elected by their work group. (Although these elections can turn into popularity contests, they generally work out well.) The coordinating committee did exactly what its name says—it coordinated activities and didn't make decisions on behalf of the larger organization. It is this coordinating committee that put together the agenda for the large group meetings and in coordination with the street representatives and the communications working group developed our notices and flyers.

It was the responsibility of each working group or committee to come up with a report to the large group at the next meeting. Because people who attended the meeting wanted to have a say or at least wanted to know that we cared about how they felt on issues or approaches, we found that it was usually good to have several work groups present a question to the larger group for discussion and decision.

How did emergency decisions get made? Not by me. If



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TAKING ON DOW IN ITS OWN BACKYARD

BY MICHELLE HURD RIDDICK

Midland, Michigan is home to the world headquarters of the Dow Chemical Company—one of the world's largest emitters of dioxin. Over the past half century, Dow's Midland plant has manufactured Agent Orange, mustard gas, and chlorinated pesticides, contaminating the city and surrounding areas with high levels of dioxin. Federal and state tests for dioxin in Midland soil going back to the mid-80s have repeatedly found that areas of the city are among the most contaminated in the country, but the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has failed to address the problem.

In the spring of 2001, Midland activist Diane Hebert, the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), and the Ecology Center filed a petition with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to try to get the DEQ to act. At around the same time, the MEC, on a tip from an insider at the DEQ, began filing Freedom of Information Act requests to the DEQ to determine the full extent of the dioxin contamination.

DIOXIN IN THE FLOODPLAIN

When the documents we requested began arriving in January 2002, we were astonished. The materials included information on the levels of dioxin contamination in the floodplain south of Midland along the Tittabawassee River. The river flows 22 miles south from the Dow facility to the Saginaw River, which empties into Lake Huron. As a result of a wetlands restoration project undertaken by General Motors, the state had tested for dioxin in areas of the floodplain south of Saginaw City and found concentrations as high as 7,280 parts per trillion (ppt)—over 80 times the state's current residential cleanup standard of 90 ppt!

Dow's dioxin had been migrating for years down the Tittabawassee River. As early as the 1970s, fish in the river had high dioxin concentrations, and every spring the Tittabawassee floods, depositing contaminated sediment into residential areas. Some of the extensive contamination was due to massive flooding in 1986 that had washed contaminated waste from the Dow plant far downstream into the river basin.

The state had been aware of the severe contamination near residential areas for almost two years but had failed to

act. The documents revealed that DEQ Director Russell Harding had blocked further testing and suppressed a state health assessment. Even worse, he had ordered DEQ staff to weaken the state's cleanup standard for dioxins.

MOBILIZING TO DEMAND A CLEANUP

We at the Lone Tree Council joined the MEC, Environmental Health Watch, and the Ecology Center in calling for immediate actions to protect children from being exposed to dioxin in parks and residential areas along the river and for the release of a public health assessment of the risks. We also demanded federal and state investigations into DEQ's actions.

Dow's Midland plant has manufactured Agent Orange, mustard gas, and chlorinated pesticides, contaminating the city and surrounding areas with high levels of dioxin.

But we needed to do a lot more. It was time to start lining up allies, establishing media contacts, educating the public—and organizing. We leaned heavily on the expertise of Tracey Easthope at the Ecology Center in Ann Arbor and Dave Dempsey of the MEC in Lansing. We also received invaluable support from Diane Hebert, whose life's mission for the past 20 years has been getting Dow to clean up dioxin contamination in her hometown of Midland.

The Lone Tree Council had been fighting to clean up Midland for a long time, but now we began to engage the downstream communities. We set up monthly meetings with residents at the local nature center in Saginaw, where dioxin concentrations were the highest. People knew the river was sick and readily shared their stories about their cancers, family medical histories, and sick pets. John Taylor was one of the first residents to become vocal and early in the process

worked with a neighbor, Greg Whitney, to form the Tittabawassee River Watch (TRW). TRW created a website (www.trw.org) that became an exceptional informational tool.

Getting information and documents to the media was a priority. We began by creating a media database. The Ecology Center provided us with media contacts, which included many of the national and trade news outlets. Throughout the year, we continued to feed information to the media—local, state, and national—a tactic that served us very well in the end.

We learned early on how important it was for us to understand the issues, define them, and articulate them clearly, concisely, and simply. We researched the World Wide Web and medical journals and tapped other organizations, such as CHEJ and Physicians for Social Responsibility, for information. We found we could plant the seeds of reason by shar-

Dow exerts a lot of influence on Michigan politics, and Midland, Michigan is the consummate corporate town, unwilling and many times unable to question, let alone speak out, against the corporate parent.

ing information and providing credible resources. We also developed solid relationships with some very dedicated, committed public servants in the DEQ and the Michigan Department of Community Health (DCH). We could have done little without the whistleblowers in the agencies and their anonymous e-mails and confidential phone calls, and we learned the value of protecting sources and information, even as we struggled with how to use the information we received.

A COMPANY TOWN MENTALITY

It's important to understand what we were up against. Dow exerts a lot of influence on Michigan politics, and Midland, Michigan is the consummate corporate town, unwilling and many times unable to question, let alone speak out, against the corporate parent. At every turn, Dow was present with full-page ads in the local papers. Dow also put considerable resources into meeting with local officials and state representatives. Elected officials relied on Dow for their information and were uncomfortable questioning the corporate leviathan. Many of them couldn't run from the issue fast enough. While Dow had unlimited access to administrative decision makers, we had to fight for public meetings and for an open microphone at meetings. We had difficulty getting access to information, which we continued to obtain largely through the arduous FOIA process or through agency leaks.



Photo courtesy of Michelle Hurd Riddick.

MAKING PROGRESS

We were, however, making progress. In March, the ATSDR announced its response to the petition filed by Diane Hebert, the MEC, and the Ecology Center: ATSDR recommended that further soil-sampling be done in Midland and Tittabawassee River floodplain, that an exposure investigation be conducted, and that plans for actions to protect the public be developed. This gave our efforts a major boost.

Then, in late July, the DEQ announced that Dow would fund a health study. After discussion, we decided to oppose the study: the proposal lacked detail and the study was likely to be inconclusive to the benefit of Dow. Having Dow fund the study was a conflict of interest. In our press releases, letters to newspapers, and outreach to communities, we emphasized the extent of the contamination and the need for a cleanup to protect public health. We sent six letters and an alternative plan to the state, which was ignored.

Toward the end of August, soil testing by the state again revealed high levels of dioxin extending all the way from Dow down through the floodplain, with a high of 3,400 ppt at Freeland Festival Park. In a small victory for public health, the DCH and the Saginaw County Health Department put up signs warning park users of dioxin contamination—though Dow used its influence to weaken the warnings.

THE CONSENT ORDER

In mid-summer, we were already hearing rumors that a consent order was being negotiated between the state and Dow. In early October, the DEQ came to Freeland for a public meeting at which DEQ Deputy Director Art Nash denied that there was a deal in the works to raise cleanup levels. Within a month, two letters from the Attorney General Jennifer Granholm's office to Art Nash confirming the existence of a consent order came into our possession from unknown sources. The consent order would raise the cleanup levels in Midland more than ninefold—from 90 ppt to 831 ppt—and would tie cleanup standards to Dow's health study. But the letters also revealed that the environmental division of the attorney general's office considered the consent agreement to be "fatally flawed and fundamentally illegal."

We were extremely concerned that the less protective standard would later be extended to other areas, including contaminated areas along the Tittabawassee River. The consent order was essentially a "sweetheart deal" that would relieve Dow of a large part of its liability for the dioxin contamination in the region.

In November, the DEQ held a public hearing in Midland on the consent order. Dow marched out their loyal followers

in support of the 831 ppt standard. The DEQ presentation was scientific, detailed, and way over the public's head. Individuals were given only two minutes to ask questions or make comments.

KILLING THE "SWEETHEART DEAL"

Meanwhile, we began evaluating our legal options. All indications were that this sweetheart deal with Dow was going to be cut before the end of the year—when Jennifer Granholm, the current attorney general and an opponent of the deal, would become governor. At the beginning of December, the Ecology Center, MEC, Lone Tree Council, TRW and several residents filed a Petition to Intervene in Administrative Proceedings (PTI) with the DEQ. The PTI charged the DEQ with numerous procedural violations in making the consent order public and in its conduct during the public comment period and addressed the issues of pollution

Coverage by the national press put pressure on the local media, which had been reluctant to cover the sordid details of the issue because of their comfortable relationship with Dow.

and of alternatives to the consent order. Our position was that the consent order was unlawful and was designed primarily to serve the interests of Dow Chemical—not the public health. It came as no surprise, however, when the DEQ denied our request to intervene.

We quickly followed up by filing a temporary restraining order against the DEQ in Ingham County on the grounds that the consent order was illegal. While the judge denied our request, he did order a full hearing in early January to review the issues, preserving our right to challenge the consent order, even if it was finalized by the DEQ in the intervening month.

Meanwhile, we continued to send out e-mail updates to our lists and media contacts and issuing press releases at every opportunity. Our work with the media paid off when the *Washington Post*, *Detroit Free Press*, and state public radio began covering the "sweetheart deal." Coverage by the national press put pressure on the local media, which had been reluctant to cover the sordid details of the issue because of their comfortable relationship with Dow.

Rumor had it the consent order would be signed, court date or not. But the stench from the consent order was beginning to draw flies. While the administration had been able to silence state employees, they could not silence EPA Region 5. EPA put forty-three specific objections to the consent order on

the public record. The Saginaw County Board of Commissioners went on record opposing the consent order. Perhaps emboldened by events, toxicology staff at DEQ and DCH leaked public comments criticizing the consent order. We posted the comments on the TRW website and fed them to the media. One of our biggest breaks came when the Associated Press picked up the story and placed several articles on its newswire. The result was extensive coverage and newspaper editorials opposing the consent order.

DEQ Director Harding earlier had threatened to sign the order with or without the attorney general's permission, but with a court date looming, the attorney general's signature was the only thing left that could lend credibility to the deal. However, Dow and the attorney general's office could not agree on acceptable language. The consent order died the morning of December 27 when Granholm's office refused to review any more drafts until after the first of the year—inauguration day for the new governor.

We were elated! Diane Hebert spoke for all of us when she told the AP that she was "just thrilled." Concerning the consent order, she said, "This wasn't good for the public in any way." With Governor Engler and DEQ Director Harding gone, we all began the new year cautiously optimistic that Dow at last will be forced to begin the huge task of cleaning up its dioxin contamination. ■

Michelle Hurd Riddick is a member of the Lone Tree Council, a Saginaw Bay Watershed environmental watchdog group based in Bay City, Michigan.

GROUP STRUCTURE

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an emergency decision needed to be made, the coordinating committee would communicate with people. They had two choices: 1) ask the street representatives to take a poll of the people, contacting as many of the households as possible or 2) call an emergency meeting.

The constant contact with neighbors encouraged participation. People felt like they really were part of the group, included and *needed*—not merely bodies to warm a seat at a meeting or hearing. People felt engaged and came to meetings and participated in all the different ways that made sense to them.

This is the model—although at the time we didn't know anything about "models"—we successfully used at Love Canal. If you are a leader of an organization and make all the decisions, do all of the work, and can only get a small number of people to turn out at your meetings, you might want to think about trying out some of the lessons learned at Love Canal. ■

Next issue: Strategies and Tactics

CONTAMINATION BRINGS TOGETHER WORKERS AND RESIDENTS

BY MICHELE ROBERTS

For ten years, Mable Mallard worked as a seamstress at a military support center in South Philadelphia making uniforms for the military. Toiling in sweatshop-like conditions in poorly ventilated rooms, Mallard and the other seamstresses were exposed to an incredible range of toxic substances: DDT and other pesticides, vapors from gasoline and other petroleum products, organic solvents, raw sewage, PCBs, and asbestos. Only after the facility was shut down did employees find out about the contamination.

Forced to retire on disability because of an injury she suffered when she passed out on the job, Mallard started the Right to Know (RTK) Committee to help workers become aware of the threats to their health and safety. After residents in the surrounding neighborhood were forced to move out of public housing because of the petroleum contamination, the RTK Committee took on their cause as well. Today the RTK Committee is working to ensure that the former workers and former community residents get the health care they need.

A CONTAMINATED SITE

The Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) was set up by the U.S. Army in 1912 to make uniforms and to purchase food, clothing, supplies, and equipment for the Army and other federal agencies. The facility provided uniforms that were used as combat clothing for U.S. military operations during both World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and more recently in the 1991 Gulf War. Activities at this site included sponging clothing with pesticides, testing bulk chemicals, and repairing and painting military vehicles.

The pesticides and petroleum products such as diesel fuel, gasoline and heating oil were stored in underground tanks. Over time, these tanks leaked, releasing organic solvents, fuels and pesticides that contaminated the local groundwater and soil at the site. A large plume of primarily petroleum fuel has been identified at the site.

But, as bad as it was, contamination from the military facility was not the whole problem. There are also several large refinery and storage facilities located in the area. According to a site investigation report issued by Johns Hopkins in 1996, a large plume consisting of diesel oil and gasoline and esti-

mated at more than 500,000 gallons was discovered during construction activities under the southern boundary of the DPSC. This plume is thought to have originated from a large Sunoco refinery adjacent to the DPSC and the neighboring Passyunk Homes housing development. The plume is estimated to cover 2 million square feet.

A TOXIC WORKPLACE

Mable Mallard was one of many seamstresses that worked in the poorly ventilated Building 13 located on the southern boundary of this contaminated site. The mostly African-American and Hispanic women at the facility made military uniforms out of wool that had been dipped in a brew

At times it was so bad that women literally passed out while working at their sewing machines. Supervisors would instruct the sick workers to “go outside and get some air and come back to work.”

consisting of DDT and other chemicals. As they sewed the uniforms, the women were continuously exposed to DDT. The U.S. EPA had banned DDT in 1972 for all uses except public health emergencies because the agency considered it a probable cause of cancer in people. But the military continued to use it.

Later testing of the building revealed that DDT was literally everywhere, including the air vents. Two-thirds of the dust samples exceeded the Army’s cleanup goal of 15 parts

per million (ppm). The highest level found was 58,000 ppm. Mallard explained that “DDT was in everything that the women touched.”

Building 13 contained a fallout shelter, which was later discovered to be located directly above leaking underground petroleum tanks. During full operation, the DPSC utilized this fallout shelter as one of the work areas in Building 13. The workers considered this area the “hell hole.” The room had no windows and fans provided the only ventilation. When the workers were assigned to work there, they would always come out of the room nauseous due to inhalation of foul fumes. On rainy days, conditions were even worse due to the rising water table that caused backups into the toilets and flooding of basements. At times it was so bad that women literally passed out while working at their sewing machines. According to Mallard, supervisors would instruct the sick workers to “go outside and get some air and come back to work.”

It was here that Mallard suffered the work-related injury that disabled her. In 1994, dizzy from the fumes, Mallard passed out and fell, injuring her shoulder, back, and ankle. Her ankle was so badly hurt that she was never able to return to work.

STARTING THE RTK COMMITTEE

In 1993, the DPSC was selected for closure under the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC). The DPSC was closed in September 1994 and the personnel who worked at the facility were relocated to the Naval Inventory Control Point located in North Philadelphia. Although the Army claimed that the factory was being shut down because of cutbacks, the employees believed that the real reason was the DDT contamination and leaking underground storage tanks.

After Mable Mallard left the DPSC, more than 500 people contacted her over the next 4 years regarding the illnesses and injuries they suffered while working there. Today many of the workers are either sick from cancer and other illnesses or are dead. Concerned that so many of her former colleagues were sick and dying, Mallard organized the workers into what is now known as the “Right to Know Committee.” The group came together and filed a civil suit in 1997.

Unfortunately, the committee was notified in 1998 that the statute of limitations had expired, prohibiting them from pursuing the suit. Determined to prove their case, the organization is seeking to have their suit reconsidered based on the fact that the workers only found out about the contamination in the building in 1997 after they obtained a copy of the Johns Hopkins report. According to Mallard, the government had first discovered underground oil plume in 1958 while trying to install an elevator at the DPSC. The government had concealed the contamination from the workers for nearly 40 years.

CONTAMINATION IN THE COMMUNITY

The surrounding community was also kept in the dark. A 53-acre low-income housing development had been built next to the DPSC, and approximately 1,000 primarily African-American residents lived in housing adjacent to the DPSC’s south-

ern boundary. Myrtle Carter of the Passyunk Homes Residents Council said the residents found out about the oil contamination in an unusual way.

The group’s goal had been to secure a better “physical quality of life.” The residents in Passyunk Homes needed a community center and health center as well as other amenities for their community. In the early 1990s, after years of

“The smell was so strong that it would burn your eyes.” Residents in the community, especially children, complained of skin irritations and there was a high rate of respiratory illnesses, mostly asthma—one of the reasons the community had wanted the health center.

struggle, they broke ground for the community center—and found that the soil where they began digging was contaminated with petroleum oil.

Residents were shocked to discover that the Sunoco oil plume had been the reason for closing several neighboring facilities, including the DPSC building. Carter said, “Residents were unaware—they were literally fighting for the wrong quality of life amenities.” But there had in fact been clues that something was not right. “There was always a strong odor that came from the outlets,” said Carter. “The smell was so strong that it would burn your eyes.” Residents in the community, especially children, complained of skin irritations and there was a high rate of respiratory illnesses, mostly asthma—one of the reasons the community had wanted the health center.

The Passyunk Homes Residents Council held meetings to inform the community of the contamination problem. The group also met with military officials to demand a cleanup. But even after the oil plume was discovered, government officials did not consider the Passyunk Homes community unsafe until work was done on an expressway that cut through the community. By that time, the oil plume had spread beneath the highway. Due to this expansion in contamination, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) was called in and residents in the community were notified. The DOH found that the health threat to residents was so serious that

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QUICK ORGANIZING BLOCKS LANDFILL IN CANDLER COUNTY

BY LARRY YATES

Last summer readers of the *Metter Advertiser* in Candler County, Georgia discovered that outside developers were considering placing a landfill in their small, agricultural community. One resident – Anne Trapnell—immediately called Tattall County activist Marilyn Lanier, who had gained statewide recognition for blocking a factory farm hog operation there. She got Marilyn’s advice—“Get organized and get organized fast”—and she found out another Candler County resident, Judy Winkler, had also called Marilyn for guidance. Within minutes, the two were on the phone with each other, planning the first public meeting of what became Citizens to Save Candler County (CSCC). They prepared and distributed a simple flyer, and they made phone calls to as many people as they could think of around the county.

Fifty or sixty people showed up at a meeting the following Monday, and got right to work, electing a steering committee and taking on some immediate tasks, including outreach to more communities and to local and national groups that might help them. One of those elected to CSCC’s steering committee was Ogden Doremus, an elected state judge in Metter, and a prominent Georgia environmentalist for a half century. Doremus heard about the proposed landfill from his extensive contacts before it even made the paper. “It was startling to me that they came into this county,” Doremus said. Candler County is a small county, and it is well known that it has been Doremus’ home for 30 years, and thus a good place for polluters to avoid. “But,” he went on, “I should not have been startled. Our county was a sitting duck, as are many counties in southeast and southwest Georgia that lack zoning and laws governing the location of landfills.” Nor was Doremus surprised that the landfill site was in an area where most residents are African-American and Latino. But he was heartened by the speed and cohesiveness that his neighbors showed in fighting the landfill.

CSCC also called on Chandra Brown to help. As the Canoochee River Riverkeeper, Brown’s task was to protect the river’s watershed, and the proposed landfill would border a tributary creek of the river. So she also came to the first meeting and added her skills and knowledge to the mix. And like Doremus, she was impressed with the rapid and effective citizen response. According to Brown, within days “you could

not drive through Candler County anywhere without seeing a ‘Stop the Landfill’ sign in someone’s yard.” It was crucial, she felt, that CSCC’s Steering Committee “included people from different areas of county—not just neighbors of the landfill site—people from across social economic and race lines.”

Local businessman Craig Winkler, Judy Winkler’s husband, called CHEJ a few days after CSCC got going. After getting advice from us, he and other members went door to door with flyers that included their phone numbers, and then

Doremus wasn’t surprised that the landfill site was in an area where most residents are African-American and Latino. But he was heartened by the speed and cohesiveness that his neighbors showed in fighting the landfill.

came home to countless phone calls. They organized events like a Day in the Park that included garage and bake sales by various churches and community people, live music, speakers from environmental groups, and home-cooked food, and raised over \$5,000 for CSCC’s war chest. A poster and essay contest was organized for schoolchildren in the community. CSCC’s T-shirt became a popular fashion statement in the county. The group’s meetings brought out hundreds of residents, and the community sent hundreds of individual letters to elected officials. Above all, Winkler says, “We knew the developers were reading the paper, and we didn’t miss a single week of letting them know that we were not going to give up.” CSCC also stayed unified; Winkler said, “It was

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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.

ARIZONA

◆ Members of the Gila River Indian Reservation took on the country's biggest medical waste treatment company and won! **Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment** (GRACE) led the campaign to close down Stericycle's medical waste incinerator, alerting residents to the toxic pollution coming from the facility. The group distributed flyers, circulated a petition, and made presentations at reservation district meetings about the hazards of incineration. **GreenAction**, which helped mobilize Oakland residents in a successful campaign to shut down IES's medical waste incinerator in California last year, played

an important mentoring role in organizing the community, and **Health Care Without Harm** also provided support for the group's efforts. The incinerator shut down in mid-November, and under the terms of the new lease the tribe negotiated with Stericycle, the company will use its steam-driven autoclave facility to treat all waste, including medical waste. "We wanted to send a message to the rest of the country to say Native Americans shouldn't have to go through this anymore," said GRACE's Lori Thomas-Luna. (Community pressure forced Stericycle to shut down its medical waste incinerator in St. Louis, Missouri, too. See page 14.)

ARKANSAS

◆ **Citizens Advocating Safe Environment** (CASE) in Fayetteville continues to fight a troubled Waste Management landfill on several fronts. This winter, the county government passed a resolution opposing the Tontitown landfill. As a result of the work CASE and local officials have done and the media attention to the issue, the Arkansas Joint Performance Review Committee, a state legislative committee, has posed some serious questions to the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), the supposed regulator of the landfill. As a result, the ADEQ has agreed to rewrite all solid waste regulations and to obtain input on a statewide basis. CASE has worked closely with CHEJ science and organizing staff to reach this point. CASE's major goal continues to be reversal of an ADEQ decision two years ago to allow Waste Management to continue to operate. Last year, a whistleblower reported a major hole in the landfill's liner, but ADEQ allowed the landfill to resume operations after a brief closure. CASE's support and public recognition continues to grow. CASE received the **Sierra Club's** "Conservation Group" award for 2002 in Arkansas for its work on the landfill issue.

CALIFORNIA

◆ **South Bay Cares** (SBC) is opposing a plan to put a golf course on top of a former landfill site in the hills of Palos Verdes. The former industrial hazardous waste landfill was built without a liner

and closed with only a layer of topsoil. The U.S. Army and Dow Chemical Company have been identified as sources for some of the waste, but in most cases there is no remaining record of what was dumped or who dumped it. The Rancho Vista Elementary School is located just a few hundred feet downhill from the dump, and businesses and homes at the bottom of the slope are already showing signs of leachate runoff. The heavy use of water on a golf course—at least 400,000 gallons a day—would further contribute to extensive groundwater contamination. SBC, which includes parents, educators, health professionals, businesspeople and other local residents, is calling for an independent environmental investigation of the site before any action is taken. However, a group of well-connected local officials continues to push the project forward. After pictures of methane pipes wrapped with tape and propped on cinderblocks showed up on SBC's website, landfill workers began to restrict access to the dump site, which had been open to joggers, walkers, and horseback riders for many years. SBC conducted a walk-through of the site with their state assemblyman, and also met with a state toxicologist, who became flustered when a SBC member raised questions about the synergistic effects of the various toxic chemicals in the dump. SBC also met with a local air quality official, who told the group that he gets no complaints about air quality around the site. After the meeting, SBC provided his number to numerous local residents. Now, complaints from residents around the site about odors are starting to pour in.

◆ Residents in West Alamo are putting their elected officials to work for them in their fight against plans to put additional antennae on an existing cell tower. After suffering an initial setback in front of a zoning administrator, they formed the **West Alamo Neighborhood Alliance** and went to their county representatives. They've won a partial victory, getting commitments for no more antennae on the existing

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tower and an agreement to test electromagnetic radiation at 10 nearby homes they select. Before this fight, the neighbors in this rural area didn't even know each other. Now, having seen what they can accomplish, they are determined to keep their group active and ready.

CONNECTICUT

◆ At the beginning of March, adult and child members of the **Canary Committee** gave powerful testimony at a state assembly hearing on the need for statewide legislation to address toxic mold and other environmental hazards in schools. The **Yale Environmental Law Clinic** is assisting the group with the proposed legislation.

GEORGIA

◆ Residents of Sugar Hill came together to form **Community Awareness Regarding Education and Safety (CARES)** after they found out that their school board was building their community's new school right between two landfills. The group researched and found out about the health risks to children from exposure to the toxic waste in landfills. They also found out that construction of their school had been approved just one week before Gwinett County ruled that schools cannot be built next to landfills. CARES worked hard on getting their message out to the media. The group's efforts paid off when, after only a few weeks, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the biggest newspaper in the Southeast, did an article on their struggle. Now, with more people aware of the situation, CARES is organizing a meeting to recruit many new people to work with them. They've set up several committees—one to work on planning a protest at the school board's office, one to continue research, one to keep the media involved, and a steering committee to coordinate everyone's actions. With solid planning, widespread support in the community, and the media on its side, CARES has mounted a strong campaign to prevent the school from opening in September.

ILLINOIS

◆ Residents of Chicago's predominantly Latino Little Village and Pilsen neighborhoods went to Mayor Daley's office in December to ask for legislation that would require generating plants located near their homes to meet current environmental standards. The aging coal-burning plants are currently allowed to operate under "grandfathered" older standards. Students from several schools in the area did a "die-in" at the protest to dramatize the impact of asthma on their lives. Groups taking part in the protest included the Pilsen/Southwest Side local chapter of the **Green Party**, the **Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO)**, **Illinois PIRG**, the **Pilsen Alliance**, and the American Lung Association.

INDIANA

◆ For two years, residents of East Chicago have been fighting a plan by the Army Corps of Engineers and the East Chicago Waterway Management District to put toxic dredging residues in an open dump near schools and homes. With **Citizens for a Clean Environment (CCE)** now leading the fight and getting more and more support in the community, and with one member of CCE and a couple of friendly officials now on its board, the Waterway Management District is changing its tune. In January, the board called for an independent health consultant to review the Army Corps' plans, a move that the Army Corps and the U.S. EPA have resisted.

In December, CCE members and supporters had clashed with the Army Corps when it tried meeting with the public one on one at booths rather than through an open meeting. Region 5 EPA scientist Dave Petrovski was quoted in the *Northwest Indiana Times* as saying, "If people actually wanted information – instead of just to stand up and rant at meetings – this is a very good format to learn about this project." In response, Kim Scipes of the **Calumet Project**, an 18-year-old labor-church-community coalition in the area, said, "We have real questions here and this meeting was designed to keep us from hearing a consistent story about them.... The attitude of the Army Corps is arrogant." CCE is also an active member

in the **Northwest Indiana Environmental Justice Partnership**, in which the Calumet Project is a lead partner.

KENTUCKY

◆ In a big victory for the citizens of central Kentucky and for communities everywhere opposing the incineration of chemical weapons, the Pentagon announced at the end of last year that it was recommending a non-incineration approach for destroying the more than 500 tons of chemical weapons at the Blue Grass Army Depot. The victory is the result of almost two decades of community activism. In the mid-nineties, the **Chemical Weapons Working Group**, a project of the **Kentucky Environmental Foundation**, played a critical role in getting Congress to pass legislation establishing the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment (ACWA) Program to identify alternatives to incineration. Over the last several years, community groups in central Kentucky, including **Common Ground** in Richmond and **Concerned Citizens of Madison County**, worked closely with the Kentucky Citizens Advisory Commission (CAC), a state-appointed committee, on identifying alternatives to incinera-



The Chemical Weapons Working Group led a rally last summer outside a U.S. Army hearing in Richmond, Kentucky. Photo courtesy of CWWG.

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tion. In June, the CAC decided on a technology recommended by ACWA—neutralization and supercritical water oxidation—over incineration, and quickly obtained endorsements for its proposal from Kentucky's federal elected officials and a broad coalition of regional and state community groups. The CAC presented its recommendations to Pentagon officials at the beginning of November, and by the end of the month the Pentagon had surrendered. Kentucky Environmental Foundation director Craig Williams said, "It's been a long haul, but the well-being of the public and the image of the region will benefit greatly because citizens demanded a better way."

LOUISIANA

◆ The U.S. EPA is considering taking away the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's power to enforce federal water pollution, air pollution, and hazardous waste standards. Environmental groups, including the **Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**, the **Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation**, the **Mississippi River Basin Alliance**, the **Alliance for Affordable Energy**, the **League of Women Voters of Louisiana**, the **Louisiana Environmental Action Network**, **Gulf Restoration Network** and **Citizens for a Clean Environment**, have been calling for action against the agency for over a year, arguing that "something is fundamentally broken at DEQ."

EPA's criminal investigation division is looking closely at Louisiana sites, including the massive Woodside Landfill located in the midst of a largely low-income residential community. Indictments are likely in this and other cases involving DEQ. Last spring, DEQ staffers were found to have accepted gifts from Woodside's management. DEQ staff have also told citizens making complaints about chemical odors from the landfill that they have orders to bring landfill staff with them when they take complaints. Now, DEQ is resisting the request from **Concerned Citizens of Livingston Parish** to take 8-hour air samples around the dump, even though 30-

second air tests have shown high rates of toxic substances. Concerned Citizens continues to push for testing, investigation, and closure of the landfill.

Even the Louisiana State Supreme Court recently got in the act, scolding the DEQ for not sharing information it had with residents directly affected by contamination. The former head of the DEQ had written to a resident with a benzene-contaminated well that "the agency has no requirement" to "notify adjacent landowners that their property is, or may be, contaminated." The Louisiana Supreme Court disagreed.

The Louisiana Environmental Action Network noted recently on its website that Louisiana was rated lowest in the nation in health rankings compiled by the United Health Foundation and got straight F's on its "economic vitality" report card from the Corporation for Enterprise Development.

MARYLAND

◆ Parents at Fort Foote elementary school in Fort Washington are taking action against toxic mold, which plagues their 50-year-old school building. The largely African-American community in southern Prince George's County has long been frustrated that no new schools have been built in their part of the county for 25 years, but it was the school's serious mold problem that spurred it to action. The PTA organized to bring in an environmental consultant to evaluate the problem but is not counting on the school to make changes on its own. Instead, the group collected their own mold samples and is getting people involved to make sure that the school lets them know the results of the investigation and acts immediately. The group is getting technical assistance from CHEJ's science staff to evaluate the results. Outreach to the community helped bring 70 parents and 15 teachers as well as a local city council member and a representative of the school superintendent to a PTA meeting to address the mold issue. At the meeting, the community resolved to form a PTA subcommittee to work on the mold problem and committed to sending as many people as possible to a PTA event in Annapolis where they can lobby for funding. After being told by the school superintendent's representative that the

county wouldn't be able to help soon, the mold committee went to work with CHEJ's assistance to get their issue in the media and to pressure local and state officials until they can't do anything *but* deal with the issue.

MASSACHUSETTS

◆ Swampscott's **Coalition for the Health of Aggregate Industries Neighbors** (CHAIN) is going to the state legislature to stop the siting of a school next to a quarry. The school would not only be next to a quarry that produces considerable air pollution but would be built in what is now a forested buffer area between the quarry and residential neighborhoods.

MICHIGAN

◆ **Families Against Incinerator Risk** (FAIR) in Ypsilanti is working hard to delay the proposed new sewage incinerator there for long enough to make it an issue at the next election. They beat back an effort to put an incinerator supporter on the Washtenaw County Democratic Committee and elected two incinerator opponents; 28 precinct delegates who opposed the incinerator were also elected. At a subsequent meeting, the Washtenaw County Democratic Party Convention passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on new permits and building of incinerators and power plants. The resolution, which began "when you can't breathe, nothing else matters," cited proposed EPA limits on particulates and stated that "incinerator and power plant operators are rushing to get new operating permits approved in Washtenaw County before the new regulation takes effect," and that an "eighteen-month moratorium on new permits for, and building of, incinerators and power plants will give state regulations time to catch up with the current EPA limits." The resolution was passed over the opposition of the local Democratic officials, who are pushing for a new waste incinerator in Ypsilanti. Quickly following up on this, FAIR won an even bigger victory by getting a similar resolution passed at the state convention of the Democratic Party.

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MISSOURI

◆ Stericycle's medical waste incinerator won't be poisoning the St. Louis air anymore. Community pressure forced the company to shut down the incinerator last November. The **Medical Waste Incinerator Group** (MWIG), with support from **Health Care Without Harm**, had waged a four-year campaign against the incinerator, organizing public meetings, leading protests, opposing the company's efforts to obtain a Clean Air permit, and making the case for strict penalties for environmental violations. In mid-November, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen unanimously passed an ordinance that prohibits the incineration of medical waste that can be treated with alternative technology. Less than two weeks later, Stericycle acknowledged defeat by announcing that it was permanently closing the incinerator and would treat all medical waste in its new autoclave facility. MWIG founder Daniel Berg said, "A group of citizens and volunteers took on a corporate behemoth and won. This is great for the health of adults and children in St. Louis." (The victory came the same month the **Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment** shut down Stericycle's medical waste incinerator in Arizona. See page 11.)

NEW JERSEY

◆ Mobilizing by the **Youth Action Brigade** got the Bergen County Planning Board so worried that it cancelled its November meeting to discuss a housing development on watershed land. Previously, opponents at a planning board meeting had offered the suggestion that United Water Resources, which owns the land, "build in hell." The issue has not been raised again, and the community where the project was to be located has elected a new mayor who opposes the plan.

◆ An exciting conference took place at Rutgers University in Newark around environmental justice issues in urban settings. Leaders from groups across the state joined together with educators and students to explore how they could link their work

to move forward on their collective efforts. The room spilled over with participants, who discussed how the urban garden, anti-incinerator, and affordable housing movements could be linked to create a stronger movement for change. CHEJ's Lois Gibbs brought the suggestion of framing the efforts around an overarching strategy that includes a positive vision and emphasizes precautionary and preventative approaches. Partnerships were developed and exciting new strategies planned.

NEW MEXICO

◆ In February, residents in the South Valley neighborhood of Albuquerque won a double victory. The Extraterritorial Land Use Commission rejected zoning changes that would have allowed a sand and gravel pit in a residential neighborhood. The commission also turned down an application to expand a landfill nearby. **ACORN**, which has been leading the fight to preserve agricultural land uses, held two large community meetings to prepare for the commission meeting. Fifteen members of Acorn, as well as members of the **Southwest Organizing Project** (SWOP) and the **Rio Grande Community Development Center**, testified in opposition to the sand and gravel pit at the commission meeting.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

◆ **Citizens Leading for Environmental Action and Responsibility** (CLEAR) in Claremont has been working with parents and staff of St. Mary's school and other neighbors of a former underground tank manufacturing site. The tank manufacturer had polluted the neighborhood with styrene and other chemicals until it closed down last summer. Now Mass Tank and Engineering Corporation (MasSTEC) has proposed operating on the same site. However, after CLEAR began organizing in the area, the new manufacturer delayed its appearance before the Zoning Board of Appeals. A CLEAR spokesperson said, "We are holding MasSTEC to its word that it does not want to come if the community is not welcoming them." She added that "Claremont is moving in a new direction now. We are no longer willing to have polluting industries trespassing our envi-

ronment and our bodies with toxins in our downtown and residential areas."

NEW YORK

◆ Members of **Hickory Woods Homeowners for a Clean Environment** marched outside Buffalo Mayor Masiello's home on a Saturday morning in February. Although the weather was cold and wet, it didn't dampen the spirits of the 30 marchers who carried a huge clock that said "Time's Up" and signs saying "Pinocchio for Mayor" and "Keep Your Promises." CHEJ's Lois Gibbs joined the residents in their protest and explained to the media the similarities between Love Canal and the Hickory Woods neighborhood. The protest marked the second anniversary of the mayor's commitment to relocate families living next to the 220-acre toxic site, formerly owned by LTV Steel. The only offer from Mayor Masiello has been a "property protection plan" which would provide \$15,000 to homeowners. If residents accepted the offer they would need to continue to live in the contaminated neighborhood for five years and give up their rights to take legal action for health or property damages against the city. Residents met with Gibbs after the protest to develop a plan for the next year focused on the mayor and state legislators.

◆ Community members and parents of current and former students of P.S. 65 in Queens have formed **Parents@P.S. 65 and Neighborhood Against TCE** to press the city to close the school and clean up the community. For years, children at the elementary school have been getting sick with asthma, pink eye, headaches, and other problems. Eight students in the school of 400 have developed stomach cancer and two have leukemia. Several teachers at the school and women in the surrounding area have developed breast cancer. The group formed when community members found out that the school building—an airplane parts factory with few windows that was converted into a school—is on top of a plume of

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Hickory Woods residents let their mayor know what they think of him for breaking his promise to relocate them. Photo by Lois Gibbs.

trichloroethylene (TCE). The New York City Department of Health (NYDEP) keeps telling the parents from the largely minority and immigrant neighborhood that there isn't any problem. The group has gone to the media and challenged the results of the testing done by the NYDEP. Members are about to begin going door to door to build community support and increase the pressure on decision makers.

◆ The **Westchester Health and Environmental Action Team (WHEAT)**, with support from Local 1000 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, seems close to winning its fight for testing of what is now Shore Park in the Village of Pelham Manor on Long Island Sound. Shore Park was the site of an incinerator ash dump from 1938 to 1974 and was also used as a shooting range and for other general dumping. The Village converted the site

to a park without doing any environmental testing and has continued to resist testing. Local 1000 got involved at the request of members who were working in the park; some workers had to maintain a sprinkler system that was installed under the thin topsoil cover on the landfill. WHEAT and Local 1000 argue that the workers have a right to know what they are working in, so the landfill soil must be tested. The office of the attorney general of New York agrees. Once the testing has been done, WHEAT will push for remediation of the site that protects workers, the public, and neighboring Long Island Sound.

◆ The **Cheektowaga Citizens' Coalition (CCC)** and the **Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC)** have been leading the fight to preserve Cheektowaga's recycling program. In mid-December the Cheektowaga town board announced their intention to eliminate the program on the grounds that it was no longer "economically feasible." The CCC and CEC quickly mobilized environmental, labor, religious, and community organizations in the area against the plan. Twenty-one groups signed a letter to the board urging them to reconsider; residents weighed in with letters, phone calls, and emails; and the media editorialized against the proposal. The groups also contacted the state attorney general's office since recycling is required under New York State law. The town board responded by canceling a vote on the proposal at the end of December, then met without public notice in January to "suspend" the program. New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer promptly announced that he would sue Cheektowaga for stopping the recycling.

◆ On a snowy December Saturday, representatives of community groups from across the state gathered in a Rochester library for a lively training session on how to use air buckets to monitor toxic contaminants in the air. The session was conducted by Denny Larson, who has helped establish "bucket brigades" in communities throughout the U.S. near refineries and chemical plants and who now coordinates the **Refinery Reform**

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Campaign. The **Citizens' Environmental Coalition** (CEC) and the **Kandid Coalition** (KC) will use the buckets to track toxic emissions from Eastman Kodak in Rochester. "We are now taking action into our own hands," said Sue Mihalyi of KC, "and will be monitoring Kodak ourselves so that people can find out about the chemicals in the air."

◆ **Friends of Westland Hills** (FWH) has made a lot of progress in its fight to stop construction of a school on a toxic site. When the Albany school board tried to hold a secret meeting this winter with state agency staff, FWH members got wind of it, showed up, and forced cancellation of the meeting. The land swap that must take place before the school is built requires approval from the New York state parks authority and from the federal Department of the Interior, and both are now insisting there must be an environmental impact statement, which the school system has resisted. In addition, more of the site's history as a junkyard is being revealed. Originally isolated, the group is now getting more support from the local newspaper, and public opinion is shifting to its side.

NORTH CAROLINA

◆ **Friends of the Green Swamp** continues to hold off a landfill project in a sensitive environmental area. The group is using every tool available to them from state and federal agencies. Recently, they and their allies and supporters pressured the Columbus County Commission to wait on approving a variance for the landfill until new flood plain maps, now in the works, have been completed. (The maps are expected to show that large parts of the landfill site in this low-lying coastal area are subject to flooding.) In addition, the Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe is in the process of filing a complaint against the Army Corps of Engineers for not soliciting their input on the landfill, even though they are a recognized tribe. There are also reports that an Indian cemetery is on the proposed landfill site— one more reason to protect the area.



The **Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition** (OVEC), the **Coal River Mountain Watch** (CRMW), and other several other environmental groups brought their members to Charleston last October in a protest directed at the West Virginia Coal Association. The Association is erecting a memorial to miners that will include a plaque depicting mountaintop removal and wording praising miners for contributing to "low-cost energy." Low cost? OVEC and CRMW used the gathering to call attention to miners' lives lost to lung disease, to jobs lost to machines and union busting, and to the communities, mountains, and streams destroyed by mountaintop removal. *Photo courtesy of OVEC.*

◆ Unionville residents won a quick and thorough victory in November when the town council unanimously rejected a plan to expand a Waste Management-owned dump. Residents began mobilizing against the proposal even before it had been formally announced, with 80 opponents of the plan showing up at the council meeting in October when it was first introduced. With support from the **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League**, residents then organized themselves as **Citizens Against Polluting** (CAP). Group members prepared booklets of information and formed committees to press the mayor, town council members, and other local officials to reject the plan. They also put up signs in their yards and distributed stickers that said, "Don't Dump on Unionville." Opposition to the plan was so strong that

Waste Management withdrew its request for the council to vote on the plan. The council then went ahead with a preemptory resolution, killing the proposal for good. The plan would have expanded a 30-acre construction debris landfill into a 200-acre dump accepting 2,500 tons of trash a day.

OREGON

◆ **Victims of TCE Exposure** (VOTE) continues its work in the Beaverton area around the former ViewMaster factory. In December, VOTE members and supporters gathered near the water tower that provided trichloroethylene-contaminated water to employees for many years and held a memorial event that was covered by local televi-

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sion. At a hearing by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on a proposed consent decree, VOTE got substantial coverage in the local press by putting DEQ on the spot about how little they knew and how they were nevertheless rushing to put a consent decree in place. VOTE then pushed the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) for an open town-hall style meeting on the impacts of TCE exposure in the community. When ODHS insisted on breaking the meeting into small groups, VOTE again got substantial press attention as 300 former ViewMaster workers and family members protested and raised questions before the meeting broke up.

VOTE also supported the family of Geraldine Tolson, a woman who worked at the ViewMaster plant for 26 years and died of liver cancer at the age of 71. The family had been planning to work with VOTE before Ms. Tolson's death and called a press conference to "share their anger and grief" with the community after she passed away. Ms. Tolson's daughter and sons attribute their mother's death to the TCE contamination found at the Viewmaster plant where she worked. A study by the ODHS released at the end of January found increased rates of pancreatic and kidney cancer among former workers at the plant.

PENNSYLVANIA

◆ In Hazleton, **Group Against Gas** (GAG) continues to organize for relocation of residents at risk from gasoline spills under their homes. Faculty from the University of Pittsburgh released a health study of part of the Laurel Gardens gas spill area that failed to find a significant health impact from the spills—contradicting a previous study of another part of the gas spill area and the findings of several local medical practitioners. GAG members pointed out to the press and public that the study covered a large area that had been defined by the U.S. EPA and that parts of the area were up to a mile away from the main plume of the spill.

Since 1997 the EPA has spent

more than \$22.3 million on the Laurel Gardens gas spill site. (The information was provided in response to a GAG member's Freedom of Information Act request.) This money was spent largely to put in place a contaminated groundwater treatment system that is currently not in operation and a vapor extraction system that is only running intermittently. EPA estimates these systems would take "tens of years" to clean up the area, and the systems offer no solution to gasoline in old coal mines under Laurel Gardens. GAG leader Patricia Tomsho said, "We think it was a hell of a lot of money spent to accomplish very little. We want one of two things—a total cleanup or for them to move us. They didn't do either."

A new governor, Ed Rendell, came to office in Pennsylvania in January, and GAG is looking to him to get the relocation they need. GAG had been successfully applying pressure on former governor Tom Ridge before he left office to go to Washington after 9/11. Six GAG members attended the open house following Rendell's inauguration address wearing matching dark green ties with "GAG" spelled out on them in silver glitter and with "Hazleton" in holographic letters and RELOCATE as the tie clip. They spoke up about their issues when the governor reached them in the reception line. He responded good-humoredly. The action also got GAG some television news time in Harrisburg, the state capital.

PUERTO RICO

◆ The U.S. Navy has confirmed that it will be leaving Vieques by May 1—a victory for the movement to expel U.S. forces and a testimony to the effectiveness of organizing and of civil disobedience. In January and February, groups of activists repeatedly entered bombing ranges on Vieques, disrupting what is scheduled to be the final round of U.S. bombings on the island. Puerto Rican police cooperated with U.S. forces to arrest protesters, some of whom were given sentences of several months for entering restricted areas. The **Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques** (CRDV) and other activists are already working to ensure that the land is properly cleaned up and is turned over to the citizens of Vieques for development. The CRDV is demanding that the Vieques community

be full participants in the cleanup process, which will be overseen by the U.S. EPA, and is getting assistance from activists, including the **Military Toxics Project**, who have worked with communities fighting to clean up military bases. In the past few months, the CRDV has also created several work commissions to address long-term needs, including a health commission that seeks to have all of Vieques' school children tested for heavy metals related to military contamination.

SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ **Citizens Organized for Rights and Empowerment** (CORE) has held preliminary discussions with representatives of two of the four cement plants that surround the majority African-American community in Holly Hill concerning the community's demands. CORE addresses both environmental and labor issues and is asking for retirement after 25 years from cement plants; relocation from the area for those who choose it; yearly tests for residents over 40 years old for diseases prevalent in dioxin-contaminated areas; disability compensation for the sick; and funding for libraries, community centers, and apprentice programs.

TEXAS

◆ **Citizens for Environmental Justice** (CEJ) of Corpus Christi in collaboration with the **Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition** have just released *A is for Air Pollution II: The Chemical Threat to Texas Schools*. The report is based on state records and is the first major effort by the new, Austin-based **Refinery Reform Campaign**, a project of the SEED Coalition. "Few parents realize that the state of Texas has no plan or protocol to ensure that the air children breathe at schools near toxic emitters is safe," said Suzie Canales, chairperson for CEJ. "Our county has 28 schools with 10,000 students near 3 million pounds of toxic air pollution without any comprehensive monitoring of what our children are breathing. We have a right to know exactly what is in the air our children breathe."

Action Line

Action Line

Corpus Christi citizens formed CEJ to address the longstanding problem of siting schools near toxic sites and other environmental health problems. The Latino community in Corpus Christi has found a cancer cluster of adults who attended the Cunningham Junior High School, which was located next to a landfill that closed in 1965. Within the same community, there are four schools close to a functioning toxic injection well and four pre-regulation landfills that have been shut down but are still toxic. Emissions from 15 petrochemical facilities within several miles of the community are an additional source of health problems.

◆ Residents in Houston have formed the **Katy Corridor Coalition (KCC)** to challenge a major highway expansion. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing to expand a section of I-10, the Katy Freeway, from 11 to 18 lanes. More than a dozen schools and day care facilities are located within 1,000 feet of the freeway, which already carries over 200,000 vehicles a day. The group has held public meetings to educate themselves and the communities along the highway about the threats of increased pollution and noise. Last September, the group filed suit against TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, charging the agencies with failing to adequately address the health and environmental effects of the expansion before approving it. But KCC has not stopped there. In January, the group released a detailed alternative plan that includes building the new freeway lanes below ground level and planting a large green buffer zone. The plan also reserves space for a rail line, which the group views as essential to reducing congestion and cutting pollution. The plan has wide community support, and TxDOT officials have agreed to look at it.

UTAH

◆ **Healthy Environment Alliance (HEAL)** staged an effective cell phone action on a Sunday morning in March. Determined to stop the building of a radioactive waste disposal site in the

state, the group used a gathering of the Western States Communication Association to educate and mobilize participants from across the region to voice their concerns. HEAL asked Lois Gibbs to include their efforts in a keynote address she was giving at the event. Gibbs asked participants to stop at the HEAL table on their way out to place a call on cell phones to the homes of state legislators to support the group's efforts to stop the proposed dump. Before the room was empty, the voice mailboxes were full, accepting no additional calls. HEAL is working to pass a state-level bill to ban radioactive wastes from being dumped in Utah. A vote on the bill is scheduled for mid-March.

VERMONT

◆ **Concerned Citizens of Wallingford** recently stopped a crematory—a source of mercury and formaldehyde emissions—that was to have been built in a residential area near an elementary school and day care center. The group contacted the **Toxics Action Center** just five days prior to the local zoning board vote on the crematory for help planning a winning campaign. Concerned Citizens of Wallingford then took to the streets, educating residents about the crematory's emissions, plastering warning signs on cars, calling the press, and advertising the upcoming zoning board's meeting to the public. Their effort paid off when the board voted against the crematory. Now Concerned Citizens of Wallingford is working to pass zoning regulations to make sure no incinerator or other industrial polluter will ever be allowed in this residential and commercial area. *Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

◆ **Residents Opposed to Quarries in Neighborhoods (ROQIN)** have been battling Pike Industries' application to put a quarry in the middle of their neighborhood in Williamstown and Barre Town. One of ROQIN's greatest concerns is the threat of silica dust, which would aggravate asthma, emphysema, and other respiratory problems. Their opposition to Pike's proposal has been visible on mailboxes, lawns, and vehicles. ROQIN is currently fundraising and mobilizing to stop the state from granting Pike Industries a permit. *Contributed by Toxics Action Center*

VIRGINIA

◆ The **Blue Ridge Coalition's (BRC)** continuing activism against a natural gas pipeline led the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (MRC) to hold an unprecedented meeting in the hills of southwest Virginia. MRC, with headquarters on the Chesapeake Bay, rarely focuses on the inland streams for which it is also responsible, but in response to a state legislator's request on behalf of the BRC, commission members and staff traveled 300 miles and heard five hours of testimony, mostly from pipeline opponents. Virginia state delegate Ward Armstrong told MRC that the land that will be impacted by these pipelines "has been in individual families for generations," and that the pipeline will "scar the landscape" and "completely and totally ignore the wishes of a community." Two weeks later, the BRC brought a busload of supporters 200 miles across the state to the regular meeting of the commission. MRC, however, is claiming they can't act because the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has already approved the pipeline. Undaunted, pipeline opponents have since called in to a live radio call-in show featuring Virginia's governor and met with the lieutenant governor. BRC members are also keeping each other informed about Duke Energy's preparations—and also about the serious Enron-like financial troubles that Duke is experiencing, which they hope will doom the pipeline project.

WISCONSIN

◆ Building on the experience of a prior ethanol fight in the northeastern area of the state, **Concerned Citizens of Dunn County (CCDC)**, a new group, quickly mobilized opposition to a proposal for a new ethanol plant. With only 10 days notice about a hearing to be held on the day after Christmas, CCDC got out great citizen support and testimony, and succeeded in getting the county manager to propose rigid controls, performance bonding, and exponentially increasing fines. Now the decision goes to the Dunn County Board of Adjustment.

Action Line

CONTAMINATION BRINGS TOGETHER WORKERS AND RESIDENTS

continued from page 9

the housing development needed to be closed down and cleaned up.

Government agencies provided minimal assistance to Passyunk residents as they relocated. The city gave the residents vouchers allowing them to move to other public housing in South Philadelphia, and the Highway Authority provided trucks to help them move their belongings. But what the residents really needed was someone to address their health concerns.

STILL WORKING TO PROTECT WORKERS AND RESIDENTS

Myrtle Carter moved to Mable Mallard's neighborhood in the Gray's Ferry area of Philadelphia. Carter still misses her beautiful and spacious Passyunk home and her neighbors in Passyunk, which were like an extended family that looked out for the well being of one another. But Mallard and Carter are glad to be living so close to each other. Mallard had con-

Through it all, Mallard's motto has been, "Do the best you can with whatever you have." She and the rest of the RTK Committee continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the DPSC workers and Passyunk residents to help them "learn how to best live and cope in a toxic world."

tacted Carter after she read about the Passyunk contamination in the local newspaper. Now the two women are working together in the RTK Committee to identify health problems among those exposed to the contamination and to get both the DPSC workers and the Passyunk residents the health care they need.

Although the DOH conducted a health survey in the Passyunk community, the agency began only after families started moving out and therefore missed many residents. The RTK Committee remains concerned that many residents are unaware of the potential health impacts of the contamination.

To address the problem, the RTK Committee successfully applied for a grant from the Mott Foundation to conduct an ongoing community health survey. The Committee's goal is

to educate the community about the number and types of illnesses caused by the contamination. To increase the comfort level for those in the community skeptical of the process, interviewers will be hired from within the community itself and participants in the survey will be identified by code and not by name. Locating those not included in the DOH survey, however, will be a large task since the former Passyunk community is now scattered in public housing throughout South Philadelphia.

The RTK Committee is also receiving assistance from the Clean Water Fund, which has trained residents to be part of a local "bucket brigade." The residents take air samples with a bucket specially designed to measure pollutants in the air. The Committee would like to expand the efforts of the bucket brigade to include the youth in the community since the air sampling buckets are a valuable tool for educating youth about environmental health threats and what to do about them.

Through it all, Mallard's motto has been "Do the best you can with whatever you have." She and the rest of the RTK Committee continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the DPSC workers and Passyunk residents to help them "learn how to best live and cope in a toxic world." ■

The RTK Committee has established a telephone hotline number for those who would like to be included in the health study, or are interested in joining the RTK Committee or in bucket brigade training. Mallard and Carter welcome all calls at 215-336-3541.

QUICK ORGANIZING BLOCKS LANDFILL IN CANDLER COUNTY

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almost scary that everybody was so different, but could all get along. There was never any battle for more limelight."

The land developers that were trying to put a dump in Candler County must have been reading the paper and driving past all of those signs. On September 30, they let their option to buy the proposed landfill site expire. According to the rumor mill, they told landfill opponents in another county that the Candler County group was "just about crazy."

CSCC has not gone out of business. For one thing, they are working to change local laws so that Candler County is less vulnerable to undesirable land uses. They are also getting ready to organize a recycling effort in the county. CSCC's media chair, Lori DeLoach, said, "We believe this particular battle has been won, but we will still continue to strategize on how to win the war." CSCC is requesting that those with "Stop the Landfill" signs return them to the group. "We plan to hold these [in case] we need them again," DeLoach said. "They also may be used to help those in nearby counties should they face this same tragic threat." As Ann Trapnell put it, after the victory, "We had a nice little break, we took a big deep sigh, but now we're ready to get back to work." ■

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 level. For information on the campaign, publications, and updates on our activities, visit our website at www.childproofing.org.

CAMPAIGN GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

In compiling a list of the communities we assisted during 2002, we found that we assisted 120 grassroots groups and individuals in community organizing efforts. This does not include assistance provided by e-mail or our work with local, state or national groups that are part of the campaign and with whom we work on larger projects.

CAMPAIGN HIRES ORGANIZER

Because of the campaign's pressing need to provide even more resources and assistance to communities where schools are exposed to toxic waste, we've hired a full-time organizer. So please welcome Margie Klein. Margie is well prepared for the position after her year-long stint in the Green Corps program, where she worked on a variety of local and national campaigns. Margie has hit the ground running and has already assisted newly formed community groups and environmental committees in New York, Georgia, and Maryland (see Action Line). She is also the coordinator of our new Green Flag Program. Margie is ready to take on even more challenges, so please contact her at Margie@chej.org or 703-237-2249, ext. 27.

GREEN FLAG PROGRAM TAKES SHAPE

The Green Flag Program is a new initiative designed to help communities make their schools healthier places to learn and to educate students about environmental responsibility. The program works with students and adults to creatively clean up schools by educating each other and advocating positive

policy changes in the school. With each positive step that school communities take, the Child Proofing campaign will present awards to the school and students, culminating in the presentation of the Green Flag Award of Environmental Achievement.

We are sharing the program's recently developed resources with Green Flag committee members and active Child Proofing Our Communities campaigners this spring and summer. After incorporating what we have learned by having our committee members test our material in schools, we will officially launch the program this fall.

Schools can get a Green Flag Award for completing improvements in one or more of four issue areas. Each one of these programs has award criteria designed by a specific committee whose members include activists, educators, and organizers who have knowledge of the issue and experience in implementing school programs.

1. Integrated Pest Management (IPM): Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a safer alternative to routine pesticide use to combat insects, rodents, weeds, and other problems that often plague schools. IPM relies on long-term prevention or suppression of pest problems through a combination of regular pest population monitoring; site inspections; structural, mechanical, and biological controls to prevent pest access; and routine housekeeping and maintenance tasks that eliminate pest attractions and habitats. This program helps schools develop and implement IPM programs and policies that use only "least toxic" pesticides and only as a last resort.

2. Non-Toxic Products: Many everyday products you find in schools are actually unhealthy for children, such as industrial-strength cleaning products, which contain dangerous chemical additives. Other toxic products include art and office supplies that contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which is highly toxic during both production and incineration. This program helps schools identify which products in their school are toxic and replace them with non-toxic, cost-effective alternatives.

3. Indoor Air Quality (IAQ): Poor indoor air quality (IAQ) causes many health problems to which children are especially vulnerable. According to the U.S. EPA, 20 percent of the nation's public schools suffer from unsatisfactory IAQ. Health conditions that are linked to poor IAQ include asthma, respiratory ailments, sinus infections, increased vulnerability to colds, and other more serious health problems. Many problems known to plague schools, such as toxic mold and offgassing from volatile organic compounds (VOCs), are exacerbated by poor IAQ. This program helps schools improve their IAQ through implementing the EPA's well-regarded *Tools for Schools* program.

4. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Forest destruction and solid waste are two of our most important environmental problems in the world today. Reduction, reuse, and recycling (RRR) activities address these problems and can mean much more than just sorting out newspapers, cans and bottles. This program will help schools establish better systems of conservation and recycling, which reduce schools' environmental impact and improve their own environment.

If you would like more information on the Green Flag Program, want to be involved in any of the working committees, or would like to introduce our materials in your community's schools, please contact Paul Ruther at childproofing@chej.org or 703-237-2249, ext. 21, or Margie Klein at Margie@chej.org or ext. 27.

ALLIANCE FOR SAFE ALTERNATIVES

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



Alliance for Safe Alternatives ELIMINATING PERSISTENT TOXIC CHEMICALS

www.safealternatives.org

THE CAMPAIGN HAS A NEW FACE AND A NEW FOCUS

The Stop Dioxin Exposure campaign has expanded its breadth and depth and is now:

The Alliance for Safe Alternatives: Eliminating Persistent Toxic Chemicals.

For the next two years, the Alliance has decided to focus on strategies that will shift the market away from products such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic that are made with or create persistent toxic chemicals during production, use, and disposal. On the front end, groups are working to 1) get state-wide policies enacted that will eliminate the sources of these dangerous products, and 2) shift state and local purchasing policies away from these products. At the back end, Alliance partners are working to create policies to ensure that harmful products such as PVC are disposed of in a safe manner instead of being burned in incinerators or burn barrels. All of these policy initiatives promote safe, practical and cost effective alternatives. The Alliance will continue to watchdog the EPA's Dioxin Reassess-

ment project, and once it's released, groups will push for strong policies at the federal level that build off the work that has been done at the state level.

A lot of work went into the process of reframing the Alliance. Alliance partners helped to develop a survey that was then sent to the 1,400 folks in CHEJ's dioxin network. Over the course of the last year, there were a number of strategy sessions with campaign partners to determine what they needed to be successful in their work. We identified new, strategic allies and are forging new relationships. And we completed a series of focus groups and polling in three states (Maine, Michigan, and Washington) to test our messages with the general public and determine how to talk with decision makers about these issues.

The Alliance will be officially launched in mid-April. Stay tuned for more details.

CDC RELEASES REPORT ON EXPOSURE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS

At the end of January, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released their second *National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals* (Available at www.cdc.gov/exposurereport).

This report is the largest and most extensive assessment ever done of the U.S. population's exposure to toxic chemicals. The levels of 116 chemicals, including pesticides, lead, mercury, PCBs, dioxin, and phthalates, were measured in the blood and urine of some 2,500 people. This report provides important evidence that the American people have been exposed to a wide array of toxic chemicals and that they continue to carry these chemicals in their bodies.

A key finding of the report is that children have higher levels of many industrial chemicals than adults. This is especially troubling because of the sensitivity and vulnerability of young children. Women of childbearing age were found to have high levels of mercury, phthalates, and other industrial chemicals. Mexican Americans had more than three times as much DDT, a pesticide banned in the United States in 1972, as non-Hispanic blacks and whites.

The CDC, however, failed to determine how many chemicals were present on average and which substances were found most often. It's also unclear what body burden levels are safe and which lead to adverse health effects. The lack of analysis provided by the CDC contrasts starkly with a report released by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Commonweal. In this re-

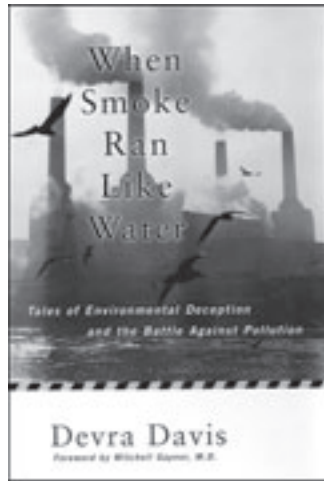
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COMMUNITIES SHUT DOWN TWO MEDICAL WASTE INCINERATORS!

In April of 2002, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) launched a campaign to get Stericycle, the country's largest medical waste disposal company, to stop incinerating medical waste and adopt alternative technologies that cause less harm. Late last year, the campaign celebrated two victories when Stericycle closed their incinerators in St. Louis, Missouri and on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona. See Action Line for details.

RESOURCES

◆ In *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution*, epidemiologist Devra Davis makes a compelling case for redirecting public health research to focus on environmental contamination. The book opens with riveting chapters on the deadly industrial fogs in her hometown of Donora and in London and how official studies of the fogs inadequately explored the connections between pollution and health. Davis goes on to tell the stories of several scientists who have sought to call attention to the health impacts of lead and air pollution and of how industry has tried to suppress or discredit their research. She also asks probing questions about the role that chemicals play in breast cancer and reproductive health problems in men. (Basic Books, 2002, 316 pp., \$26.00)



on public health, including states' failure to track chronic diseases, lack of information on most toxic chemicals, and the limited number of chemicals tracked by TRI. (U.S. PIRG Education Fund, January, 2003, 46 pp. + appendix; available online at www.uspirg.org.)

◆ Jack Doyle's *Riding the Dragon: Royal Dutch Shell and the Fossil Fire* is a devastating survey of the environmental and human rights record of one of the world's largest oil companies. Looking at Shell's operations worldwide, Doyle provides a wealth of detail on the company's toxic emissions, explosions and fires at Shell refineries and chemical plants, tanker spills, leaking underground storage tanks, and oil and gas pipeline projects. Doyle also traces Shell's production of such dangerous products as leaded gasoline, MTBE, and pesticides now banned as persistent organic pollutants. (Environmental Health Fund, 2002, 349, pp.; available online at www.shellfacts.com.)



◆ What industrial chemicals and pesticides do we have in our bodies? To answer this, the Mt. Sinai School of Community Medicine, in collaboration with the Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Commonweal, tested 9 individuals for 210 contaminants—almost twice as many as the Centers for Disease Control looked at. The results are clearly laid out in *Body Burden: The Pollution in People*. The report is an outstanding resource on how toxic chemicals get into our bodies and what the potential health effects are, even at low levels. The EWG has developed an outstanding interactive website that allows you to view the contaminants in each of the nine individuals and offers detailed descriptions of the chemicals and their salient health effects. (Environmental Working Group, January, 2003, 83 pp.; available at www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden)

◆ *Good Things to Life: GE, PCBs and Our Town*, a feature-length documentary by Mickey Friedman, is an outstanding educational tool for introducing communities and workers to the dangers of PCBs. The film focuses on Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where for more than four decades General Electric used PCBs for manufacturing and servicing electrical transformers, dumping PCB-contaminated oil into areas throughout Pittsfield and into the rivers and lakes in the area. Told almost entirely through interviews with former GE workers, Pittsfield residents, and members of the Housatonic River Initiative, the documentary reveals how GE concealed the dangers of working with PCBs from workers and has fought to avoid cleaning up the town and the river. (Produced by Mickey Friedman, 90 minutes; contact Housatonic River Initiative at 413-446-2520 or view their website at www.housatonic-river.com.)

◆ In *Toxic Releases and Health: A Review of Pollution Data and Current Knowledge on the Health Effects of Toxic Chemicals*, U.S. PIRG analyzes data from the U.S. EPA's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) to assess the trends in the emissions of chemicals linked to serious health problems. For five kinds of toxic chemicals, including dioxins, data is broken down by chemical, geographic location, and industry. PIRG's analysis reveals that while there has been a significant decline in total toxic releases, there has been a dramatic shift in toxic releases to the South. The report also calls attention to a number of serious problems in evaluating the impact of toxic releases

◆ In their well-researched report *Chemical Reaction*, Common Cause reveals how the American Chemistry Council (ACC) and its allies in the U.S. Senate have successfully blocked legislation since 9/11 that would require companies to adopt tighter security standards and safer technologies. The report follows the money trail, documenting the campaign contributions from the ACC and the chemical companies to senators that played key roles in opposing the legislation. (Common Cause, January 2003, 13 pp.; 202-833-1200; available online at www.commoncause.org.)

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 December 10, 2002 and March 7, 2003. 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.

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GUARDIANS' CIRCLE

(gifts of \$1,000 or more)

...bringing the leadership, vision and support needed to the crucial work of empowering communities to protect themselves from exposure to toxic chemicals in their water, food, air and soils.

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ALLIANCE FOR SAFE ALTERNATIVES

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port—*Body Burden: The Pollution in People*—the levels of 210 chemicals were measured in 9 volunteers. They found that the average person had 91 chemicals in their body. A total of 167 chemicals were found (see Resources, page 22). This report provides a glimpse of what the CDC could do if they chose to analyze their own data.

Although PCBs and dioxins were included in this testing, virtually none were found. This is not because there are no PCBs and dioxins in the American people but because of limi-

tations in the design of the study. PCBs and dioxins were not detected because the CDC didn't have enough blood from each of the volunteers to properly measure dioxin-like chemicals. Substantially more blood is needed to test for dioxins than to test for other toxic chemicals. This deficiency in the study is inexcusable because we already know that current background levels of dioxins are linked to adverse health effects such as cancer, learning disabilities, and depressed immune systems.

CDC intends to continue to monitor the level of these chemicals in the body and has pledged to do a better job at testing for dioxins. In the meantime, the American people are forced to wait once again for information on dioxin. This adds to the mounting frustration of hundreds of groups that have been waiting for the release of the EPA's Dioxin Reassessment. ■



Beyond Love Canal...

25 Years of Citizen Activism



2003 marks a milestone in American history – the 25th anniversary of the relocation of 900 families away from the chemical exposures of the Love Canal dumpsite.

Love Canal was not an isolated incident. *Everyone's Backyard* features the struggles and victories of just some of the thousands of communities – like Love Canal – that have been devastated by chemical releases, spill and dumpsites.

The lessons learned by these communities, and by CHEJ, in twenty-five years of struggles to build environmentally safe and sustainable communities will be a hallmark of 2003. We need you to be a part of our effort to

- **Organize**...workers, parents, farmers and all concerned about safe schools, safe lands, safe workplaces, safe foods
- **Demand**...that elected representatives be responsive to their constituents' desire for a community free from toxic contaminants.
- **Ensure**...the protection of human health and the environment over corporate short term self-interests
- **Celebrate**...the local heroes that have provided the spark to light the fire in the fight for reduction, elimination and cleanup of toxic chemicals in the environment

For more information about our Anniversary Year efforts or to make a contribution in honor of the anniversary, contact our office at 703-237-2249 or give online at www.chej.org.

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