

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

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25 Years of Citizen Activism and Construction

~ The New Grassroots Environmental Health Movement ~

PCB ACTIVISTS COMING TOGETHER TO TAKE ON POLLUTERS

The Journal of the Grassroots Movement for Environmental Justice
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:

- ◆ *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*, devoted to protecting children from pesticides and toxic chemicals in schools and day care facilities
- ◆ *Green Flag Schools Program*, helps schools become healthier places for kids and nature, and teaches students about school's environment. By working together, parents, teachers and students investigate environmental issues in their schools, identify problems, create solutions, and improve their school environment.

We invite local groups to become part of these campaigns.

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

SPECIAL ISSUE!

In this special issue of *Everyone's Backyard*, CHEJ celebrates the 25th anniversary of the community fight at Love Canal that won relocation for 900 families from one of the nation's worst toxic waste dumps. This is not the celebration of single event but of 25 years of grassroots activism that has demonstrated again and again that government and corporate power can be successfully challenged. We've expanded *EBY* to 35 pages to include lots of community stories and photos from the last 25 years. We also tell you about our new coalition, the Environmental Health Alliance, BE SAFE.



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*CHEJ's new
Environmental
Health Alliance
~ BE SAFE~*

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

BY LOIS GIBBS

The year 2003 marks the 25th anniversary of the Love Canal crisis—a good time to take a careful look back at the grassroots movement that grew out of the Love Canal victory. But this is also a time for strategizing for the future as grassroots leaders plan to launch a new campaign—the Environmental Health Alliance—to propel the precautionary principle to the forefront of public and political consciousness.

The Love Canal community's successful fight for the relocation of 900 working class families away from a leaking toxic waste dump awoke a nation to the hazards of toxic chemicals in our environment. Overcoming powerful resistance from government and a multi-billion dollar company, Occidental Petroleum, this grassroots effort demonstrated how ordinary people can gain power and win their struggle if they are organized. Love Canal sparked a new nationwide social justice movement concerned with links between health problems and the environment. This movement refuses to concede to corporations the right to increase their profits through decisions that sacrifice the health of innocent families and the environment.

A NEW GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT

While traditional environmentalism in America has focused on protecting the natural environment, newer grassroots efforts are as much about protecting public health as protecting our natural surroundings. These efforts value the basic human right to have clean air, water, food and soil as well as the value of preserving our nation's natural resources.

Traditional environmentalism primarily uses legislative and legal strategies to win change, but the grassroots leadership believes systemic change comes from the bottom up. Grassroots leaders believe that people plus organization equals strength—the strength to influence policy and win protection of basic rights and the strength to counteract the money and pressure

corporations bring to bear on elected representatives to oppose or weaken protective laws. As a result, the grassroots strategy is to build a stronghold at the local and state levels that can influence federal-level representatives and national policies.

Because traditional environmentalism is focused on regulations and regulatory controls, it inevitably winds up debating how much pollution can safely be released into the air or water. Efforts focus, for example, on determining how many parts per billion of dioxin are permissible in the wastewater of a pulp mill. The grassroots movement, however, is focused on prevention. Grassroots leaders are asking, "Why do we need to pollute our rivers at all? Why do we allow dioxin-laced wastewater from a pulp mill's bleaching process to be discharged into our rivers when non-toxic alternatives exist?"

Neither approach is right or wrong or superior to the other. The overarching goal of protecting the environment and all living things is the same for both segments of the environmental movement. When operating on a parallel path, the two approaches together can make significant progress in protecting the environment and public health.

WHO IS THE GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT?

The grassroots environmental movement has a long history of success. One of its most important achievements has been building a broad and diversified base of support that includes: workers; people of color; faith-based organizations; rural and

KETTLEMAN CITY, CALIFORNIA

Waste Management had operated the largest hazardous waste landfill west of the Mississippi at Kettleman City for years, so in the late 1980s the company expected little resistance when it applied for a permit to burn toxic waste at the site. But the largely Latino community of 1,200 organized **People for Clean Air and Water (PCAW)** to fight the incinerator. PCAW knew they had been targeted because they were a small community of color, and they had had enough. When the incinerator's environmental impact statement was written in English only, the community charged the state and the company with "toxic racism." Residents turned out for meetings, and marched and rallied again and again, keeping the pressure on decision-makers until they won and Waste Management was denied a permit to build the incinerator.

urban families; indigenous peoples; parent-teacher organizations; doctors, nurses, and other health professionals working to transform the health care industry's disposal of potentially harmful substances; people who make their living fishing or who depend upon fish as a primary food in their diets; and others from all walks of life.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Armed with a willingness to do whatever it takes to win, the grassroots environmental movement has accomplished much over the past two and a half decades. Leaders learned toxicology, researched corporations, established strong organizations, held protests, lobbied their elected representatives, ran for elected office, and mastered changing public opinion about the seriousness of environmental chemical exposures.

The movement has produced many extraordinary victories. Some of these are well known, such as the federal "Superfund," enacted in 1980, which provides a pool of funds for cleaning up the most toxic hazardous waste sites. Later, a community grants program was established that provides up to \$50,000 per Superfund site for community groups to

hire their own technical expertise. And recycling has become a household norm; now people look at you strangely if you throw a can in the trash. But other, lesser-known victories are equally important.

PUTTING AN END TO LANDFILLING

In the last two and half decades, over 1,000 landfills have been closed, either because they couldn't meet new stronger regulations that grassroots organizations helped pass, or because citizens blocked expansion construction. New commercial hazardous waste landfills have become a thing of the past.

How was this accomplished? In 1985, CHEJ convened a came together at a roundtable discussion of grassroots leaders to develop a strategy to stop the commercial landfilling of hazardous waste. The strategy was to force industries to abandon landfilling by making it more expensive to bury waste than to reduce and reuse materials or substitute less hazardous materials. To accomplish this, leaders realized they had to close existing landfills, stop new landfills from being built, and increase transportation costs for

COLUMBUS, OHIO

The Columbus municipal waste incinerator burned the city's trash for 11 years before local citizens found out that dioxin emissions from the burner were the highest of any incinerator in the country. The **Parkridge Area Residents Take Action (PARTA)** organized strong opposition to shut down the incinerator. They filed complaints, met with government officials and politicians, and organized rallies, generating enormous pressure on the government to shut the incinerator down. A key moment in their struggle was the release of a strategic letter from EPA official William Sanjour to EPA Administrator Carol Browner about the dioxin emissions. PARTA used the letter to expand the group's reach and increase pressure on the government, which shut the incinerator down for good in November 1994.

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

BY LOIS GIBBS

Before you can define a strategy and tactics for your efforts you *must* have a clear set of goals. You need to ask, “I need a strategy to obtain what?” If you don’t have a clear goal then the best strategy and most creative tactics will not achieve anything.

What do I mean by strategy and tactics? A strategy is a plan that you use to achieve a goal or set of goals. Tactics are the specific actions you take to achieve your goals. Your choice of tactics will depend on the plan you develop for accomplishing your goals.

At Love Canal, of course, I never thought about what we were doing in these terms.

However, the group we formed—the Love Canal Homeowners’ Association followed this model closely. We began by setting a clear goal. We wanted relocation. Our families were facing chemical exposures from 20,000 tons of toxic wastes buried in the center of the community, and we wanted to get them out of there.

In developing a plan—a strategy—for achieving our goal, our first step was to determine who could relocate the 900 families. Who had the funds and the experience to move the families? We considered Occidental Petroleum, the company responsible for the contamination. We also looked at the school board, the city, the county and the state of New York, who all shared some responsibility for the situation.

Our emotions told us to go after Occidental Petroleum since they were most responsible, but we recognized that would be a ten-year legal battle. After looking at all of the possibilities, we decided that the state was our best option because it was the state that had the resources to do what we needed.

All strategies also need to focus on a specific “person.” Our mothers were right when they said, “You can’t fight city hall.” City hall is a building—a bureaucracy. The mayor, however, is another story.

So we needed to figure out who within the state could make the decision to relocate us. Love Canal residents decided on Governor Carey. Not only did the governor have the authority to make the decision but he was also up for reelection.

LCHA leaders came up with a strategy for getting what we wanted from the governor: We’d make Love Canal a political issue in the campaign and convince the governor that voters wanted him to move families and that he would lose votes if he refused. The media was critical to the plan, as were the governor’s own campaign activities.

Once you have decided on a strategy, you’ll need to devise tactics that put pressure on your opponent. At Love Canal, we used a variety of tactics against the governor:

- A group of us followed the governor across the state, using his public appearances to expose our plight and his lack of action to the public.
- Every time we talked with the media, we made sure we used the governor’s name. “My child is sick because the governor refuses to move our families and sue Occidental for reimbursement.”
- We used the science about health effects and the extent of the contamination to make our case for moving the families.
- Faith-based leaders held prayer vigils and “walks of concern” around the dumpsite asking for the governor to take immediate action.

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PCB ACTIVISTS COME TOGETHER TO TAKE ON POLLUTERS

BY LARRY YATES

How about this for General Electric's worst nightmare: at the entrance to their international corporate headquarters in Fairfield, Connecticut, 60 activists from communities poisoned by PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in Georgia and Alabama, Alaska and Washington, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin, organized by GE's longtime opponents in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York sing, chant, and hold up signs telling GE's neighbors that GE puts profits ahead of children's lives.

And the nightmare doesn't stop there. The activists go on to form a network and press for real solutions to PCB issues. Now this is a nightmare not just for General Electric but for CBS (Westinghouse), Monsanto, AK Steel, and even the U.S. Department of Defense.

That's exactly what happened this March when PCB activists came together in Fairfield, Connecticut, to participate in the first PCB Health Congress. They learned about the latest science on PCB health impacts; they learned about each other's activism; and before they left, they laid the foundation for a new grassroots network.

The PCB Health Congress was the first PCBs-related conference organized by and for grassroots activists. For most of us, the PCBs in our bodies are part of the global soup of persistent toxic chemicals—an unwelcome but anonymous "gift" from unknown

industrial and military sources. But for local activists in Anniston, Alabama, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and other PCB-impacted communities, PCBs are personal.

They know who released the PCBs that wound up in their front yards and schoolyards, in the wildlife and water around them, and in their bodies. They've spent hours in face-to-face meetings with corporate spokespeople; they've seen the corporate messages on TV and in full-page ads in the local paper. And, like the guy in the movie, they're "mad as hell, and they're not going to take it any more."

The spirit in which they came together was summarized in these

words from the Declaration of Independence from PCBs, developed by Housatonic River activists with input by e-mail from many of those who signed it at the congress:

"We, the people, regardless of race, age or income have a right to a clean and healthy environment and to a life, free from the effects of industrial pollutants that have been imposed upon us through occupational exposure or more commonly, without our knowledge and/or against our will"



Photo courtesy of **R.E.A.Ch** (Residents Environmentally Acting for Change).

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shipping waste. Grassroots leaders joined together where ever proposals for new commercial facilities sprang up.

Since the beginning of the campaign, all but one proposal for a commercial hazardous waste landfill in this country that CHEJ is aware of has been stopped. Most of the existing commercial landfills have been closed, which left only a few commercial disposal facilities open nationwide. This means that most producers of hazardous waste have to ship their waste long distances, causing transportation and the associated accident insurance costs to skyrocket. There is no federal law that prohibits the commercial burial of toxic/hazardous waste. It is people who have stopped it.

SIERRA BLANCA, TEXAS

Sierra Blanca, a small Texas town 16 miles from the border with Mexico and with a mostly Mexican American population, was chosen in 1992 to be the site for a dump for radioactive waste from all of Texas and from Maine and Vermont as well. Five hundred people turned out at the first public hearing to oppose the idea – in a county that had only 1,200 registered voters! In 1994, the Sierra Blanca Legal Defense Fund was formed by local residents and their supporters to oppose the plan. They took their struggle to Congress, where the late Senator Paul Wellstone was their champion, and to the Texas Legislature. They also mobilized support from across the border; ultimately the Congress of Mexico passed a resolution against the project, uniting all of Mexico's political parties. Among the many actions taken against the plan were a three-day march in the Texas desert, rallies at border crossing points joining U.S. and Mexican citizens, and a hunger strike by Mexican legislators. Bowing to public pressure, a Texas state agency killed the project in October 1998.

RIGHT-TO-KNOW LEGISLATION

Another major accomplishment was the passage of “right-to-know” legislation, which has reduced waste and toxic chemical usage. The strategy for passing this legislation was locally based but nationally effective. Right-to-know legislation began as a worker issue. Workers in industrial plants wanted to know what they were working with and what was stored and transported to and from the plant. Labor organized to get this information. Later unions formed coalitions with grassroots environmental groups and passed city-specific right-to-know laws. Soon, more cities were being organized around this issue and corporations began to worry, not only about releasing the information to the public but also about having to fill out a different form for each city for each of their facilities. Eventually, the corporations' lobbyists in Washington, D.C. began applying pressure to standardize the paperwork and minimize the information they had to reveal. In 1986, the federal Community Right-to-Know law was passed as an amendment to the Superfund legislation to clean up toxic dumpsites.

McTOXICS CAMPAIGN: A SUCCESSFUL CONSUMER CAMPAIGN

In 1987 the nationwide grassroots network designed a campaign to stop the use of Styrofoam packaging. Styrofoam was a symbol of toxic, wasteful products. In the manufacturing, use, and disposal of Styrofoam, toxic chemicals are released. In fast-food packaging, Styrofoam is used by the consumer for only minutes and could easily be eliminated.

Grassroots leaders chose McDonalds Corporation because it is a high-profile company vulnerable to public opinion. They believed that if they could get enough consumers to push McDonalds to stop using foam sandwich boxes, other fast food restaurants would follow their lead, decreasing the demand for Styrofoam. The campaign involved children, schools, religious institutions, county



governments, and those faced with the potential siting of an incinerator or landfill in their community. Soon, school children everywhere joined the campaign, and in restaurants across the country people were saying “No” to Styrofoam. On November 1, 1990, McDonalds announced that it would no longer use Styrofoam sandwich packaging. McDonalds’ decision wasn’t the only victory; entire counties, churches, and statehouses banned the use of Styrofoam.

NATIONAL PEOPLE OF COLOR LEADERSHIP SUMMITS

Environmental justice and human rights have been a constant theme at each level of growth of the grassroots environmental health movement. In October 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D.C., an event that propelled the issues of justice and human rights onto the doorsteps of the president and congressional leaders.

The summit brought together many diverse cultural groups and communities and produced a powerful declaration on the principles of environmental justice. Newly formed coalitions began their collective work. Over the years, these webs of connection have grown and become stronger.

In February 1994, President Bill Clinton signed an executive order on environmental justice issues, responding to the powerful organized efforts of groups such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and others. The environmental justice executive order begins to acknowledge the obvious—that communities of color and low-income communities have more than their fair share of polluting industries and waste sites.

A second summit was held in Washington D.C. last year that addressed ways to build on the successes of the environmental justice movement and improve the lives of people of color. The movement seeks to broaden its scope to address such issues as globalization and to spur the growth of grassroots involvement to achieve systemic change.

WARREN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

In 1982, Warren County was chosen as the location for a landfill for used oil containing PCBs that had been illegally dumped along North Carolina’s highways. Residents organized **Warren County Concerned Citizens Against PCBs** to fight the landfill. The residents believed so strongly that the decision to build the landfill in their community was based on income and race that they lay down in the middle of the street to stop trucks from coming through with the PCB-contaminated oil. Activists nationally joined in this nonviolent resistance—launching the environmental justice movement. The landfill was built, but with the governor’s promise to apply a better solution if it was ever found. The group never gave up, and after nearly 20 years of pressure the PCBs are being removed from the landfill and destroyed using a safer method selected by local residents.

The campaign used the health threat posed by dioxin as an opportunity to reach a broad public about the need to create a sustainable society and hold corporations and government accountable for protecting our health and the environment. Working with hundreds of grassroots groups, the campaign helped communities across the country shut down garbage and medical waste incinerators, convinced state and local governments to adopt new policies for the purchasing and disposal of products and wastes that release dioxins, and successfully pressed for new laws that reduce the amount of dioxin produced by paper mills. The EPA has found that dioxin levels in the general environment have decreased since the start of the campaign.

Recently, the campaign has broadened its efforts to reflect the full scope of the work being done by campaign members on PVC plastic, PCBs, and other persistent toxic pollutants.

Launched this spring, the Alliance for Safe Alternatives supports local groups in their struggle against the sources of persistent toxic chemicals and advocates for alternative production processes, products and disposal practices. The Alliance has taken a leadership role in a national coalition to raise awareness about the European Union policy called REACH that would require industry to publicly provide basic health, safety and environmental impact data for a long list of chemicals used in everyday consumer products. The education campaign is targeting both the media and policy makers as a mechanism for creating greater leverage for the state and local policy initiatives being spearheaded by community groups.

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

In July of 2002, Seattle became the first city in the country to pass a resolution to phase out the purchase of products contributing to persistent toxic pollution. A coalition of organizations led by the **Washington Toxics Coalition** mobilized grassroots groups and worked closely with sympathetic government officials to build support for the resolution among members of the Seattle city council. The adoption of clean purchasing policies by cities increases awareness of the dangers of persistent toxic chemicals and, by creating demand for a wide range of cleaner products, lowers the costs of these products for the general public.

HUDSON RIVER, NEW YORK

For more than 30 years, two General Electric (GE) capacitor plants released PCBs into the Hudson River. These chemicals settled into the sediment and eventually contaminated more than 200 miles of the river. Over the years, numerous community and environmental groups organized and called for cleanup of the river. For two and a half decades, GE resisted paying for any cleanup, choosing instead to spend millions on lawyers and publicity campaigns. But a resilient network of activists never let go of the issue. A David facing a corporate Goliath, they finally succeeded in 2002 in getting the EPA to require GE to dredge PCBs from the river as part of an estimated \$460 million Superfund cleanup.

HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM

Health Care Without Harm is another example of a powerful coalition effort that has broadened the larger grassroots environmental health movement and deepened its impact. Born out of CHEJ's 1995 work on dioxin, it effectively became its own organization in 2002. This coalition works together with local, state, national, and international organizations to transform the health care industry's practices and purchases to eliminate pollution without compromising safety or care.

For example, the coalition sought to have the health care industry replace its toxic products—for example, those containing mercury or PVC—with safe alternatives that either pose no public health and environmental risks or are less damaging through their lifecycles. The coalition identified the largest purchaser of health care products in the U.S.—Kaiser Permanente—and pressured it to commit to change its purchasing practices. The coalition believed that if you can change the largest purchaser, as was accomplished by pressuring McDonalds to stop using Styrofoam, smaller purchasers will also be inclined to find safer products at reasonable prices due to the demand created by the larger targeted corporations.



CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMICAL HAZARDS

On April 21, 1997, in response to the growing public concern about involuntary exposure of children to pesticides, dioxin and other toxic chemicals, President Bill Clinton issued another executive order. This order, entitled "*Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*," states: "*A growing body of scientific knowledge demonstrates that children may suffer disproportionately from environmental health risks and safety risks.*" The order asks federal agencies to make it a high priority to identify and assess environmental health risks and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children.

CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

The fight at Love Canal began when I asked the school board to transfer my son from a school on the perimeter of the dumpsite—and the board refused. As I found out, children are especially vulnerable to exposure to toxic chemicals. Because they spend a

large part of their day at school, we need to make sure that our schools do not pose invisible threats to their health.

Over the years, CHEJ has received hundreds of calls from parents complaining that schools are making their children sick. It is not unusual to find schools that are built on dumpsites, like the school at Love Canal, or near polluting facilities. In many cases, school environments are contaminated with pesticides, cleaning chemicals, molds, offgassing from toxic building materials, or diesel fumes from idling buses.

CHEJ launched the Child Proofing Our Communities campaign to channel the rising concern of parents and communities across the country into effective and coordinated grassroots action to eliminate environmental health hazards from our schools.

A major focus of the campaign has been to call attention to the problem of building schools on or near toxic sites. In the 2002 report *Creating Safe Learning Zones: Invisible Threats and Visible Actions*, the campaign looked closely at five states—New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Michigan and California—and found that over one thousand public schools housing over 600,000 students were located within a half mile of a known toxic or hazardous waste site. The report provided guidance



QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS

Ignoring the lessons of Love Canal, city officials in Quincy announced in 2000 that they planned to build a high school on land once used to dispose of shipyard and industrial waste. Concerned parents educated themselves about the contamination at the site, which included PCBs, asbestos, lead, and other chemicals, and then set out to mobilize the community. Calling themselves **Parents for Safe Schools**, the parents used every opportunity to put pressure on city officials, becoming a regular presence at city council meetings and packing public meetings to voice their opposition to the plan. By the end of the year, city council members had had enough, and the mayor announced that the city would have to find another location for the school.

for evaluating the impact on a school located on or near a known contaminated site, including site assessment and cleanup processes that need to be taken by school decision makers before a school is permitted to open.

LEWISTON, NEW YORK

In Lewiston, NY the community is calling for a health study of people who attended classes at an Air Force Plant building in the 1960's surrounded by suspected radioactive waste, as well as, the existing Lewiston-Porter school system (K-12) that is near the federal Niagara Falls Storage Site's massive concentration of radioactive waste, and the Northeast's largest commercial hazardous waste landfill operated by Chemical Waste Management. Un explained illnesses and cancer deaths among students and teachers in the Lewiston-Porter school system over the years have raised questions about a possible connection with the toxic dumps.

As a result of the media coverage generated by the campaign's reports and the work done by campaign partners, city and state policies have been passed addressing school-siting, arsenic-treated wood in playgrounds, and pesticide use. The campaign has also supported dozens of community efforts focused on protecting children's health at school. It has helped groups obtain remediation of indoor air quality problems, stop schools from being built on toxic sites, and win cleanups of schools already built on contaminated sites.

The campaign will launch a new program this fall designed to help communities make their schools healthier places to learn thorough promoting environmental health education and turning environmental concerns into action. The Green Flag Program will work with students and adults to identify environmental problems, promote solutions, and create new policies or programs that address environmental problems in schools such as pesticides use, use of products containing toxic chemicals, and poor indoor air quality. If you would like more information on the Green Flag Program, see the Child Proofing Our Communities Campaign page on page 31.

2003: NEXT STEPS FOR THE MOVEMENT

STEP 1. WE HAVE TO MAKE CHOICES THAT REFLECT THE LESSONS WE'VE LEARNED.

Our movement is at a turning point in history. As a Society we can make this choice by either taking the lessons we've learned from our past and using them as a guide or ignoring them and conducting "business as usual." If we use what we've learned, we can move forward and make informed decisions while being open to embracing new ideas, technologies, and priorities as a part of our growth as a movement.

STEP 2. WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO REINVENT THE CONCEPT OF "BUSINESS AS USUAL."

In Washington, D.C., the political jockeying continues over money, power and party politics, while families across the nation are increasingly concerned about their health.

The economic base of our country has changed over the past 25 years from steel mills and industrial complexes to high-tech and service industries. In order for our society to keep abreast of these changes and have a positive role in making the most of this new generation of businesses, governmental support is needed in the form of:

- ◆ Providing incentives for companies to create new businesses and jobs and subsidize adequate new job training for unemployed industrial workers.
- ◆ Encouraging new industries that produce alternative energy products, such as solar panels, and minimize waste.
- ◆ Investing heavily in recycling industries instead of incinerators that burn wastes and pollute the environment.
- ◆ Supporting organic and family farms instead of allowing huge corporate farms to spray tons of pesticides or create mammoth lagoons for animal wastes that destroy rivers, groundwater and drinking water supplies.

NEXT STEPS IN 2003

2003: A NEW UNITED FRONT



In January, 2003, the Environmental Health Alliance was launched when 160 organizational leaders started having conversations about how to move forward on a path towards building a healthier tomorrow in the

face of our country's many challenging environmental and public health problems. Through a series of conversations and group meetings, it was agreed that a collective effort must be undertaken. It became clear that each organization was doing extraordinary work of its own. However, each victory and each step forward with a single focus only allows us to achieve limited success.

By assembling all the organizations under a single call for change—a platform that the American people can stand behind—a powerful voice has been created.

Through this unified voice, a powerful choir with the potential to effect far-reaching and long-lasting change is reaching the American people. With public support, leaders of organizations from all across the nation are optimistic that through this collective effort we can move our country forward.

Organizational leaders have drafted a platform—BE SAFE to guide decision-making through the next decade. This October, the Environmental Health Alliance will launch a nationwide campaign based on this platform. Groups will hold media events and educational meetings and will be seeking other groups to sign on to the platform and use it to advance work on state and local policies. Be sure that your group is part of the campaign! Sign on to the BE SAFE platform by sending in a letter on your organization's stationary indicating your group's support. Or visit our website at www.besafenet.com and endorse the BE SAFE platform online.

Be counted when we deliver this national platform to the White House in 2005. Endorse the platform today at www.besafenet.com

Brochures on the following issues will be featured on the website in the Fall 2003. For a sample, please see Protecting Children's Health brochure on our website, www.besafenet.com. Thanks.

- Air Pollution
- Arsenic-Treated Wood Products
- Asphalt Plants
- Brominated Products
- Burn Barrels & Incineration
- Protecting Children's Health
- Clean Car Campaign
- Clean Computers Campaign
- Clean Production
- Contaminated Sediments
- Dioxin
- Enforcement
- Environmental Justice
- Fossil-Fuel Plants
- Global Warming
- Green Buildings
- Green Energy
- Green Schools
- Hog Factory Farms
- Incinerators
- Just Transition
- Landfills
- Mercury
- Military Toxic Dumps
- Mining
- Nuclear Power
- Nuclear Waste Dumps
- Pesticides
- Pesticides & Farmworkers
- PBTs
- Plutonium Plants
- Producer Responsibility
- PVC Consumer Products
- Right to Know
- Safe Hometowns Initiative
- Sludge
- Superfund
- Toxic Fertilizer
- Waste Gasification Technologies
- Water Pollution
- Wilderness Protection
- Workers & Economy
- Untested Chemicals
- Zero Waste

Environmental Health Alliance

BE SAFE Platform

In the 21st century, we envision a world in which our food, water and air are clean, and our children grow up healthy and thrive. Everyone needs a protected, safe community and workplace, and natural environment to enjoy. We can make this world vision a reality. The tools we bring to this work are prevention, safety, responsibility and democracy.

Our goal is to prevent pollution and environmental destruction before it happens. We support this precautionary approach because it is preventive medicine for our environment and health. It makes sense to:

- *Prevent pollution and make polluters, not taxpayers, pay and assume responsibility for the damage they cause;*
- *Protect our children from chemical and radioactive exposures to avoid illness and suffering;*
- *Promote use of safe, renewable, non-toxic technologies;*
- *Provide a natural environment we can all enjoy with clean air, swimmable, fishable water and stewardship for our national forests.*

We choose a “better safe than sorry” approach motivated by caution and prevention. We endorse the common-sense approach outlined in the Blueprint’s four principles listed below.

Platform Principles

HEED EARLY WARNINGS

Government and industry have a duty to prevent harm, when there is credible evidence that harm is occurring or is likely to occur—even when the exact nature and full magnitude of harm is not yet proven.

PUT SAFETY FIRST

Industry and government have a responsibility to thoroughly study the potential for harm from a new chemical or technology before it is used—rather than assume it is harmless until proven otherwise. We need to ensure it is safe now, or we will be sorry later. Research on impacts to workers and the public needs to be confirmed by independent third parties.

EXERCISE DEMOCRACY

Precautionary decisions place the highest priority on protecting health and the environment, and help develop cleaner technologies and industries with effective safeguards and enforcement. Government and industry decisions should be based on meaningful citizen input and mutual respect (the golden rule), with the highest regard for those whose health may be affected and for our irreplaceable natural resources—not for those with financial interests. Uncompromised science should inform public policy.

CHOOSE THE SAFEST SOLUTION

Decision-making by government, industry and individuals must include an evaluation of alternatives, and the choice of the safest, technically feasible solutions. We support innovation and promotion of technologies and solutions that create a healthy environment and economy, and protect our natural resources.

PCB's

continued from page 7

Collaboration between scientists and community people was a key element of the congress. Scientists Dr. David Carpenter of the State University of New York, Peter DeFur of Virginia Commonwealth University and Environmental Stewardship Concepts, and CHEJ's Stephen Lester shared their commitment to ensuring that communities have the best knowledge base possible. Lively discussion focused on cutting-edge issues such as the degree to which PCBs enter our bodies as volatilized breathable vapors. (Most environmental agencies still focus on ingestion of fish as a source of PCBs in our bodies.)

Community people shared their successes and failures. Mitch Rice, a longtime activist from Bloomington, Indiana, told the tale of the fight from 1989 to 1994 that blocked Westinghouse's plans to incinerate PCBs there, and he sang one of the "PCB Blues" from that fight. (You can hear the "PCB Blues" yourself on the web at copa.org/incinerator.html.) But that fight, he also told the congress, didn't make the problem disappear, and today many of the PCBs that were not incinerated are now escaping from linerless dumps into the porous limestone soil of southern Indiana.

Several activists from the Hudson Valley shared their more recent victory of getting a commitment from U.S. EPA to dredge the Hudson—as well as the difficulties ahead as General Electric continues to resist facing its responsibilities.

The congress was initiated by activists from the Housatonic and the Hudson watersheds, and the northeast U.S. was heavily represented. Some key communities, like Warren County, North Carolina, and the Akwesasne Mohawk nation, were not present; this meant the congress did not hear firsthand about the long battle in Warren County that has led to treatment of PCBs by alternative methods or about the Akwesasne community's use of both traditional knowledge and scientific information in their fight.

The congress did hear from June Gologergen-Martin, a Siberian Yu'pik from St. Lawrence Island, about the impact of PCBs and other toxics left behind after the Cold War in or near native communities, including her home village of Savoonga. (Also, PCBs

from the whole northern hemisphere tend to migrate to the Arctic.) Gologergen-Martin emphasized the impact of PCBs on her home community, which still bases its diet and its way of life on age-old traditional practices. She is working with David Carpenter and Alaska Community Action on Toxics on a four-year project (part of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences' Environmental Justice Initiative) to address the military contamination on St. Lawrence Island, as well as long-range contamination.

The congress looked beyond specific impacts and issues of PCBs to the broader framework of thinking about toxic dangers. Peter Montague of the Environmental Research Foundation (which publishes *Rachel's Environment and Health News*) stimulated the minds of participants with a critical discussion of the risk assessment approach favored by corporations and their friendly regulators. The Declaration of Independence from PCBs included support for the Environmental Health Alliance, the new multi-group effort being launched this fall by CHEJ to promote precautionary approaches to regulation, alternative technologies and products, and meaningful citizen input into government and industry decisions. (For more on the Alliance and its Be Safe platform, see page 17.)

As the congress ended, participants stepped forward to volunteer for committees, and traded phone numbers and e-mail addresses. One of the committees will plan the next congress, and there was some discussion about which PCB-abuser would have this group showing up at its front door sometime in 2004.



March in Anniston, Alabama

ACTION LINE

ALABAMA

◆ Residents of Anniston are cheering the jury decisions that have thus far awarded \$35 million to about 200 individuals who sued Monsanto for polluting this mostly African-American community with PCBs. In an important legal victory last year, a jury found that Monsanto and Solutia, which owns what was once Monsanto's industrial chemical division, are liable for Monsanto's years of dumping PCBs in the area. The jury is making awards now for property and emotional damage and still needs to review the cases of 700 claimants. Then it will take up claims for personal injury and punitive damages.

◆ The **Southwest Improvement Association**, which unites ten neighborhoods in Birmingham, is working hard to shut down a composting operation just outside the city limits in Jefferson County. They have met with their representative on the county commission to let her know how important this issue is to them.

ALASKA

◆ Kodiak residents led by the **Women's Bay Community Council** (WBCC) have succeeded in shutting down a soil incinerator located in the middle of a residential area. The soil burner opened last year despite strong community opposition and was shut down briefly for environmental violations. After WBCC sued the local government for violating zoning regulations, government and company officials agreed to shut the burner down for good at the end of this summer in

return for a pledge from WBCC members that they would not interfere with the burner's operations or try to close it down sooner.

ARKANSAS

◆ **Citizens Advocating Safe Environment** (CASE) continues to battle the Tontitown landfill on several fronts. Although CASE lost a hearing before the state's Pollution Control and Ecology Commission on the expansion of the landfill, it drew public attention to the fact that the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality and Waste Management had come into court together, filing a joint legal brief. CASE also got state legislators to introduce legislation banning landfills in major watersheds and in areas with karst (limestone) geology. The legislation lost by just one vote. Now CASE is building alliances with other Arkansas landfill communities and with statewide environmental groups.

CALIFORNIA

◆ The **Environmental Health Coalition** (EHC), **San Diego Organizing Project**, and **Metropolitan Area Committee** conducted three informative workshops for residents of Barrio Logan, a mostly Latino community near the San Diego shipyards, on community planning, affordable housing, and environmental justice. Residents will have a chance to participate in drawing up a new community plan for their neighborhood to mitigate the impact of 50 years of mixed-use zoning allowing toxic businesses to operate next to homes. The workshops were held this February as a cleanup of heavy metal waste at the Master

Plating site began under EPA supervision. The plant, which emitted extremely toxic fumes into the neighborhood, was closed last year in response to pressure from community residents and the EHC.

◆ Going to Beverly Hills High School may sound like a dream come true, but the truth is a nightmare. Parents are concerned about the health effects of having 18 active and 25 abandoned oil wells on the school grounds. While the community is organizing itself to pressure the school board to move the school to a safer and healthier location, former students ill with cancer have secured the assistance of environmental hero Erin Brockovich. After tracking down more than 250 cancer cases among former students, Brockovich and her law firm have begun filing claims against the high school and city government charging that toxic fumes from the oil wells caused the cancers. At the beginning of May, oil operations at the school were temporarily shut down because emissions of benzene violated air quality regulations.

COLORADO

◆ The **Environmental Justice Project** and other activists in the Boulder area have been fighting hard to stop plans by a local Cemex cement plant to burn tires. In response to a suit filed by the **Sierra Club**, a local judge ruled that the plant's permit to burn tires, which had not been used for several years, was no longer valid. The company set up a meeting with the county board to discuss the permit situation, but after the

continued on page 18

board received numerous letters from people wanting to speak against the plant, the meeting was cancelled. When Cemex held its own information meeting to explain why tire burning was a good idea, only five residents attended, while opponents held a silent vigil outside. Now, activists are gearing up to make sure the county does not grant the company the new permit.

CONNECTICUT

◆ The Connecticut Congress has overwhelmingly passed the Indoor Air Quality Bill for Schools—a tremendous victory for the **Canary Committee**, which spent all spring working with allies in the legislature to draft and build support for the bill. The legislation provides an emergency fund for indoor air quality problems in schools and mandates that the EPA's Tools for Schools program be implemented in any Connecticut school upon request from a teacher or administrator. The new law also requires that school facilities and ventilation systems be inspected every five years. And any new school that is planned will now have to undergo an environmental assessment before it's built to ensure that it is not near any contaminated sites.

◆ At the **Toxics Action Center 2003 Conference** earlier in the spring, keynote speaker Lois Gibbs of CHEJ presented Canary Committee founder and president, Joellen Lawson, with the "Outstanding Activism Award" for the work her group has done to improve air quality standards in schools.

FLORIDA

◆ People in Lake City are organizing to stop a plant that would gassify tires there. Residents and staff of Eastside Village Retirement Community have taken the lead, bringing 50 people to the county board and applying enough pressure to ensure that the county delays any decision on the issue.

GEORGIA

◆ In Gwinnett County, members of **Community Awareness Regarding Education and Safety (CARES)** have put together a constant drumbeat of successful events to pressure the board of education not to open Sycamore Elementary School, which would be located between two landfills, one of which is still active. In March, CARES brought 150 people to a board of

education meeting held at the proposed new school building and handed out notecards to everyone with questions such as, "Since we know landfills have make kids sick before, why are you putting our kids in harm's way when we have a good alternative?" Once people asked all the questions on the note cards, all 150 walked out. Next, CARES held two successful rallies, generating extensive media coverage. On the same day as one of the rallies, one of CARES' leaders spoke to the Georgia House of Representatives advocating statewide school-siting legislation. Armed with CHEJ's technical review of the school board's environmental assessment and with hundreds of people supporting their cause, CARES has clearly made an impression on school board members, some of whom are showing a new willingness to listen to what the group has to say.

◆ **Citizens to Save Emanuel County** was formed quickly when the word got out that EnviroPro intended to spread septage (material from septic tanks) on county fields. When the company spread the septage even before applying for permits, the Georgia Environmental Protection Department quickly fined them. With encouragement from the group, the county government has taken a solid stand against EnviroPro in court. The septage-spreading plan has already been rejected in several other Georgia counties.

◆ After **Citizens to Save Candler County (CSCS)** defeated plans for a landfill in their area, the group helped save Peach County as well. The landfill developers who ran from Candler County turned to Peach County but gave up again after CSCS members met with local activists and shared how they won.



Photo courtesy of *Community Awareness Regarding Education and Safety*.

Action Line

IDAHO

◆ The **Silver Valley People's Action Coalition** (SV PAC) of Kellogg has completed its health survey of the communities near the Bunker Hill Superfund site. Toxic waste from the mining industry has contaminated a vast area of northwestern Idaho, exposing generations of residents to high levels of lead and other heavy metals. The survey—the first major health survey of the region—confirmed that many residents in the area suffer from serious chronic health problems. A third of the women surveyed have had miscarriages, and nearly a third of the adults have heart disease. One out of three children have difficulty with reasoning, and one out of five show signs of attention deficit disorder. SV PAC is developing a Community Lead Health Project to treat adults and children affected by exposure to lead.

ILLINOIS

◆ Congratulations to **Concerned Citizens of Ogle County** (CCOC) for stopping the expansion of landfill owned by Rochelle Waste Disposal! The Rochelle City Council rejected the 2,000-ton-per-day expansion this spring after CCOC got residents writing to their local officials. Yard signs were also a key part of their organizing. The dozens of signs in the county included one in the yard of every neighbor of every council member. After the vote, a CCOC spokesperson told local TV news that he hopes the landfill owner understands Rochelle doesn't want their money or their dump. The owner will probably appeal to the Illinois Pollution Control Board, but CCOC will be keeping the pressure on its state representatives.



Photo courtesy of *Concerned Citizens of Ogle County*

◆ **Living Under Remediation Madness** (LURM) in Oak Park joined with the **South Austin Community Council** (SACC), another Chicago area grassroots group, to stage a lively demonstration outside of the shareholders meeting of Commonwealth Edison, Chicago's electric utility. SACC is demanding that Com Ed re-open the customer service center in Austin Bank that was closed last October. LURM is calling for Com Ed to clean up coal gas waste throughout the neighborhood around Barrie Park, not just in the park itself where ComEd is cleaning up now. LURM is also pressing the City of Oak Park to buy out residents whose homes and property are contaminated by the waste, which was left from a coal gas plant that operated in the early years of the last century. Residents near Barrie Park have been living with the massive park cleanup for four years.

INDIANA

◆ **Friends of Mile Square** is organizing to fight sludge lagoons proposed for a wetland area that is also an informal park for the town of Albany. Some of the same people got assistance from CHEJ nine years ago when the town proposed spreading sewage sludge on local fields. The town board voted for the lagoons with little public notice and no public hearing, and local leaders think the vote can be reversed. They are also pressuring the Army Corps and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

LOUISIANA

◆ **Mossville Environmental Action Now** (MEAN) has won a commitment from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to assist residents in obtaining health services and to

work with the group on its demand that residents be relocated. The impoverished African-American community, which is next door to several facilities that emit dioxin, has been fighting for relocation for over a decade. The meeting with ATSDR came after months of pressure from the group and after members of **Coming Clean** sent ATSDR a letter demanding an accountability session. At a public meeting following the meeting with group, however, ATSDR presented misleading information to the community about the average dioxin-blood levels revealed by the agency's latest tests, focusing on parish-wide levels and ignoring the high levels in Mossville residents. Dioxin-blood levels among Mossville residents are about three times the national average, virtually unchanged from 1999 levels. MEAN issued a press release and a fact sheet to set the record straight.

MAINE

◆ A coalition led by the **Environmental Health Strategy Center** succeeded in getting precedent-setting arsenic legislation passed this June. The law prohibits the sale of arsenic-treated wood for residential construction after April 1, 2004. The ban on disposal methods that could contaminate groundwater or release the toxin into the air makes Maine the first state to regulate the disposal of arsenic-treated wood.

◆ Addison resident Donna Kausen led a successful effort this spring to protect herself and her neighbors from harmful pesticides sprayed over Maine's vast blueberry barrens. When Addison residents voted at a town meeting in March, they passed an ordinance drafted by Kausen and her neighbors to prohibit aerial spraying of pesticides. The ordinance

passed with over 60 percent of the vote, adding Addison to a growing list of Maine towns with local restrictions on pesticide use. "Our hope is that this ordinance is just the beginning of the public education process," said Kausen. "We cannot afford to continue to use pesticides as we have traditionally done; it's time to put our health first." *Contributed by Toxics Action Center.*

MARYLAND

◆ **ACORN** members living next to Baltimore's Metropolitan Transit Authority bus lot are in the streets organizing to get back breathable air. Residents say the fumes from 200 buses idling are increasing asthma and other health problems in their community, especially since the MTA got rid of a buffer zone of trees between them and the buses.

UPDATE ON EPA OMBUDSMAN



A Senate hearing in January produced a strong outpouring of support for former EPA ombudsman Robert Martin. Representatives of communities that Martin had assisted eloquently praised his efforts to help get their communities cleaned up and made a powerful case for having a fully independent ombudsman to investigate grievances against the EPA. Martin resigned last April after Administrator Whitman moved the ombudsman to the office of Inspector General and took away his authority to decide which complaints to review. Since then, support has been building within Congress for creating an ombudsman position with real independence and significant resources. In May, the Senate unanimously approved a bill that would for the first time establish a separate Office of the Ombudsman within the EPA, giving the ombudsman full control over his budget and staff and the authority to investigate grievances brought against any department of the EPA. The ombudsman would be appointed by the president and be answerable to Congress.

Communities that Martin worked with are still feeling his departure. Investigations being conducted by Martin were halted and his files confiscated. And Martin's replacement, EPA veteran Mary Boyer, didn't see the job quite the same way Martin did. In Pensacola, Florida where Martin had worked tirelessly with the African-American community to try to get the EPA to remove dioxin-contaminated waste, Boyer told residents, "Unlike Mister Martin, I do not act as an advocate." Boyer has since resigned. ■

Action Line

◆ Members of **Fort Foote Elementary Parents Association** held a successful demonstration in front of their school to protest the school's toxic mold problem. Armed with CHEJ's technical review, which showed that the school's own study found serious mold problems, the parents demanded immediate action and further testing to protect their children's health. Then, prepped by CHEJ organizers, the group's leaders held a strategy session where they planned their group structure and set roles such as recruitment coordinator, researcher, and media coordinator.

MASSACHUSETTS

◆ Three neighborhood groups in Wilmington are fighting to clean up three separate toxic sites in the town—which was recently named by *Boston Magazine* as one of the worst places in the state to live in because of its toxic sites and high cancer rates. The **Woburn-Wilmington Collaborative** is working to force a cleanup of the Olin Chemical dumpsite in the town. Recently, four public drinking water wells were shut down due to contamination from the Olin site. **Townpeople Organized Against Illness and Contamination (TOXIC)** is working to ensure a proper cleanup at Rocco's Landfill, a 200-acre Superfund site straddling the Tewksbury-Wilmington border. Superfund cleanup at the dump stalled when the Bush administration took over. Finally, the **Ipswich River Headwaters Stream Team** is trying to get another old dump properly shut down. *Contributed by Toxics Action Center.*

2003 GOLDMAN PRIZE WINNERS

Awarded annually by the Goldman Foundation, the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize not only honors individual courage and achievement but helps call attention to serious environmental problems and ways to address them. This year's winners include two activists working on issues of special concern to CHEJ.

As the Convenor of the Philippine Clean Air Coalition and the Coordinator of Greenpeace International's Toxics Campaign in Asia, **Von Hernandez** led the fight against waste incineration in the Philippines through a campaign of mass protests and public education, resulting in the world's first nationwide ban on incineration. Von Hernandez is one of the founders of GAIA (Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance/Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives).

West Virginia activist **Julia Bonds** directs the Coal River Mountain Watch, which has led the fight against mountaintop removal (MTR) coal mining in Appalachia. Taking on the region's most powerful industry, she has worked to educate the public about the devastating social and health impacts of MTR, which destroys streams and forests and pollutes vast areas with heavy metals.

The prize is awarded to activists from six geographic areas. CHEJ's Lois Gibbs won the award for North America in 1990, the first year the prizes were given. For more information on this year's winners, see www.goldman.org.

MICHIGAN

◆ The **Coalition for Nuclear-Free Great Lakes** has been working with officials and residents of Waters Township to oppose putting "rubbleized" material from a nuclear plant in a local landfill. County and nuclear utility officials support Waste Management's plans for the landfill, but township officials have thus far remained firmly opposed.

◆ A coalition of two dozen environmental, community and religious organizations, including the **Ecology Center, Michigan Environmental Council, and NO WASTE** (Network of Waste Activists

to Stop Trash Exports) has launched an ambitious campaign — Don't Trash Michigan — to drastically cut the importing of out-of-state trash, tighten standards for landfills, end incineration, and promote recycling. Broadcast and press media in Michigan provided extensive coverage of the opening of the campaign, and Michigan politicians seem to be listening. Both state and federal legislators have introduced bills that would restrict imports of out-of-state trash, and Governor Granholm has announced that the state "will no longer be America's dumping ground."

Action Line

Military's War on the Environmental Laws

The **Military Toxics Project** (MTP) is leading opposition to efforts by the U.S. Department of Defense to use the war on terrorism to justify military exemptions to environmental laws. MTP has mobilized 70 communities affected by military contamination to petition Congress and call public attention to the impact of the proposed legislation. The military wants to virtually strip the EPA and state governments of authority to enforce toxic cleanup laws at military bases and to exempt the military from compliance with the Clean Air Act. The proposals would also eliminate or drastically reduce protection for marine mammals and some endangered species. The DoD—already the world's largest polluter—continues to argue the exemptions are necessary to enhance military readiness in a time of war—a claim refuted by a Government Accounting Office report issued last year and publicly rejected by outgoing EPA Administrator Whitman.

MINNESOTA

◆ Residents in the rural city of Preston organized **Southeast Minnesota Environmental Protection** (SEMEP) to block a proposed tire-burning facility. Last fall, opponents of the facility rallied to elect two write-in candidates, the mayor and a city council member, who voted against the facility. Although a Preston city ordinance states that four votes are required to grant a usage permit, the three to two majority vote was considered valid by city council proponents of the plant, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has already granted the permit. Under SEMEP's leadership, concerned citizens are appealing MPCA's decision. SEMEP continues to organize against the facility, and the numbers of opponents are growing steadily as word gets out about it to area residents.

MISSOURI

◆ Parents from the Jefferson group Missouri Access have decided to become MEAN — **Missouri Environmental Access Network** — and have rededicated themselves to address school environmental health issues. Through the local

Independent Living Center (ILC), a social service agency that helps people with disabilities, including multiple chemical sensitivity, MEAN hopes to provide information, support, and resources to school communities facing poor indoor air quality and other environmental health problems. MEAN will be working closely with CHEJ's Green Flag program. Eventually, the group hopes to create a model relationship between local ILCs and school environmental health programs.

MONTANA

◆ The Milltown Dam is coming down! The **Clark Fork Coalition** (CFC) has led the long campaign to breach the dam on the Clark Fork River because it traps heavy metals from upstream mining operations, contaminating the region's groundwater and poisoning fish. The campaign's slogan—"Remove the Dam, Restore the River"—resonated with people in Missoula County. More than 10,000 residents—out of a population of only 90,000—sent comments to the U.S. EPA demanding that the dam be demolished and the contaminated area cleaned up. In April, after years of study, the U.S. EPA finally

announced that as part of its cleanup plan, the dam would have to be torn down. Atlantic Richfield Company, which now owns Anaconda Mining, the company primarily responsible for the contamination, will have to pick up the \$100 million cost of the cleanup. "It's a great day for the river and for communities alongside the river," said Tracy Stone-Manning, executive director of the CFC. "We get to put a river back together. That's just stunning. There aren't many places in the West that have this kind of opportunity."

NEW HAMPSHIRE

◆ **Citizens Leading for Environmental Action and Responsibility** (CLEAR), parents and staff of St. Mary School, and other Claremont neighbors have won several rounds of their fight to block a new underground tank builder on an old site already polluted by a similar business. The city's director of public works denied the company's request for an administrative ruling to allow them to continue a non-conforming use. CLEAR announced plans for a victory celebration and told its members and supporters, "Victory is every day they don't open for business! Be ready to party!"

Action Line

NEW JERSEY

◆ One mom in Livingston has turned her personal nightmare into a powerful local campaign to protect children's health at school. When her daughter became seriously ill from chemicals and mold at Mt. Pleasant Elementary School, the mom mobilized other parents and formed **Livingston Parents for Healthy Schools**. The group is working for a cleanup of the school and for long-term environmental improvement and education through participation in CHEJ's Green Flag program. After the parents gave a presentation at a Mt. Pleasant PTA meeting, they were invited to speak about the Green Flag program in front of the Livingston PTA board, which decides on policy for the school. The board reacted very positively and is strongly considering endorsing the program at all their schools.

◆ Over a hundred runners, some wearing gas masks, raced passed chemical plants in New Jersey's "kill zone" as part of **Greenpeace's** "Run for Your Life" event. The purpose of the May action was to call attention to the vulnerability of millions of New Jersey and New York residents to chemical accidents or terrorist attacks on the plants. The one-mile race ended with a spirited rally in New York's Liberty Park where speakers called on Congress to pass legislation requiring companies to adopt tighter security standards and safer technologies.

NEW YORK

◆ On April 3, community and environmental groups in Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse held press conferences to announce the "winners" of the **Citizens' Environmental Coalition's** (CEC)



Members of the Citizens' Environmental Coalition greet Kodak costumers in Rochester. Photo courtesy of CEC.

First Annual "Dirty Dozen" Polluter Awards. Speakers at the news conference in Rochester included representatives from CEC, the **Kandid Coalition**, **Holley Environmental Action Council**, and **Residents Environmentally Acting for Change** (REACH). Kandid Coalition which monitors Eastman Kodak, nominated the company for being "New York's No. 1 manufacturing polluter and one of the nation's top emitters of cancer-causing chemicals." Holley residents singled out Diaz Chemical Corporation for the chemical spill last year that forced the relocation of 20 families. The company has a history of serious chemical accidents, with more than 30 in the last 25 years. REACH selected General Electric for contaminating a Brockport neighborhood with PCBs. Although the massive cleanup is almost finished there, PCBs near the site are

threatening to recontaminate the cleaned areas. Referring to the award—made from egg cartons containing a dozen misshapen eggs representing each of the "winners"—CEC's Mike Schade said, "These are some bad eggs you wouldn't want to find in your Easter Basket."

◆ The **Citizens' Environmental Coalition** (CEC) kept the pressure on Kodak by coordinating the first-ever National Day of Action for Clean Air at Kodak. Actions took place at more than 20 drugstores in New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington that sell Kodak film. The goal of the actions was to raise awareness among both storeowners and consumers that Kodak chemicals are poisoning the environment and people. Near Kodak's corporate headquarters in Rochester, activists dressed as a nurse and doctor staged a colorful street theater protest outside a drug store and handed out "prescriptions for a clean Kodak" to people entering the store. (See "Shareholder Activism," p. xx for more on CEC's efforts to get Kodak to eliminate its toxic emissions.)

◆ Less than two months after being named one of CEC's "dirty dozen," Diaz Chemical shut down operations, though it is unclear whether the closure is for good. After investigating the facility, the U.S. EPA had ordered Diaz Chemical Corporation to upgrade its safety equipment or stop using hazardous chemicals. Facing lawsuits from 175 residents impacted by last year's chemical spill and from the New York attorney general's office for being a public nuisance, the company decided to close rather than invest

in new equipment. Meanwhile, the EPA announced that it has agreed to conduct additional air and soil tests before cleaning up the homes contaminated by the Diaz spill last year—a key demand of the **Holley Environmental Action Council**. The EPA has also agreed to indefinitely extend relocation benefits for the nine families that have not been able to return to their homes after the spill.

◆ Months of pressuring the city and the board of education have paid off for **Parents@P.S. 65 and Neighborhood Against TCE**. Both the elementary school—a former airplane parts factory—and the surrounding Ozone Park neighborhood are slated for cleanup and remediation. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation announced this winter that it had reached an agreement with Endzone, Inc. requiring the company to clean up the toxic plume of TCE (trichloroethylene) under the school; in return, the state will drop its litigation against it. The consent order allows the community to oversee the cleanup, which is scheduled to start in October, and with the help of the **Columbia Environmental Law Clinic** Parents@P.S. 65 is working to increase community involvement in the process. The group is also urging the city to close P.S. 65 until the cleanup is complete.

◆ **Residents for Responsible Government (RRG)** is working to protect the community of Lewiston from multiple threats. RRG is opposing expansion of a hazardous waste landfill and is pressing the Army Corps of Engineers to provide more information more frequently on a nuclear waste site. RRG is also concerned that PCB-contaminated

WINNING PROPOSALS FOR NON-BURN TREATMENT OF MEDICAL WASTE

On April 7—World Health Day—Health Care Without Harm announced the winners of its international contest for safer, cleaner, non-incineration technologies to treat medical waste in developing areas. Sixty entries came in from 30 countries. The winning proposals were:

- ◆ a solar-powered autoclave system named Prometheus, which is portable and can be used in any weather conditions, designed by the team of Rhys Hardwick-Jones at the University of Sydney, Australia;
- ◆ a system that combines mechanical grinding with boiling water to treat medical waste, designed by M.G. Holiday of the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals;
- ◆ a proposal to treat waste through the heat generated by a chemical reaction involving lime that would harden the waste into a cement-like material designed by Mark Bricka and Allissa Willis at Mississippi State University.

The designs had to be relatively easy and inexpensive to build and operate, require little or no electricity, and be capable of treating a range of medical waste with minimal impact on the environment. The designs are available to the public at www.medwastecontest.org.

sediment from the Hudson River will be sent to their already heavily impacted community.

◆ Congratulations to the hard working residents of **Concerned Citizens of Clarence (CCC)**! Safety Kleen's hazardous-waste incinerator in Clarence has been shut down—for good. The plant has been closed since a chemical fire last summer caused \$2 million in damages and left residents shut up in their homes. After the fire, the facility was sold to Clean Harbors, but community pressure convinced the new owners that reopening the facility would be a mistake. Patricia M. Melancon, president of CCC, which fought for years to close down the incinerator, said, "This is a tremendously good thing for the Town of Clarence. It rights a wrong that has been plaguing our town for decades."

◆ In a big victory for Albion residents and **Stop Polluting Orleans County (SPOC)**, the town board has rejected a proposed Waste Management landfill, turning its back on millions of dollars in incentives to accept the dump. Waste Management has been seeking to open the new landfill on a defunct landfill site, and the owner of the landfill, who is in bankruptcy, offered the town a lucrative "host community agreement" if it approved the plan. SPOC energetically opposed the new dump and got the town board to stand firm. After the vote, the town supervisor said, "The landfill would be an unforgivable scar on our landscape."

Action Line

◆ **Save Our Lake Environment** (SOLE) on Chautauqua Lake near Jamestown has seriously delayed a plan by pro-herbicide residents to form a quasi-governmental lake district, which would apply herbicides to the lake to deal with aquatic plants. The pro-herbicide forces had been working on quietly getting official approval for the plan when SOLE distributed 2000 flyers and did a radio interview exposing the process.

◆ **Members of Safety Always First for Eastchester** (SAFFE) are doing everything they can to stop a potentially toxic water treatment plant from opening less than a block away from their elementary school. Through public pressure and strong media coverage, SAFFE persuaded their city council to fight United Water in court. The group, however, is not leaving this effort to the lawyers

alone. With the help of CHEJ, SAFFE members are also working to get the support of state political leaders to keep the plant away from their school and to pass statewide legislation to prevent water treatment and chemical plants from being placed next to schools in the future.

NORTH CAROLINA

◆ **Friends of the Green Swamp** (FOGS) know how to prepare their supporters for a public hearing. The group served chicken and rice plates, hot dogs, and soft drinks in the parking lot across from the county building and held a rally before going into a hearing on a variance a local developer needs for a landfill in Columbus County. FOGS has also been getting yard signs out all over the county and has at least one larger wooden sign (4 ft x 4 ft) in each county commissioner's district.

NORTH DAKOTA

◆ Concern is growing on the Fort Berthold Reservation, home to the Mandan, Hidatsa and Sahnish nations, and in nearby non-Indian communities, about an oil refinery planned for the Makoti area. Tribal government leaders, who favor the refinery, have faced questioning from community members at various gatherings, and information has been shared by community members about the negative environmental impacts of refineries in other communities. Community members have been receiving support from **Project Underground** and the **Indigenous Mining Campaign Project** of the **Indigenous Environmental Network**.

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STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

continued from page 6

- We leafleted outside the governor's thousand-dollar-a-plate dinner asking donors to help them convince the governor to move the residents or else the LCHA efforts would hurt his campaign.
- We built strong alliances with labor, which we are able to do because family members belonged to local unions. Union members wrote letters and walked picket lines with residents, actions that threatened to take some of the labor vote away from the governor.

Even when Governor Carey answered "No comment" to reporters' questions about Love Canal, residents knew their strategy and tactics were working. The media was asking questions and the public was listening.

And watching. Governor Carey was unable to escape the visuals on TV night after night of teary-eyed women holding their small children and, saying the governor wouldn't help their innocent families. His public relations people were at a loss about how to "spin" the governor's inaction and counter the mother and apple-pie appeal of Love Canal residents.

After winning everything LCHA could from the state, we used the same strategies and tactics at the national level to put pressure on President Carter, who was then running for reelection. The image of mothers and fathers with sick children in tow was too much for him as well.

On October 1, 1980, a year and a half after LCHA was organized, relocation benefits were offered to all residents that lived within a 10-block area. Our goals were achieved because we put in place a focused strategy and employed effective tactics to make the strategy work. ■

CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE IN BHOPAL

Survivors' groups have been calling on Dow, which now owns Union Carbide, to accept responsibility for the 1983 pesticide disaster at Bhopal, which killed 8,000 people and left tens of thousands seriously injured.

In March, **Greenpeace** activists working with the **International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal** blocked the entrance of Dow's Houston headquarters to deliver 250 gallons of contaminated water from Bhopal wells.

On May 1, two women survivors, Rasheeda Bee and Champa Devi, and activist Satinath Sarangi started a 40-day tour in the U.S. to call attention to Dow's refusal to compensate victims and to clean up the still-contaminated site. During the tour, the group met with university students and communities affected by Dow's toxic pollution and were joined by environmental activists here in protests against Dow. At a demonstration in New York's financial district at the beginning of May, the group began a fast, initiating a Worldwide Relay Hunger Strike to call attention to Dow's indifference.

A week later, the two women were in Midland, Michigan to address Dow's shareholders.

At a rally outside the meeting, supporters held up 10-foot banners with images of victims at Bhopal. The pair demanded that the company take responsibility for the disaster and for poisoning communities. In response, CEO William Stavropoulos denied that Union Carbide faces criminal charges in the Bhopal court—though the company is considered a fugitive from justice by Indian courts.

The activists ended their fast in mid-May at a demonstration in front of the Indian embassy in Washington joined by Greenpeace, **Health Care Without Harm**, and **Code Pink Women for Peace**. Thus far, more than 200 activists in 20 countries have helped keep the fast going. For more information, please see www.bhopal.net.

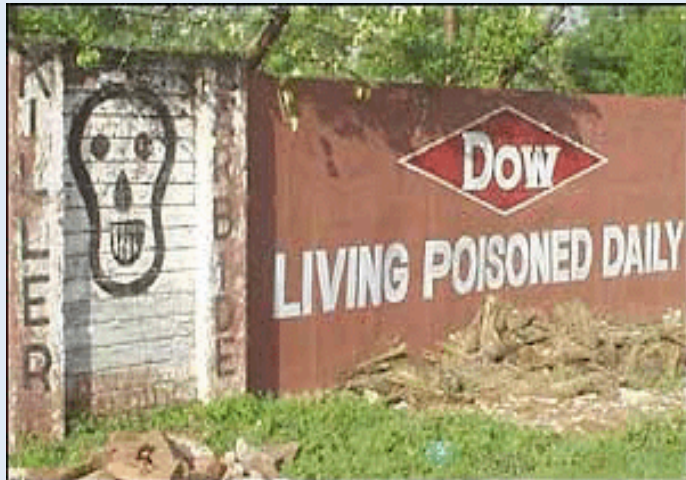


Photo courtesy of Bhopal.Net, a project of the UK Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

Action Line

OHIO

◆ In Middletown, local activists are working closely with the **Sierra Club Ohio** and **Citizens' Action** to get AK Steel to take responsibility for the serious contamination of Dick's Creek, which runs behind a school and has been a popular site for wading and fishing. Recently, the Sierra Club had testing done which showed that the PCBs in the creek are very similar to those from AK Steel. (Different mixtures of PCBs were used by different companies at different sites.) AK Steel denies that

the tests prove anything. When the Sierra Club was asked if it would do any more testing, a spokesperson said it would not. "At some point, this becomes ridiculous," she said. "AK Steel is the 800-pound, PCB-releasing gorilla sitting on Dick's Creek."

◆ Opponents of the massive WTI incinerator in East Liverpool took heart from a federal court's ruling in April that the company must reinstate a whistleblower that reported the company's illegal

practices to the Ohio EPA. The employee had reported that WTI was accepting waste, such as benzene, that it had no permit to incinerate and storing waste illegally at an adjacent facility. The judge ordered that WTI pay the employee \$50,000 in compensatory damages and \$125,000 in exemplary damages. Alonzo Spencer, president of **Save Our County**, a group that has fought the incinerator for 20 years, said, "The decision gives us incentive to continue our efforts against this unsafe, illegal, and unwanted facility."

Action Line

Action Line

OREGON

◆ **Victims of Toxic Exposure** (VOTE) held informational meetings with environmental, health and legal experts to discuss TCE exposure with former Viewmaster employees at the beginning of April in several communities near Beaverton, where Viewmaster operated. Mattel, the current owner of the Viewmaster plant, refused to help VOTE identify former employees. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), which found high rates of certain cancers in an earlier study of ViewMaster workers, wants to do a larger study and to set up a citizens advisory committee. VOTE, however, is questioning the idea of a citizens committee.

◆ The **Oregon Toxics Alliance** sponsored a benefit in April for community groups that are part of the Railroad Pollution Coalition, which is fighting for a cleanup of the Union Pacific railroad yard in Eugene. At the event, CHEJ's Lois Gibbs spoke on the need to develop a multi-issue statewide campaign to address the problem of toxic waste in communities. Lois also worked with the community groups on developing an organizational structure for their coalition.

PENNSYLVANIA

◆ **Group Against Gas** (GAG) got 250 neighbors to sign on to an appeal to Governor Rendell to use Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency funds for relocation. GAG sent the letter to Rendell with support letters from Senators Santorum and Specter, Congressman Kanjorski, and Luzerne County Commissioner Steve Urban, along with a packet of pertinent Laurel Gardens gasoline "spill" information. PA state

Representative Todd Eachus will hand-deliver these letters and packets to Governor Rendell and Department of Environmental Protection Acting Secretary McGinty.

◆ While admitting that the cleanup of the site is far from complete, the U.S. EPA sent a high-level official to tell the community that the EPA is going to leave the site and turn it over to contractors and consultants. The EPA has sent out letters to local governments urging them not to call the situation a "disaster"—though the oncologists who serve the community have warned residents not to get any additional gas exposure and the local governments have foregone taxes on homes in the community for several years. Working hard for a "toxic turnaround in the greater Pottstown area," the **Alliance for a Clean Environment** (ACE) is conducting a health survey to document the patterns of illness and diseases in the community known to be linked with the hazardous substances emitted by polluters in the area—above all the Pottstown landfill and Occidental Chemical's PVC plant. Using the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry, ACE has already found that rates of childhood cancer in the area have been increasing for at least two decades and are now almost twice the national average. ACE's immediate goal is to motivate DEP to require significant reductions in toxic emissions from the polluters in the Greater Pottstown Area. ACE held a press conference to announce the health survey and has asked churches, civic organizations, schools, PTAs, and local government bodies to help distribute the survey. ACE has also posted the survey on its website to make sure that as many people as possible participate.

◆ **Move Your Ash** (MYA) in York has been pressing for an end to two huge uncovered piles of incinerator ash that tower several stories high over two York neighborhoods. American Ash Recycling obtained the ash from the local Solid Waste Authority, with approval from Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection, by claiming that the ash would be recycled into building material. Most of the ash, though, is still in two piles, estimated to total over 300,000 tons, and located two blocks from people's homes. MYA folks, including physicians and neighborhood representatives, met with the local Solid Waste Authority, which agreed to limit the amount of incinerator ash going to American Ash. MYA also uncovered evidence that a local elected official had actually courted American Ash to come to York; the group publicized this information just before a local primary election.

◆ **Advocates for Sustainable Development** won its fight to stop Connectiv from putting in a power plant in East Donegal Township. The company cited the poor economy when it dropped its plans, but the Advocates believe their yard signs, their pressure on local officials who supported the plant, and the media coverage the group generated on the issue made the real difference.

◆ **Halt Environmental Lead Pollution** and other residents in Throop fighting for a cleanup of the Marjol Battery site were delighted when the Throop Zoning Hearing Board rejected a request from Gould Electronics Inc., the owner of the site, to rezone it back to an industrial property. Gould has opposed a cleanup of the site, which is contaminated with lead, other heavy metals, and PCBs.

Action Line

PUERTO RICO

◆ On May 1, residents of Vieques held a jubilant, island-wide party to celebrate the departure of the U.S. Navy. Joined by hundreds from the other islands of Puerto Rico and from the U.S., happy residents marched from the island center to the gates of the former Navy military base. Residents demolished the central Naval checkpoint and walked through part of the base—land previously off-limits. After four days of festivities, the groups that campaigned to end the U.S. military presence on the island resumed work on ensuring the land is properly cleaned up and used for social and economic development. The U.S. Department of the Interior has assumed control over most of the former land occupied by the Navy; only a fifth has been transferred to Vieques. The Navy remains responsible for the cleanup, which will be overseen by the U.S. EPA. Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques and community organizations are demanding that Puerto Rican officials participate in all decisions concerning the administration of the lands, that the cleanup be undertaken with the goal of making possible a wide range of uses of the land, including agriculture and housing, and that Vieques be employed in the cleanup. EPA community forums begin in Vieques in the fall.

SOUTH CAROLINA

◆ **Allendale County Citizens Opposed to Landfills** (ACCOL) is working with volunteer legal assistance to write a new waste ordinance for the county. The group also got input from CHEJ. ACCOL reported that the proposal for a brownfield use of a former landfill there has cleared its first hurdle for federal funding.

TEXAS

◆ A woman in Joshua who has already had lung cancer called CHEJ on a Monday about blocking plans by the volunteer fire department to burn down an abandoned house right near her home. She was concerned about dioxin and other chemicals. We urged her to get some neighbors together and take action. By Friday, she wrote back to tell us what happened. The woman “gathered 20 citizens that feel the same as [she does] about the environment and took the issue before the city council....” The result: “Joshua City Hall has decided that they WILL NOT BURN that old house after all.”

VIRGINIA

◆ **Rayon Park Residents Association** leaders are very upbeat. Within months after the new organization formed, the neighborhood got substantial funding for a drainage ditch that will help it deal with military toxins that are draining into their community. The problem had been neglected for years before the group got together. The group is also hopeful about a Community Development Block Grant application by Chesterfield County for \$1.2 million that would advance the cleanup of the neighborhood even further.

◆ **The Blue Ridge Coalition and the National Committee for the New River** brought out hundreds of opponents of Duke Power’s plans for a pipeline and power plant to a meeting with Virginia’s Secretary of Natural Resources. Duke is moving forward with its pipeline plans, but was forced by public pressure to drill deep beneath the New River rather than crossing it with a pipeline. Its power plant plans appear to have been defeated, and residents are still determined to stop the pipeline from crossing their property.

◆ **Loudoun Neighbors Against Toxic Sludge** showed up at a board of supervisors meeting in hazmat suits to make sure their testimony against spreading sludge in the county would not be ignored by the local media. The local health department doesn’t see any problem with sludge, and the board is stacked with sludge supporters. The group is preparing for a long fight; it’s developed a well-researched website and is actively networking with groups around the state and the nation.

WASHINGTON

◆ In a major victory in the battle against persistent toxic chemicals, Governor Locke signed into law the Mercury Education and Reduction Act in May. The law bans the sale of mercury thermometers, thermostats, and auto-switches beginning in 2006, requires schools to remove all mercury products by 2006, and mandates that the state purchase products without mercury whenever feasible. Congratulations to the **Washington Toxics Coalition** and **Washington PIRG**, who worked to build support for the law among state officials and in the state congress.

WISCONSIN

◆ Concerned Citizens of Dunn County heard no more from proponents of an ethanol plant there after they quickly mobilized opposition to the plant last December. Concerned Citizens activists have since joined with others around the state to form a new statewide network to work on ethanol issues, the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Local Environments (WISLE). WISLE is working to oppose federal and state subsidies to ethanol, which they believe largely benefit large agribusiness interests.

Action Line

Action Line

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

◆ Two hundred angry residents in Surrey packed a school board meeting and succeeded in blocking the installation of AT&T cell phone antennas on Sullivan Heights High School. The group included students wearing tin foil hats and parents who promised to remove their children from the school if cell phone antennas were installed. After the meeting, the school board met inclosed session and decided to renege on its twenty-year contract with AT&T. The group got technical and moral support from Milt Bowling, coordinator of Canada's **Electromagnetic Radiation Task Force** and board member of the **Electro-Magnetic Radiation Network**.

MEXICO

◆ Local residents working with Greenpeace Mexico protested against a proposal by multinational corporation Vivendi for a hazardous waste landfill in the Tecali municipality of Herrera. Two weeks later Mexico's national environmental ministry announced it was rejecting the proposal. A Greenpeace spokesperson said that the residents "would have done anything to stop the project," which they considered "una bomba de tiempo"—a time bomb. ■

Action Line is a way to share strategies and actions that work and to stay up-to-date on industry trends and tactics. We encourage contributions please send your Action Line contributions to EBY Editor, P.O. Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040

SHAREHOLDER ACTIVISM

Over the past several years, groups within CHEJ's network have started to incorporate shareholder activism into the bag of tools they use to pressure major corporations to be more environmentally responsible. May was an important month for groups fighting three major corporations.

On May 5, members of **Health Care Without Harm** (HCWH) attended the Stericycle shareholder meeting in Rosemont, Illinois. Stericycle is the largest medical waste disposal company in the United States and operates nine incinerators. HCWH presented Stericycle with a detailed report card showing that the company has failed to live up to its mission to be "the leading company dedicated to the environmentally responsible management" of medical waste. The company did not receive a "satisfactory" grade in any of the areas surveyed – elimination of incineration, disclosure and accountability, reduction of waste volume and toxicity, and protection of workers and communities. At the meeting, representatives from Haw River, North Carolina and Salt Lake City, Utah urged Stericycle to shut down the incinerators still operating in their communities.

The meeting produced a commitment from Stericycle to work with HCWH to change state statutes that require incineration for particular waste streams. Stericycle also agreed to work with hospitals to specify non-incineration technologies in their waste disposal contracts. If Stericycle keeps its pledge, this will be a big victory.

On May 6, members of New York's **Citizens' Environmental Coalition** (CEC) traveled to Los Angeles for Eastman Kodak's annual shareholder meeting. Kodak is the number one manufacturing polluter and the largest emitter of carcinogens to the air in New York, according to the most recent U.S. EPA Toxic Release Inventory Program. CEC is leading a campaign to get Kodak to stop emitting dioxin from the two hazardous waste incinerators at the company's headquarters in Rochester. At the meeting, a former Kodak employee introduced CEC's resolution — "Adopt a Non-Toxic Chemicals Policy"—calling on Kodak to develop and implement a plan to phase out emissions of persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs), such as dioxins and mercury. Outside the meeting, activists dressed in bright yellow "Kodak Toxic Cleanup Crew" hazmat suits handed out flyers to shareholders encouraging them to vote for the shareholder resolution. Even though the board of directors issued a statement urging shareholders to vote against the resolution, CEC's proposal received votes representing over 10.5 million shares—about 6 percent of the total— which means that the resolution can be brought back next year for another vote. CEC intends to use the resolution as leverage in its ongoing dialogue with Kodak and will work with shareholders to organize for next year's meeting.

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Shareholder Meeting continued

On May 8, activists from around the world descended on Midland, Michigan for the annual Dow Chemical shareholder meeting. Dow, one of the largest manufacturers of dioxin-generating products in the world, has been the focus of shareholder activism for a number of years and those efforts increased after the company bought Union Carbide and inherited responsibility for the Bhopal chemical disaster of 1984. This year a resolution titled “Policies on Dioxin and Persistent Toxics” was filed requesting that the board of directors “issue a report by October 2003...summarizing the company’s plans to remediate existing dioxin contamination sites and to phase out products and processes leading to emissions of persistent organic pollutants and dioxins.” Dow attempted to have the resolution withdrawn, but in the end it received close to 7 percent of the vote, which means it can be reintroduced next year. (For Dow’s response to demands that the company take responsibility for the Bhopal pesticide disaster, see “Campaign for Justice in Bhopal” p. xx.)

For more on Stericycle, see www.noharm.org; for the campaign to clean up Kodak, see www.kodakstoxiccolors.org; for more on Dow, see www.ecocenter.org.



The “Kodak Toxic Cleanup Crew” at Kodak’s annual shareholder meeting. Photo courtesy of CEC.

Membership in CHEJ

CHEJ’s work is important and needs to be supported by people and organizations who believe in building and empowering communities to stop the poisoning of the American people, our environment and all living things. CHEJ has **never** taken funds from polluters or government. Please, consider making a contribution or joining as a member so that we will have the resources to continue this work. Below is a description of our membership program.

◆ Individual Membership

Receive Everyone’s Backyard, a 10% discount on CHEJ’s unique publications, training events and merchandise, priority access to our technical assistance, organizing and research services and referrals. **Individual Membership — \$30**

◆ Partners’ Circle

Receive the above, plus CHEJ News, providing current updates on national campaigns and grassroots news, invitations to nearby events, and recognition in CHEJ’s annual report and *Everyone’s Backyard*.

Health Defender — \$100

Family Partner — \$250

Neighborhood Advocate — \$500

◆ Group Membership

Join with community groups across the country working towards health and environmental justice. Receive CHEJ’s newsletter, Everyone’s Backyard, priority access to our technical assistance, organizing and research services and referrals, the unique “how-to” resources on our members-only website, a 10% discount on unique publications, and merchandise, recognition in CHEJ’s annual report and insider bulletins. **Group Member—\$100**

◆ Advocates Circle

Help ensure that CHEJ has a dependable source of income to meet unexpected challenges and enjoy the convenience of monthly automatic payments.

Advocates Circle - \$10 a month or more

CHILD PROOFING OUR COMMUNITIES

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

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

This September the campaign will launch its most ambitious initiative yet—the Green Flag Program. The program is designed to promote environmental leadership in schools by issuing awards in the following four areas:

- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Indoor Air Quality
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycling
- the purchase and use of non-toxic products.

To help schools achieve a healthier environment during this time of shrinking education budgets, the Green Flag program will offer a blend of resources and incentives. The campaign has been piloting the program this spring and several schools have already made progress toward addressing environmental problems in their schools.

HERE'S HOW SCHOOLS GET STARTED.

CONTACT THE GREEN FLAG PROGRAM:

Campaign Organizer Margie Klein is the program's coordinator and will be the primary contact person for all schools interested in applying to the program. Any school from k-12, public or private, can apply.

SELECT A GREEN FLAG SCHOOL COORDINATOR:

In general, someone with an existing relationship to the school can become the Green Flag school coordinator. The school coordinator can be a parent, teacher, school administrator, facility manager, school nurse, etc. High school students are also eligible.

One school coordinator is Margaret Fitzgerald, a music teacher at Hucklebury Hills Elementary school in Brookfield, Connecticut. Margaret's district recently completed an asbestos abatement in all of its schools after she identified extremely high levels of the toxic material in her classroom. Margaret has brought the Green Flag program in to her school to address continued indoor air quality problems and to promote education and awareness on environmental health issues.

COMPLETE A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY:

The campaign will provide each Green Flag school coordinator with a 25-question survey asking general questions about the school and its present environmental programs and policies.

In completing the survey last spring, Mickey Maheu, a fourth-grade teacher at Southeast Elementary school in Mansfield, Connecticut, realized that his school lacked the required health and safety information on the school's cleaning products. Mickey obtained the appropriate records and

recruited a parent with extensive knowledge of cleaning products and suppliers to join his school's Green Flag team and help them explore the purchase of environmentally preferable products.

SET UP A GREEN FLAG TEAM:

The school coordinator is responsible for forming a Green Flag team of students and adults. The Green Flag team could be an already existing after-school environmental club, a specific class or grade level, or even the entire school.

Jake Lubarsky, a seventh grade teacher at the Thornton Friends School in Silver Spring, Maryland, recruited his entire classroom of students to become a Green Flag team. They adapted the school environment survey into homework, taking similar questions home and educating their parents on the issues. They are now creating an ambitious recycling program to go into effect this fall.

WORK WITH A GREEN FLAG MENTOR:

Once the Green Flag team has decided on its issue area, the program will assign it a Green flag mentor. The mentor is an individual who has specific expertise to the program area and who, ideally, is located within the school's state or region.

Robina Suwol, director of California Safe Schools, is a mentor

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CAMPAIGN PAGE

The mission of the Alliance for Safe Alternatives is to transform production processes, products, and disposal practices so that they are not a source of persistent toxic chemicals in our food, water, soil, and air. The Alliance is a national partnership that promotes alternative technologies and products, supports local struggles against the sources of persistent toxic chemicals, advocates for state and local policies to reduce and eliminate these chemicals, and works to hold government and industry accountable for protecting our health and environment from persistent toxics. The Alliance developed out of CHEJ's Stop Dioxin Exposure campaign. For more information, please visit our website at www.safealternatives.org. You can contact the Alliance at safealternatives@chej.org

Poll Shows 80% of Voters Support Phase Out of Persistent Toxic Chemicals

As part of the launch of the Alliance for Safe Alternatives on April 17, CHEJ issued a national press release that included polling data representing one of the first comprehensive studies of voter opinion on persistent toxic chemicals. Groups in 18 states participated in the launch by issuing similar releases tailored to the issues they are working on.

Among the key findings of the survey were the following:

- Nearly half of those polled said that toxic chemicals in land, air, water, and food represented an “extremely” or “very serious” problem in their state;

- After hearing a description of the factors that distinguish persistent toxic chemicals from other toxics, two out of three voters indicated that they were “extremely” or “very concerned” about the problems posed by such chemicals;

- More than three-quarters of voters mistakenly believe that chemical companies are already required to provide information about the health impacts of the chemicals they create, and a majority mistakenly believe that the government conducts safety tests on chemicals used in all major consumer products;

- An overwhelming majority of more than 80 percent of those polled support a comprehensive policy to phase out such chemicals and replace them with safer alternatives; and
- Women, across party lines, support such policies.

This data is the result of surveys of 1,200 voters in Maine, Michigan, and Washington sponsored by the Alliance for Safe Alternatives, along with partners in California, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Washington.

Europe Moves Forward with Bold, New Chemical Policy to Protect Public Health, U.S. Government and Industry Opposes

On May 7 the European Union moved one step closer towards launching a sweeping new policy initiative that would close a large loophole in how toxic chemicals are regulated, creating new structures for government oversight of chemicals used in commerce and

consumer products. The policy would require that industry publicly provide basic health, safety, and environmental impact data for a long list of chemicals that have not been tested for their impacts despite widespread use in everyday consumer products.

The same day, the Alliance, along with a coalition of 32 groups, issued a press release denouncing the actions the U.S. government and chemical industry have taken to block progress on the policy.

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RESOURCES

◆ Schools across the country are reducing their use of toxic pesticides and adopting effective pest management practices that protect children's health. A new report by the **School Pesticide Reform Coalition**, a project of **Beyond Pesticides**, explains how they're doing it. *Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy Learning Environment Through Integrated Pest Management* lays out the essentials of integrated pest management IPM and highlights programs in 27 school districts in 19 states, detailing the strategies schools have used to reduce and in some cases eliminate the use of toxic chemicals. Written by environmental and children's health advocates, including CHEJ, the 27 case studies are the heart of the report and provide compelling lessons for school administrators and parents who want to protect their children's health at school. The report includes a list of organizations, pest management companies that use IPM, and consultants that can assist in the implementation of a school IPM program, as well as a list of schools that have IPM policies. Copies of the report are available for \$5.00 by contacting Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450 or info@beyondpesticides.org. The report is available online at www.beyondpesticides.org/schools.

◆ Faced with evidence that their products were dangerous, the lead and vinyl industries responded by suppressing information, controlling scientific research and discrediting independent researchers, blaming workers and children for poisoning themselves, launching aggressive advertising campaigns to promote their products as essential for progress and comfort, and deceiving and manipulating government agencies to avoid or weaken regulation. In *Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*, Gerald Markovitz and David Rosner have written what will certainly become the standard work on what the two industries knew about the harmful effects of their products, when they knew it, and how corporations plotted to keep their products on the market regardless of the immense social cost and the suffering they caused. An outstanding work of historical scholarship. (University of California Press, 2002, 408 pages, \$34.95)

◆ Philip Landrigan and Herbert Needleman, experts on the impact of toxics on children's health, have written an informative practical guide for parents on ways to identify and avoid environmental health hazards in the home and at school. Written in an informal, accessible style, *Protecting Healthy Children in a Toxic World: 101 Smart Solutions for Every Family* addresses both big threats such as lead and asbestos and the lesser-known hazards that lurk in carpeting, cleaning products, and toys. Includes useful checklists and resources for more information and alternative products. (Rodale Press, 2001, 152 pages, \$12.95)

◆ Community and Environmental Defense Services (CEDS), based in Maryland, assists communities working on a range of development issues, including traffic and highways, waterways, golf courses, and landfills. Their latest publication, *How to Win Land Development Issues*, is a detailed and well-written primer that can help with identifying project impacts on a community, understanding review and permit processes, mobilizing support for your position, working with regulators, influencing decision-makers, and overall strategizing. Publications can be downloaded free from the CEDS website at www.ceds.org. Or contact CEDS at (800) 773-4571 or

◆ Those interested in what we can learn from polls and voting patterns about public attitudes on the environment would do well to take a look at Deborah Lynn Guber's *The Grassroots of a Green Revolution: Polling America on the Environment*. Guber finds that while public concern for the environment seems strong, competing values, inadequate knowledge of the issues, and feelings of ineffectiveness limit the actions Americans are ready to take. An exception that Guber explores is in the marketplace, where public willingness to spend more on environmentally-friendly products is high. (MIT Press, 2003, 278 pages, \$24.95)

◆ While DuPont has acknowledged that fumes from Teflon-coated cookware can kill birds, what about the impact on people? Tests conducted by Environmental Working Group show that within a few minutes on the stove at normal cooking temperatures, Teflon pots and pans begin releasing gasses known to be toxic to people. EWG's report *Canaries in the Kitchen* reveals that DuPont has known for years that offgassing from Teflon products can make people sick and even has a name for it: "polymer fume fever." The report calls for warning labels on Teflon products and for studies to examine the long-term human health impact of the chemicals released when Teflon is heated. (On the web at www.ewg.org/reports/toxicteflon.)

ALLIANCE FOR SAFE ALTERNATIVES

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The new chemicals policy is called “REACH,” which stands for Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals. REACH would ensure that within an 11-year time frame companies would have to provide data on the hazards of any chemical it manufactures, imports, or sells in quantities over one metric ton (2,200 pounds)—or the EU could ban the chemical. REACH would restrict the use of chemicals suspected of being carcinogenic or reproductive toxins as well as those known to persist and accumulate in the environment.

This policy is important for groups in the United States because it complements state- and local-level policy efforts already underway to find safer substitutes for harmful toxins and offers citizens here an opportunity to promote a global system that encourages the development of safer chemicals.

The American Chemistry Council and the U.S. government, however, have been actively lobbying European delegates against REACH. In fact, U.S. government statements on the policy

have incorporated the chemical industry’s positions and rhetoric. Citing “adverse trade implications,” the Bush administration is now pulling out all the stops. On April 29, Secretary of State Colin Powell sent a directive to all U.S. embassies urging them to lobby European officials to oppose this policy. The Department of Commerce is organizing meetings with business leaders in strategic locations across the U.S. to drum up opposition to REACH. Although these meetings are supposed to be open to the public, Commerce is making virtually no information available on dates, locations and times.

As EBY goes to press, the coalition is organizing to ensure that pro-REACH voices within the U.S. are heard by the European Union, the U.S. government, and the chemical industry.

Visit our new website at www.safealternatives.org for the full press releases, a list of groups that participated in the Alliance launch, and more information on REACH. ■

GREEN FLAG SCHOOLS PROGRAM

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who has been active in creating the program. After her sons were sprayed with pesticides at their elementary school five years ago, Robina joined other concerned parents in a successful campaign to get the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to adopt a precautionary policy on pesticide use—now highly acclaimed as one of the best in the country. Robina is working to obtain LAUSD’s endorsement of the Green Flag program and will work as a program mentor with city schools that are implementing it. Schools must successfully complete all three levels of the program to receive their green flags. Each school must:

1. Complete the school environment survey, form a Green Flag team and determine which issue area/s it wants to work on (level 1). The school will then receive the Green Flag (an actual flag!) in recognition of its good start. The flag has spaces for four decals, representing the four issue areas the school can choose to work on.

2. Complete a detailed survey on one of the four issues and educate the school community about the issue (level 2). The Green Flag team will receive T-shirts and baseball caps, and each student will get their own Green Flag Detective Kit.
3. Develop a policy or program to improve environmental conditions in the school, promote it through educational activities, and have implemented the change for at least three months (level 3). The school will then receive a certificate of achievement and a decal for the issue(s) the school worked on. These will be presented at an award ceremony.

To view the pilot materials currently available, please visit us online at <http://www.greenflagschools.org>. To get involved in the program, contact Margie Klein or Paul Ruther. ■



25 Years since Love Canal

**THE MOVEMENT IS NOW AT A MILESTONE—AND
READY MOVE ONTO THE NEXT PHASE.**

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



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

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

Make sure you receive your copy of 25 Years of Citizen Activism available this Fall!

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