

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 25 No. 4 Winter 2007



LANDMARK VICTORY!

Target Agrees to
Systematically
Reduce PVC

DON'T DUMP ON US:

The "Keep North
Carolina Healthy"
Tour



The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement

Center for Health, Environment and Justice

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FALL 2007 INTERN

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On the Cover:

A young protester at a rally in Roxboro on the "Keep North Carolina Healthy" Tour.

photo by Lois Gibbs

THE CLIMATE OF OPINION

As the 30th anniversary of the Love Canal crisis in Niagara Falls, NY nears (2008), CHEJ's staff and Board have taken time to reflect. Many lessons were identified, but one stood out -- everyday people can make a difference.

This is an important message, especially today when people feel helpless to change government and corporate behavior, feed the hungry, or stop violence. Looking back over the past 30 years to CHEJ's beginnings, the environmental health and justice movement -- everyday people -- have had thousands of local victories and dozens of major policy victories. But more importantly, we feel the real success of the movement is reflected in the advances that have been made to change the "climate of opinion."

There has been a sea change in the way that society thinks about things. The most important change the grassroots movement has made is in the common definition of "environment." Environment used to be limited to the outdoors, to "wild places." Today, it means "wild places plus all the places where we live, work, learn, play and pray."

A second major climate-of-opinion change is currently underway. Until recently, our country's chemical policies have been built almost exclusively upon a reliance on scientific information. We have had to prove, scientifically, that exposure to a chemical caused harm to humans and/or the environment before government would take action. Polluters have thrived under this "prove harm" regulatory system.

Now the grassroots environmental health movement is forcing another change in the climate of opinion. The prove harm system used back in 1978 at Love Canal is becoming unacceptable. Having confronted the prove harm system in thousands of local fights, grassroots activists are advocating for a new approach, based on prevention and precaution. Under this new system, government and corporations have a duty to adopt a precautionary stance to "prevent harm" whenever there is credible evidence that harm is occurring or is likely to occur, and manufacturers have a responsibility to show that they are using the least harmful alternative to meet a specific need. Proving harm is slowly being replaced by preventing harm in town halls, school board meetings, regulatory agencies, and corporate boardrooms.

When the media begins paying attention to the 30th anniversary of Love Canal, CHEJ needs to get out the message that ordinary people are creating systemic change by advocating a prevent harm approach to managing chemicals. CHEJ is planning a strong and consistent public education campaign along these lines, but media campaigns are expensive and I'm going to need your help. I hope you'll give as generously as you can to CHEJ this winter, because moving this message across the country will give the public voice and power needed to succeed.

For a Healthy Environment,
Lois Marie Gibbs

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.

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.

BY MIKE SCHADE, CHEJ PVC CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

LANDMARK VICTORY!

TARGET SYSTEMATICALLY REDUCING PVC, THE POISON PLASTIC

After a year of relentless campaigning, CHEJ and its partners have convinced mega retailer Target to systematically reduce PVC in their products and packaging. This represents a major market shift as Target is the fifth largest retailer in the U.S. with approximately 1,500 stores and over \$59 billion in revenues a year.

Innovative Campaign Strategies

From start to finish, we built a campaign that mobilized key health and environmental organizations, parents, and over 40,000 Target customers urging the company to phase out PVC, the poison plastic. This victory couldn't have been achieved without the support of scores of grassroots health and environmental organizations from across the country who played a crucial role in planning and participating in the campaign.

CHEJ and a coalition of over 50 health and environmental organizations first contacted Target and other major retailers in March of 2006 urging them to phase out PVC, leveraging victories we won from Wal-Mart and other companies. The national campaign was publicly launched seven months later in October of 2006 with a National Day of Action featuring media events at over 30 Target stores across the country. Activists held signs, banners, wore hazmat suits, and even unveiled a giant 25-foot inflatable "rubber ducky" outside a store near San Francisco. On that same day, we launched a humorous animated video, Sam Suds, online at www.pvcfree.org to educate the public about the dangers of PVC and Target's sale of PVC products and packaging. Within the first month, the video was viewed over 50,000 times generating thousands of petition signatures.

In the months following the Day of Action, CHEJ focused on building grassroots pressure on the company in collaboration with our coalition partners around the country. We worked with progressive telephone company Working Assets to generate consumer pressure. Working Assets sent out a Target PVC action alert to over 250,000 customers across the country. In response, over 23,000 letters and 1,000 phone

calls were generated within one month. Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth also launched online campaigns generating thousands of faxes and petitions to Target.

In the spring of 2007, CHEJ organized a follow-up National Day of Action coinciding with the company's annual shareholder meeting. Events were held at over 200 Target stores across the country, including protests, press conferences, flyer distribution to customers, and letters delivered to store managers. These events generated substantial media coverage, including great print, radio, and TV stories from New York to California. We released *Way Off Target*, a report documenting how Target was lagging behind other retailers in phasing out PVC in children's toys, shower curtains, and packaging. Another tactic was to place an ad in *USA Today* calling on Target to "stop ducking the dangers of PVC." There was also a press conference and a lively protest with Ohio Citizen Action outside Target's shareholder meeting in Cleveland. Inside the meeting, we joined with other shareholders to address the CEO and senior executives during the Q&A session.

Only a few months later, we met with Target who then announced

their commitment to systematically reducing PVC in their products and packaging, an unprecedented victory!

Why this Win is Important

This campaign was launched as part of CHEJ's national prevent harm strategy that includes shifting major markets away from using toxic chemicals (in this case PVC) that are poisoning communities. From production in low-income communities of color to disposal in toxic incinerators and landfills, PVC is the worst plastic for our health and environment. PVC's toxic lifecycle is strongly felt in Mossville, Louisiana, a small community of about 1,500 African Americans. This town is surrounded by a toxic cluster of four vinyl production facilities including two major vinyl chloride manufacturers, producing more vinyl than any other community in the country making it the unofficial PVC capital of America. Studies by the EPA have found levels of



A protester from the Citizens' Environmental Coalition outside the Target store in East Greenbush, NY at the May 24th PVC Day of Action.

photo by Laura McCarthy, CEC

Continued on page 11



BE SAFE Campaign

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

GREEN PURCHASING How-To Kit

How can you get your town, county or state to set up a green purchasing program? Learn from groups around the country that have done it with BE SAFE's upcoming Green Purchasing How-To Kit.

Model city, county and state green purchasing ordinances, resolutions, Executive Orders and legislation will be included. The kit will also include information to guide you on getting such a policy approved, including sample advocacy leaflets, news releases, plans and green purchasing resource lists.

BE SAFE is interviewing activists and government officials in CA, OR, MA, NY and other states to gather the most effective strategies and model programs. The kit will be coming out this winter, just in time for groups to start the New Year by convincing their local or state government to "go green."

In addition to the kit, BE SAFE staff can provide strategy assistance and expert referrals to help you. If you are interested in signing up for a Green Purchasing Kit, please contact BE SAFE Coordinator Anne Rabe at anne@besafenet.com or 518-732-4538.

HELP US CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM OF THE PVC CAMPAIGN!

Over the past three years, we have convinced some of the world's largest corporations to phase out PVC in products and packaging. Here's how you can help us continue the momentum!

- **Sign up** for the PVC Action Network e-mail list by sending a message to mike@besafenet.com with "subscribe" in the subject line, so you can learn about the latest campaign news and ways you can protect your family from the poison plastic.
- Help us **promote** the Sam Suds video by telling your friends and family, distributing postcards in your community, putting a banner on your website promoting the video, and holding house parties to screen the animated video in your neighborhood. Contact us for resources and support, and don't forget to watch the video at www.pvcfree.org.
- **Pass** a Local PVC-Free Purchasing Policy! Cities and large institutional purchasers across the country are going PVC-free. Your local town or institution can too. Contact us for model purchasing resources.
- Be a PVC Detective and **identify** PVC by looking for the #3 or the letter "V" inside or underneath the universal recycling symbol. If you find PVC, contact the retailer and manufacturer of the product and let them know you'd like them to go PVC-free. Contact us for a sample letter you can send.
- Put a **link** on your website to our PVC campaign websites, www.besafenet.com/pvc and www.pvcfree.org.



CHECK OUT THE NEW BE SAFE WEBSITE!

BE SAFE has a new website and an expanded Precautionary Policy Clearinghouse with new policies on schools, pesticides, right-to-know, green cleaning and chemical reform. Check it out at www.besafenet.com. The site includes over 20 issue brochures, resource guides and slide shows on precaution. Informative power-point presentations by expert speakers from the 2006 First National Conference on Precaution are featured in the new "Precautionary Presentations" section covering such topics as community organizing, health studies, economics of precaution, alternatives assessments and campaign strategies to pass state and local precautionary policies.

DON'T DUMP ON US: THE "KEEP NORTH CAROLINA HEALTHY" TOUR

CHEJ Executive Director, Lois Gibbs, joined with grassroots groups across the state of North Carolina for a sweeping "Don't Dump on Us" tour of eleven counties to urge state leaders to oppose "mega-dumps" and adopt health-protective policies on solid waste to keep North Carolina healthy. CHEJ partnered with the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) and their chapters throughout the state which are deeply embroiled in stopping a rash of proposals to expand landfills to accept out-of-state waste.

Local grassroots organizing had already won some impressive victories in the state. Last year, BREDL and their allies helped win a statewide moratorium on new huge garbage landfills, called "mega-dumps." As the moratorium was due to expire this past August, BREDL proposed legislative reforms on landfill siting that would eliminate the mega-dump proposals. As part of that campaign, a tour of proposed sites was planned to educate and motivate the public to speak out against mega-dumps and to pressure policymakers to support the legislation.

Surprisingly, a few days before the tour was scheduled to begin, the bill was passed in the State Legislature. Some believe that the threat of the pending tour was what moved this legislation forward so quickly. We'll never know for sure. This law established new rules and many of the proposed sites were dropped. Local groups, however, were not lulled into believing that other proposals won't surface. They are taking the message from the tour to heart. Residents that would be impacted by mega-dumps were urged to build broad-based, local coalitions,

make themselves heard, and use political pressure to win their goals.

As a result of the legislative victory, the goal for the tour was changed to promoting community "zero waste" programs. Zero waste is a goal to reduce, recycle or reuse everything in the waste stream and to promote the purchase of reusable products instead of throw-aways, or repairing products. While it is clear that we cannot achieve zero waste overnight, if zero waste is the long range goal, we are more likely to get there.

The "Don't Dump on Us" tour traveled through eleven counties and participated in 23 events hosted by community leaders. Many of these events received great media coverage, in part because of CHEJ's 25 foot inflatable yellow duck that was part of the tour. Banners on the duck were aimed at elected representatives stating, "Don't Duck the Issues," and the public, stating "Don't be a Sitting Duck for Landfills."

The Tour Stops Here

In Forsyth County, the room was packed with community leaders as well as traditional environmental groups like the Sierra Club. Members of the Piedmont Environmental Alliance talked about a construction and demolition dump proposed next to a 150-year-old historical church, and a church leader spoke passionately about how it would impact church property, especially the playground only a short distance from the site.

In Richmond County, Save Our Abundant Resources (SOAR) held strategy sessions around the theme of "what's next?" These sessions are a good model for all groups and issues. Too often, group leaders fight for the issue in front of them, such as the proposed mega-dump, but have little conversation about what's next. How do you create lasting change to address the core problem? SOAR leaders understood that even though the law stopped the nasty dump today, it does not



BREDL leader Janet Zeller speaks at an event in Forsyth County.



Members of PC Pride (Person County People Rising in Defense of Ecology) at the tour stop in Roxboro, NC. The group is fighting a proposed landfill expansion.

ACTION LINE

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

ALABAMA

Residents of Atmore, near the city of Mobile, are opposing the building of a new chemical plant in their community. The chemical company has already purchased the land for construction, and is in the process of applying for the necessary permits. A local citizen's group offered to buy back the land from the company, but the company said no. Meanwhile, organizers have been told by the state Department of Environmental Management that the company has not applied for any permits and may actually not be required to apply at the state level. The citizens' group is now working with the county commission to oppose the issuing of permits to the plant and the relaxing of environmental standards. CHEJ is providing organizing assistance to the group, who recently organized 300 people to attend a county meeting.

CALIFORNIA

In October, California became the first state in the nation to ban toys containing toxic softeners known as phthalates that are found in plastics like PVC. The effort to ban these chemicals started in San Francisco last year, when the city imposed restrictions on consumer products containing phthalates which have been linked to reproductive and hormone problems in laboratory animals. CHEJ congratulates **Environment California**, the **Breast Cancer Fund**, and other groups for this important victory. CHEJ's PVC campaign contributed to this effort by lending our giant rubber ducky for an important media event only days before the Governor signed the bill into law, and also by sending out action alerts to hundreds of supporters in CA.

Congratulations to the **Pesticide Action Network North America** and the **Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition** who both celebrated their 25th year and to the **Center for Environmental Health** who celebrated their 10th year, all this past October.

DELAWARE

Citizens for Clean Air (CCA) working with a local research scientist successfully pressured the state government to admit to the existence of a cancer cluster in their community. The group is continuing its work to address the health problems in their neighborhood by demonstrating a link between the cancers and emissions from a local coal-fired power plant that has been a point of contention for years. CCA solicited the help

of the researcher when the power plant proposed to expand its existing plant. Due to the efforts of the local activists, Lieutenant Governor John Carney had the state conduct its own investigation, which determined that the cancer rate in the community surrounding the Millsboro power plant is almost twenty percent higher than the national average. CHEJ has been advising the research scientist working with CCA.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Parents for Non-Toxic Alternatives, Clean Water Action, and technical experts from Virginia Tech University continue to work, with the support of CHEJ, to move the Washington DC city schools to adequately test, remediate and monitor their school water sources for lead contamination. Although the city repeatedly assures the groups that they have adequately tested and remediated over 90% of the water taps that tested high for lead contamination, the groups contend that testing was inadequate, and therefore didn't even identify all taps that are sources of lead exposure. Worse, the district has no long term monitoring plan to ensure that any remediated taps remain safe. The coalition continues to fight to do their own testing; move the city to improve testing protocols and remediate completely; and to move legislation to include water testing for lead in the district.

FLORIDA

In early October, CHEJ's **Florida Alliance for Healthy Indoor Environments (FAHIE)** sent a letter to Governor Charlie Crist explaining why the governor should support moving government and school cleaning agencies toward using green cleaning techniques. CHEJ is trying to convince the governor to set an example by switching to green cleaning in the governor's mansion. The governor has already taken several energy conservation steps at the mansion and may be willing to adopt environmentally-friendly, non-toxic cleaning methods. This would be an important step in a statewide campaign towards creating a state policy on green cleaning. Seventeen state and national environmental, health and political

organizations joined in support by co-signing the letter. For more information, contact Heather Walker at cheather@chej.org.

CHEJ and **FAHIE** held a regional meeting on Green Cleaning Your Institution for local municipalities, schools, universities and workers in Tallahassee in early December. The all-day workshop featured training from some of the most sought after experts on green cleaning in the country, and shared experiences by facilities managers that have made the switch. This workshop was an additional step in our ongoing statewide campaign to move the state to use green cleaning in public facilities, schools, childcare centers and in government offices. To get involved, contact cheather@chej.org.

The small community of Apopka, located near Lake Apopka in Central Florida, was formerly the site of large-scale agriculture, and is also the home for a number of currently-operating pollution sources including

a landfill, an incinerator, and several industrial plants. The lake has been contaminated over many years by pesticides and other runoff waste. A University of Florida researcher found that local wildlife has displayed hormonal and endocrine disruption resulting from this pollution. In addition, the local community of residents, farm workers, and industrial workers

has suffered from numerous illnesses. A clinic was set up to address the health needs of this predominantly African American community, however the physicians serving the clinic were unprepared to treat the needs of people suffering from long-term exposure to low-level mixtures of toxic chemicals. CHEJ has been in contact with local groups in Apopka to build collaborative networks and determine a plan of action. CHEJ is especially interested in helping to find training, funding, and government support for the health clinic to better meet the needs of local residents.

GEORGIA

The **Newtown Florist Club (NFC)** hosted and provided a tour of the pollution problems in Gainesville for participants attending the 2007 National Bucket Brigade Coalition Conference being held in nearby Atlanta. Representatives from TX, LA, AL, FL, KY, OH, CA and ME toured the Newtown neighborhood that is surrounded by more than a dozen industries within a two mile radius, several of which border the neighborhood. The NFC has been collecting air samples using a sampling bucket developed by the Bucket Brigade for the past three years to identify toxic chemicals in the air they are breathing. They are using this information to pressure the companies to stop polluting their community. For information on the Bucket Brigade, see www.bucketbrigade.net.

An excellent new book helps explain why so many people get cancer and why so little is being done about it - *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* written by Dr. Devra Lee Davis. This book describes how over \$100 billion a year is spent on research to identify and treat the disease while ignoring the causes of cancer. A stunning expose of government and industry collusion. For more information, visit www.devradavis.com

ACTION LINE

IDAHO

Members of the **Silver Valley Community Resource Center** in Kellogg who have been actively engaged on many levels in the cleanup of one of the nation's largest Superfund sites, the Bunker Hill/Coeur d'Alene Basin mining site, are intensifying their outreach to Congressional leaders in order to stop the establishment of a toxic waste repository at the Old Mission at Cataldo. More than 600 signatures were submitted on petitions prior to a July 6th public hearing deadline as well as some very good letters responding to some of the technical concerns of this plan. CHEJ is providing organizing help and is reviewing the EPA's proposed cleanup plan for the site.

ILLINOIS

Residents of the northern Illinois community of Rockford have organized to convince the local zoning board to delay a decision on granting a permit to construct an asphalt plant within 1 mile of over six thousand residents, and within one thousand feet of a daycare center that serves low-income families. The first neighborhood meeting of **Neighborhood Environment and Traffic Safety** saw nearly 300 concerned citizens turn out. The asphalt company has suggested that it might take legal action to ensure that the plant gets approved. CHEJ has been working with community leaders to discuss strategies.

MARYLAND

Drawing heavily on architects, nurses, educators, government officials and environmental activists from MD and Washington, DC, CHEJ, the Montgomery County (MD) Green Building Program, and the Municipal Council of Governments held a Healthy School Summit in the District on Halloween. The day long workshop featured a wide range of issues affecting school health that moved beyond the traditional "green building" issue of energy conservation, with presentations and panelists covering a wide range of health risks to schoolchildren, including: toxic cleaning solvents, contamination of cafeteria food, mold damage arising from deferred building maintenance, lead paint, and improper ventilation systems. To get involved with next steps by Summit participants, contact Stacey Gonzalez at sgonzalez@chej.org.

MICHIGAN

Residents in Romulus cheered the decision by the US EPA to terminate federal permits issued to Environmental Disposal Systems to dump liquid hazardous waste into two underground injection wells. The EPA's decision was based on numerous violations, including failure to notify the agency of an ownership transfer. The facility was shut down in 2006 by the MI Department of Environmental Quality after inspectors found a leak in the surface piping of one of the wells. Subsequent inspections by EPA confirmed the

leak and identified numerous other violations of the permit. The community has been fighting the disposal of toxic waste at this site since 1998 when the permit was first issued. Congratulations!

MINNESOTA

Neighbors Against the Burner (NAB) are continuing their efforts to stop a proposed wood burner in the Phillips section of Minneapolis. They organized a major letter writing campaign in late summer to the MN Pollution Control Agency who must decide whether to issue air permits for the incinerator. One of the main issues of contention is whether there is enough "clean" wood available to sustain the burner. NAB and other opponents say no. NAB is preparing to welcome longtime friend Paul Connert to address their community in hopes of further educating the public and their elected officials about the problems with the proposed plan.

NEW MEXICO

CHEJ is continuing to offer support to the **Mesquite Community Action Committee** seeking to sustain its organizing efforts to stop the Helena Chemical plant from poisoning their community. Health concerns include air emissions from the facility as well as routine accidents that lead to higher exposures. Local group leaders recently met with the state's Lieutenant Governor where they raised concerns about the water quality and the environmental impact of local industry, including dairy farms and the Helena Chemical plant as well as upstream contamination and runoff from the urban Las Cruces area. CHEJ hopes that the ongoing organizing of local residents will spur the New Mexico state government to take action, and we will continue to support these concerned community members.

NEW YORK

Victor Citizens Against Contamination (VCAC) celebrated a victory in their efforts to permanently shut down the Syracuse Sand & Gravel mining site in Victor. In October the state Department of Environmental Conservation ordered an immediate cease of operations at the mine when they discovered that the mine's operator was providing materials to off-site construction projects which was a violation since the mine's permit had expired in 2002. DEC had warned Syracuse of these violations several times to no avail. Although Syracuse had begun the permit renewal process, it was incomplete and any activity at the site was a violation. DEC is investigating the area from which the materials were taken and suspects this may

be the source of trichloroethylene (TCE) that has been found in groundwater in the area. They plan to collect groundwater samples to test for TCE and to determine if the TCE is coming from this location. VCAC has been complaining about TCE in their water for some time and plans to continue organizing to block the company's efforts to renew its permit.

A parents group from the Bronx held a bake sale on the steps of City Hall to draw attention to the need for funding an independent review of the maintenance and monitoring plan that will be put in place following the construction of the Mott Haven Schools. The City rejected a request by the groups for \$11,000 to fund this review. To make the point that it will be quite difficult for the community to raise these funds on their own, the groups displayed 11 cupcakes priced at \$1,000 each with a sign "kids' health...priceless." This group



CHEJ Executive Director Lois Gibbs and leaders at the Ohio EJ Forum in Toledo (see Ohio story).

is part of a broader coalition of grassroots groups fighting the use of contaminated sites to build schools that includes the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, NY PIRG, and CHEJ that are calling on the City Council to close a contract loophole that allows schools that are opened in a leased facility to by-

pass environmental testing and public participation requirements.

Citizens in Romulus are organizing to push for an Environmental Impact Study and a public hearing before the siting of an ethanol plant. CHEJ is providing organizing assistance to their core leadership.

NORTH CAROLINA

Dressed in hazmat suits, rubber boots, gloves, and dust masks, members of **Neighbors Opposing Bio-Sludge (NO-BS)** took sludge to the podium to speak on why additional monitoring and testing of treated sewage sludge is needed in order to determine the effects of the land application of sludge on the ailing Jordan Reservoir. The group also submitted recommendations for the responsible management of sludge in the preservation of the reservoir. NO-BS was formed by farmers and residents of Alamance, Orange, Guilford, Chatham and Randolph counties in order to stop the land application of harmful chemicals found in sewage sludge that may pose a risk to human health and the environment (*from BREDL*).

OHIO

CHEJ and the **Ohioans for Health, Environment and Justice** continued its series of environmental

ACTION LINE

justice forums with meetings in Toledo and Warren. These meetings brought together environmental and civil rights groups to help shape an environmental justice policy for the state. More than 60 people turned out in Toledo and about 50 in Warren. A total of six forums have been held throughout the state since last March. All of the participants from these meetings were invited to attend a statewide meeting on November 30th - December 1st to consolidate community input and develop strategy leading to an environmental justice policy for state consideration.

In an unusual twist, the Ohio EPA sued an asphalt company for violating pollution rules. The state's attorney general office filed the suit claiming the Shelly Company of Thornville violated air pollution limits and burned oil that contained mercury, lead and other compounds. The complaint covers 27 plants operated by Shelly. Teresa Mills of the **Buckeye Environmental Network** who has been critical of these asphalt plants for years was quoted as saying "We're glad the EPA finally caught up to us."

PENNSYLVANIA

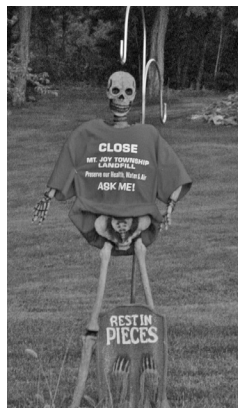
The **Elizabethtown-Mount Joy Concerned Citizens Association** is fighting the expansion of a construction and demolition (C&D) landfill located in Milton Grove. Residents living around the landfill have detected offensive odors coming from their well water and soil and are concerned that an increasing number of health problems in the community may be tied to exposure to chemicals leaching from the landfill. Testing done by the state found levels of hydrogen sulfide as high as 267 parts-per-million (ppm). While PA has no standard regulating hydrogen sulfide in groundwater, Wisconsin's standard is 10 ppm. The company wants to expand their permit from 65 to 130 acres and to increase the disposal area by 22 acres. The expansion would affect wetlands, which feed the local groundwater. CHEJ is providing organizing and technical assistance to the group who is hoping to pressure local officials to stop the expansion and to protect the health of their community.

Citizens in Lattimer Mines are organizing to stop the siting of an ASTEC asphalt plant that proposes using a new state-of-the-art design that promises "clean-coal burning." The company's literature describing their new process is typically vague and says nothing about the usual air pollutants from asphalt mixing plants - VOCs, PAHs, and heavy metals. The group is using a number of organizing tactics: public demonstrations, letter to editors, petition signing, attending public hearings, and exploring legal options. CHEJ is providing organizing and technical support to the group.

A local community group in Springdale, located near Pittsburgh, is seeking to stop a permit variance which would allow an existing asphalt plant to extend its emission stacks. If this happens, the contaminants coming out of the stack would travel further from the plant and impact a much larger area. Attempts to schedule a meeting with local city officials to seek a delay in the variance request were turned down. Despite glaring evidence of the potential danger to the health of the community from the asphalt plant, local leaders were not convinced and called this evidence the work of alarmists who are opposed to industry. CHEJ is working with local organizers committed to continuing efforts to take collective action to address this situation.

SOUTH CAROLINA

An African American community in Conway is fighting to keep an asphalt plant from locating in their neighborhood. Residents formed **Communities Against the Asphalt Plant (CAAP)** and are educating their neighbors about the dangers of an asphalt plant hoping to get more people involved. The group is not getting much support from their County Council who approved a zoning ordinance in August which allows the asphalt plant to be built, despite protests from the community. The council had originally agreed to address the issue at three of their meetings before voting on whether to amend the existing zoning ordinance. But residents claim that there was no advance notice of meetings. The group is hoping to prevent the company from acquiring air and water permits which are needed before the plant can be built.



A ghoulish sight awaited trick-or-treaters in Mt. Joy Township, PA.

photo by John Wolf

TENNESSEE

Bring Urban Recycling to Nashville Today (BURNT) has been organizing to stop the approval by the Metropolitan Nashville Council (Metro) of a consent order between the USEPA and the Justice Department on sewage overflow in the city. BURNT is concerned that

the consent decree is incomplete, violates TN law, and is an environmental injustice. They also feel that EPA and the Justice Department violated TN open records law by meeting behind closed doors and excluding the public in the process and they want a public hearing on the proposed project.

TEXAS

Community In-Power Development Association, the **Chemical Weapons Working Group**, and numerous Texas organizations came together in Port Arthur to protest the shipment of VX nerve agent by the U.S. Army to be burned in Port Arthur. Local residents are upset that the toxic nerve agent is being shipped

to their community 900 miles from a military storage site in Newport, Indiana. Without any public notice, the Army signed a 3-year contract with Veolia Environmental Services to burn the nerve agent in Port Arthur. The groups want the waste treated on-site in Newport and not transported anywhere. They also feel that there are treatment alternatives that could be used instead of incineration and that the residents of Port Arthur already suffer enough from air pollution. Residents vow to continue to fight the transportation and incineration of this waste until they win.

Citizens for Environmental Justice in Corpus Christi was joined by the **Global Environmental Monitor** and regional partner groups in a march in November to "Remember the Victims of CITGO's crimes." CITGO Refining and Chemicals Company was convicted of two criminal counts of violating the Clean Air Act in June, endangering the health and safety of their neighbors. CITGO immediately responded with newspaper ads declaring their innocence. Community members that have been exposed to cancer causing emissions from CITGO's plant want the pollution to stop and their neighborhood cleaned up. Earlier in September, about 450 people attended two town hall meetings held by the Texas Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section who were looking for people who might have been affected by the CITGO plant. About 240 people filled out victim impact statements which will be forwarded to the U.S. Probation Office in preparation for sentencing the company who was convicted on two felony counts for operating two oil/separator tanks without roofs as required by federal law.

VIRGINIA

Congratulations to **Citizens for a Clean Environment (CCE)** and the **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)** for permanently shutting down a tire burning plant operated by Tire Energy Corporation facility in Martinsville. Although the company struggled to meet air quality standards since the plant opened 3 years ago, they claimed the decision to close was due to economics, unrelated to environmental issues. CCE and BREDL are happy the facility is shut down, regardless of what the company says.

Friends and Advocates for Children, Teachers and Schools in Earlysville, along with the **Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club** and a coalition of parents, teachers, activists, and local media are celebrating the decision by the Albemarle County Public Schools to adopt safer pest management methods for all 26 schools in the county by the end of the year. The school district plans to systematically convert one school every two weeks. Great local organizing including citizen emails, phone calls, and sharing information stopped the dangerous practice of using toxic pesticides and saved children and teachers from further unnecessary pesticide exposure inside school buildings. Congratulations! ♦



A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Child Proofing Our Communities

EIGHT STEPS TO BUILDING A GREEN TEAM

Everything seems to be going green these days, and schools are no exception. At CHEJ, we are inundated with calls from schools enthused about going “green,” but they don’t know where to start. While there is no set recipe, experience has shown that several key ingredients will get a school moving in the right direction:

- 1. A Strong and Diverse Committee:** Similar to any successful school program, a greening initiative requires a committed, passionate and diverse group. The more people involved in taking on tasks, and the more diverse the group is, the more likely your committee will succeed through creativity and innovation. Remember that everyone in a school community has something to bring to the table, including often neglected voices such as those from the facilities maintenance staff.
- 2. Dividing the Committee into Sub-committees:** A diverse committee will have many interests and strengths. Dividing up the larger committee into sub-committees keeps everyone engaged and generates momentum. For instance, one subcommittee might be interested in researching the least toxic available cleaning products, while another might work to develop after school projects for students to get involved in school greening activities.
- 3. Know your School:** Every school has a unique culture. Public or private, religious or secular, primary or secondary, rural or urban, they all have different characteristics. Do your homework: know the school’s priorities, how change normally happens, what groups may have an interest in school greening, and identify your allies.



- 4. Find a Connected Supporter:** Schools can often be difficult to change, and any attempt to change the way things are done will likely encounter some resistance. If you can get a key player in the school to support your ideas, things will move forward more easily and effectively. Decision-makers, or people who “sign off” on new ventures, are the ones to talk to about your ideas and goals for the school.

5. Build Relationships: Relationships can break through the resistance that you may encounter as you introduce new ideas. Take the time to know, on a personal level, the people you will be interacting with as you move forward.

6. Educate: Assume that your audience may be hearing these ideas for the first time, including people on the committees. Some ideas may also be difficult for people to understand. Aim to educate the school community about these issues, and avoid jargon-filled scientific language. The science is important, but it’s more important that your community understands the issues enough to care about them.

- 7. Change is Slow:** No matter how easy and necessary you think green initiatives should be, change never happens quickly. The key to a successful program is consistency and patience.
- 8. Significant Change Happens in Small Steps:** Every small action is important, because each creates excitement and energy in the school community and builds a base of support for the greening initiative. Small activities also draw in new people. The more voices that are behind the issue, the more likely you’ll reach and exceed your long term goals.



For more information on building a green team at your school call us at: (703) 237 - 2249 ext. 21.

NORTH CAROLINA, continued from page 5

stop another nasty facility from coming in tomorrow.

About 50 leaders gathered around the table and had a serious, focused conversation on the question, “if not this landfill, then what?” Many ideas were discussed but the one that seemed to generate the most energy was to explore the possibility of the county becoming a distribution center for the waste that would have filled the proposed landfill. This idea gained energy because Interstate 95 (runs north and south) and Interstate 74 (runs east and west) cross in their rural county. Consequently, the area is ripe to become a transportation and distribution hub that could take solid waste and separate it into recyclable, reusable, or compostable materials. Plus, the group has a close relationship with organized labor, so this effort could provide union jobs with a living wage and benefits that would provide a sound economic base without pollution.

There were also meetings with the Editorial Boards of the *Richmond County Daily Journal* and the *Laurinburg Exchange* that provided opportunities to discuss this new economic idea as well as the serious problems posed by landfills. The next day, supportive editorials were published giving SOAR even more hope for a positive future.

In Scotland County, the group Scotland County of Tomorrow turned out over 200 people at their event. The community was energized and ready to tackle the waste issues holistically. They know the next “bad” idea is just around the corner and it is their responsibility to put in place a protective, preventive plan for waste management and economic development.

The most disturbing stop on the tour was the visit to the Green Swamp in Whiteville. Lois Gibbs was shocked to learn that there was a proposal to build a mega-dump in a swamp! How could anyone think this makes sense? Thankfully, it was one of the sites eliminated by the new law. In Duplin County, children were the movers and shakers as they carried out a skit with a cheer and songs, and spoke at a news conference.

In Greene County, the Mayor of Snowhill hosted a zero waste meeting to begin discussing how to reach that goal in the county. The mayor wasn’t waiting to be a “sitting duck;” he was thinking about precautionary actions that his community could take to prevent pollution. In Alamance County, there was a lively event featuring six leaders from the surrounding counties with great music and food.

Waste dump promoters attempted to discourage participation at a public forum in Person County organized by the local group PC-PRIDE. A story on the front page of the local paper on the morning of the event stated that one county commissioner was threatened and another had a bag of garbage dumped on his front lawn. PC-PRIDE made it clear that they would never do such things, nor would it be in their best interest. Nonetheless, the story said that the person doing

the threatening was associated with the group. Despite the bad press, people came to the event and overall the community felt that it was successful. The next day, the newspaper accurately covered the event with a positive vision of PC-PRIDE’s work

The tour ended with a rally and news conference at the State Capital in Raleigh. With the huge inflatable duck positioned so it looked like it was going to swallow the capital building in newspaper photographs, leaders from all eleven counties spoke about the need for the state to move toward zero waste. Children performed a

cheer and a song, and a letter was delivered to the Governor’s office urging him to stop all mega-dumps and support a zero waste goal.

The “Don’t Dump on Us” tour was a great success and spurred action in communities starting to develop a vision of their precautionary future. More groups should think about “If not this .., then what?” Answering this question will create a stronger, more powerful positive effort in communities. ♦



Members of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) at the final tour stop, a rally outside the capitol building in Raleigh.



With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between June 30 and October 31, 2007. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated.

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TARGET, continued from page 3

vinyl chloride, a known carcinogen used to make PVC, more than 120 times higher than air standards in the Mossville area. These PVC plants have contaminated not only the air, but also the groundwater in the community, which has forced many families to abandon their homes and move out of the neighborhood. Most recently, MacArthur Genius Wilma Subra found that high levels of cancer-causing dioxins in the bodies of Mossville residents corresponded with the dioxins being released by PVC factories nearby. CHEJ's PVC campaign seeks to reverse these environmental injustices by shifting major retailers and consumer product companies away from PVC and towards using safer and healthier products that are safer for communities and workers in towns such as Mossville.

Next Steps

CHEJ and our coalition partners will continue to work with Target to expand and implement this precedent setting policy in the months to come. At the same time, we will build on the momentum and leverage of this incredible victory by targeting other competing retailers urging them to join the growing trend away from the poison plastic and towards safer and healthier products. ♦

Visit the Be Safe article on page 4 to learn how you can help continue the momentum of the campaign.

HOW TARGET IS ADDRESSING PVC

TARGET HAS FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER COMMITTED TO SYSTEMATICALLY REDUCING PVC IN PRODUCTS AND PACKAGING. THEIR INITIAL FOCUS IS ON THEIR OWN PRIVATE LABEL PRODUCTS BUT TARGET WILL ALSO BE PARTNERING WITH BRAND NAME PRODUCTS AND PACKAGING VENDORS TO IDENTIFY VIABLE ALTERNATIVES. TARGET HAS COMMITTED TO:

- Eliminating PVC from a number of infant products and toys. All children's eating utensils and lunchboxes are now PVC-free. All baby bibs will be PVC-free by January 2008. The company is phasing out phthalates in most of their toys by Fall 2008. They are also eliminating phthalates in baby changing tables by January 2008.
- Replacing many PVC shower curtains with a safer PVC-free plastic, ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA). Target expects 88% of its shower curtains to be PVC free by this coming spring.
- Target will be 96% PVC-free in their placemat and table linen categories by Spring 2008.
- All Target soft-sided coolers are now PVC-free.
- Reducing PVC in packaging. Target is reducing PVC packaging in the company's Target brand dinnerware, electronics, food packaging, travel accessories, toys and sporting goods. The company is also asking their vendors to reduce the amount of packaging on their products and use materials that are easily recyclable.
- Target has engaged their merchandise buyers through the development and distribution of a new Sustainable Products Guide, which includes a specific section on issues surrounding PVC.

1978 – 2008: 30 Years Since Love Canal

In the 30 years since Love Canal awakened the nation to the health threats posed by low-level chemical exposures, CHEJ has given countless communities the tools and support they need to demand change. Today, with many dangerous chemicals showing up, not just in hazardous dumpsites, but everywhere -- in our food, consumer products, air, drinking water, and our bodies -- we need your support more than ever.

With your gift of:



1,978 pennies (that's \$19.78!), you provide a local group with detailed guides on the health risks posed by asphalt plants, and how to test their land and water for contamination.



1,978 nickels (that's \$98.90!), you give a CHEJ expert on healthy schools the resources to give a school presentation to students, teachers, parents, and school boards on "green cleaning" which is both environmentally-friendly and safe for children.



1,978 dimes (that's \$197.80!), you pay for a community activist to attend a training conference, where they will develop the skills and connections to win their local fight!



1,978 quarters (that's \$494.50!), you enable a dozen community group leaders to participate through a series of conference calls in the planning of a nationwide collaborative day of action that boosts their local visibility and effectiveness.

To make a donation, call our membership office at (703) 237-2249 ext. 27 or visit our website at www.chej.org.

Thank you for your support!

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