

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 26 No.1 Spring 2008

Love Canal Anniversary

The Journey Continues



Zero Waste

Beyond Recycling



Center for Health, Environment and Justice

www.chej.org

CHEJ BOARD MEMBERS

Alonzo Spencer, Ohio
Suzi Ruhl, Connecticut
Dave Beckwith, Ohio
Suzie Canales, Texas
Ken Grossinger, D.C.
Luella Kenny, New York
Esperanza Maya, California
Maria Pellerano, New Jersey
Peter Sessa, Massachusetts
Janet Zeller, North Carolina

WINTER 2008 INTERN

Robin DeCook
Caitlin Weigand

Everyone's Backyard is published quarterly by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, Inc. The Managing Editor is Stephen Lester, with layout design by Oludamilare Olugbuyi. EBY is printed on 100% recycled and 100% post-consumer waste paper, not bleached with chlorine, using low VOC vegetable oil-based inks.



CHEJ grants permission to other publications, including websites, to reprint materials from *Everyone's Backyard*. All reprinted material should contain a statement acknowledging that the material was originally published in *Everyone's Backyard*, the quarterly newsletter of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice.

Library of Congress
#ISSN 0749-3940.
Copyright by CHEJ.

Unsolicited manuscripts, news items, artwork, photographs and other submissions are welcome. All submissions become the property of CHEJ and will not be returned unless special arrangements are made in advance.



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

On the Cover:

30th Anniversary of Love Canal logo

LESSON LEARNED

HOLD POLITICIANS ACCOUNTABLE

As the 30th Anniversary of Love Canal approaches later this year, every night there is something on the news about the presidential election and the candidates. This reminds me about the most important lesson I learned at Love Canal - identifying what can make the politicians in office move to help your community is the key to success.

At the beginning when I went door to door to talk with families about the 20,000 tons of chemicals under my son's elementary school, I thought proving harm was the key. If the parents could demonstrate that chemicals were surfacing on the playground, then the authorities would immediately close the school to prevent harm to the children. I was wrong. The school board was concerned about liability and the costs associated with moving 400 students and staff.

However, when we moved our activities to focus on the Governor, during his reelection campaign, and how he didn't care that school children were being exposed to toxic chemicals, the school was closed. Similarly, in May of 1980, we took our plight to then President Jimmy Carter who was running for re-election. The Love Canal families created national news that focused on how President Carter was turning a deaf ear to American families he says he cares so much about. On October 1st that year, President Carter provided the funds needed to move all families who wished to leave.

The families living in Pensacola, Florida near Mt. Dioxin had the same success in 1993. They understood, after years of trying to prove harm, that they needed to make it politically advantageous for then President Bill Clinton to evacuate their community. With the help and donations from people across the country, they placed a full page ad in USA Today. The ad asked President Clinton to put action behind his words and evacuate the 358 families suffering in Pensacola. Three days later the USEPA announced they were offering evacuation to the families living near Mt. Dioxin.

Elections are critical to our work to prevent harm to innocent people and shift society toward prevention. But equally important is holding the elected representatives accountable once they get into office.

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 DIANNA WENTZ, CHEJ MEDIA OFFICER

LOVE CANAL: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

THIRTY YEARS OF MOVING FROM REACTION TOWARDS PREVENTION

Love Canal was so much more than a contaminated blemish on the face of America's soil. Love Canal marked the beginning of a journey that launched a movement of working towards the prevention of environmental health harm, the prevention of exposures to toxic chemicals present in our environment. Through the toxic emissions oozing up from people's yards, amidst the scared and angry faces of mothers with sick children, were sewn seeds of righteous empowerment. Precisely because of the lessons learned at Love Canal by people like Lois Gibbs and her neighbors, this country has begun to move from reaction to prevention on all things toxic and potentially harmful to people and communities.

In early 1978, when Lois Gibbs first went door-to-door talking to her neighbors to find out if any of their children were suffering from severe illnesses (as was her son), little did she know that she would soon learn a toxic waste site known as Love Canal was located three blocks from her home and that it also extended underneath the 99th Street elementary school where her five year old son attended.

Without knowing it, an alarmed and anxious mother, Lois Gibbs, was beginning a journey that would transform her into not only the "Mother of Superfund," but also a soon to be mentor of this new movement. A movement whose goal has become to ensure that the harm inflicted at Love Canal would not happen again anywhere in America without a fight.

The Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA) emerged soon after Lois and others circulated a petition to close the contaminated 99th Street School. Early actions by these growing, united voices led the New York State Department of Health to conduct the tests that showed what was already known: high numbers of people were sick in and around the Love Canal neighborhood. Still, science and truth were not enough to result in an evacuation of the entire community. In August of 1978, the Governor agreed to relocate families living within a two block radius around the contaminated site. This included only 239 families, well short of the over 900 contaminated families who lived in the neighborhood.



Children protesting at Love Canal in 1978.

As Lois and her fellow activists began to learn how to "guide" the decision makers through smart organizing techniques, evacuations continued to occur on an incremental basis until they presented the federal government with a deadline of May 21, 1980 to evacuate all of the remaining families still in harm's way. The President heard the call of the journey's founders and traveled to Niagara Falls to sign the bill that finally assured funds to relocate all of Love Canal's victims (and sparking the passage of federal Superfund legislation to pay for the cleanup of hundreds of Love Canals across the Nation). This journey, apart from the very real and lifelong medical worries,

had ended for some at Love Canal, but was just beginning for Lois and this new movement.

Mile Markers Along the Journey

As the case of Love Canal demonstrates, the Nation was only prepared to operate in reaction mode when it came to environmental health harm. Nor did any road map exist for Lois and her neighbors to follow as they were forced to begin a journey of preventing additional health harm from coming to their families. The question became one of how to prevent Love Canals from

happening to our nation's citizens in the future; along with how to deal with those already occurring. Lois responded by founding the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, now the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ), in 1981.

In 1983, CHEJ's first Leadership Development Conferences were held in several states, to mentor and train residents to expand the movement and place more people on the journey, providing them with the roadmaps needed to move everyone closer to the destination.

As Lois' work uncovered a key report (the Cerrell Report in 1986), it became clear that the movement would need to continue to grow in its savviness. This report revealed long held suspicions that industries consciously planned the location of toxic landfills in areas where low income, minorities and/or elderly people resided. Not only was environmental health harm being permitted, it was purposely unjust in "choosing" its victims. The movement born at Love

Continued on page 10



BE SAFE Campaign

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

SOUTHEAST ACTIVISTS TAKE PRECAUTIONARY ACTION ON MEGA-DUMPS, NUCLEAR REACTORS AND SLUDGE

OVER 100 COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS FROM NINE STATES CAME TOGETHER IN GREENSBORO, NC IN NOVEMBER 2007 TO DEVELOP PRECAUTIONARY ACTION PLANS ON LANDFILLS, MEGA-DUMPS, NUCLEAR REACTORS AND SEWAGE SLUDGE. STRATEGY SESSIONS WERE HELD FOR EACH OF THESE TRACKS. NUCLEAR ACTIVISTS AGREED TO FOCUS ON "WASTE, WATER AND WALL STREET" TO FIGHT PROPOSED NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, AND TO REFINE THEIR MESSAGING. MEGA-DUMP ORGANIZERS WILL MEET WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO DEVELOP ZERO WASTE PLANS TO REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE WASTE. AND ACTIVISTS FIGHTING THE LAND APPLICATION OF SEWAGE SLUDGE WILL SHARE INFORMATION IN A NEW REGIONAL SLUDGE NETWORK. BE SAFE IS WORKING WITH THE BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE AND OTHER GROUPS TO DEVELOP A MULTI-ISSUE WEB PORTAL THAT WILL PROVIDE A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ON THESE THREE PRIORITY HAZARDS. WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE ISSUES AND HOW YOU CAN TAKE PRECAUTIONARY ACTION? CHECK OUT THE RESOURCE GUIDE AND CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AT WWW.BESAFENET.COM

VICTORY! SEARS/KMART BECOME LATEST RETAIL GIANTS TO PHASE OUT TOXIC PVC

Sparked by a national campaign led by CHEJ, together with a coalition of health and environmental organizations, Sears Holdings (Sears and Kmart) announced plans to begin phasing out products and packaging containing the toxic polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic, commonly known as vinyl. Sears and Kmart join Wal-Mart and Target in reducing and phasing out PVC in products and packaging. Target's policy was announced last November. Sears Holdings, the publicly traded parent of Kmart and Sears, Roebuck and Co., is the nation's sixth-largest retailer with over \$50 billion in annual revenues and approximately 3,800 retail stores in the United States and Canada. To learn more about our victory, visit http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/newsreleases/sears_final.htm.

Pollution Prevention Victory !

New York Governor Eliot Spitzer recently doubled the funding for the state's new Pollution Prevention Institute (PPI) in his proposed budget, increasing it to \$4 million. BE SAFE joined Citizens' Environmental Coalition and other groups in commending the Governor. Next month, the state will select one or more universities or non-profit institutions to run the new PPI with a green chemistry program.

WHAT'S THAT TOXIC SMELL? HELP US RELEASE NEW REPORT INVESTIGATING "NEW VINYL SHOWER CURTAIN SMELL"

CHEJ will be releasing a major new report this Spring that investigates toxic chemicals such as phthalates being released from vinyl shower curtains in the home. CHEJ will be releasing the report along with local and state groups across the country at media events and we invite you to participate in this release. We can provide you copies of the report, sample press releases, talking points, and other helpful materials. Contact us at 212-964-3680 or mike@besafenet.com to learn how you can get involved.

BY DAVE CIPLET

COMMUNITY-BASED FOR ZERO WASTE

Incinerators and landfills are major contributors to global warming and industrial pollution – yet they are falsely being promoted as safe and environmentally friendly waste and energy solutions.

Waste disposal industries have a long history of being highly unpopular, toxic, economically disastrous, and disproportionately burdensome to people of color and low-income communities. By repackaging incinerators and landfills as “green,” these industries are working to expand existing disposal projects and to site a new fleet of pollution-ridden incinerators and landfills in communities. This would erode community efforts to protect health, reduce waste and combat global warming, and reverse decades of progress achieved by the environmental justice and health movements.

Disposal of valuable natural resources in incinerators and landfills is not inevitable. The vast majority of the materials that we dispose of are reusable. Rather than fund polluting waste industries, we can choose to invest in community-based solutions such as Zero Waste a vehicle for environmental, health and economic renewal.

What is Zero Waste? Zero Waste means investing in the workforce, infrastructure and local strategies needed to reduce what we trash in incinerators and landfills to zero by a given year. It means stopping even another dime of taxpayer money from subsidizing waste disposal projects that contaminate environments and the people who live there.

Cities like Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA are already well on their way to achieving Zero Waste by building state-of-art recycling and composting parks, implementing innovative collection systems, requiring products to be made in ways that are safe for people and the planet, and that create locally-based green-collar jobs. These cities have plans to invest in sound economic development and jobs that will benefit their residents, rather than pouring money into harmful waste disposal projects.

In Hartford, CT and Detroit, MI, community activists who are working to shut down their local waste incinerators are advocating for viable alternatives like Zero Waste to provide strong economic benefits for residents in their cities. As Dr. Mark Mitchell, Hartford resident and Director of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice explains, “The question is, can we make our central location as a waste site into an economic benefit for the city. We believe that Zero Waste can help to get us there by providing jobs at all skill levels.”

The economic benefits of Zero Waste are numerous. Closing an incinerator can mean freeing up significant amounts of taxpayer money to be put to services that benefit the public good. Speaking to this issue, Donele Wilkins, Detroit resident and Executive Director of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice explains, “By shutting down the Detroit incinerator, I think that the burden of cost would be greatly reduced. As the most expensive thing that the city is obligated to maintain, we would immediately see economic benefits that the city needs, a reduction in pollution, and an immedi-

ate increase in the environmental quality of life.” By July of 2009, the Detroit incinerator will have cost its city a billion dollars in its 20 years of operation. Detroit could have saved over \$55 million in just one year if it had never built the incinerator.

Zero Waste also provides needed jobs. Recycling collection and sorting creates ten times the number of jobs that incinerators and



landfills do. Additionally, recycling-based manufacturing jobs offer twenty-five times the number of jobs as waste disposal. Regions that have made commitments to increased recycling are bringing tangible benefits to their local economies. By requiring the recycling and reuse of 50 percent of the state’s garbage, California is expected to create about 45,000 jobs. According to a 2007 Detroit City Council report, a 50 percent recycling rate in Detroit would likely result in creating more than 1,000 new jobs in the city.

All told, the recycling sector in the U.S. provides well over a million jobs and generates an annual payroll of \$37 billion—and, the recycling industry is nowhere near reaching its potential. Roughly half of the paper, paperboard and aluminum beverage containers, and two-thirds of plastic and glass containers, are not recycled in the U.S. For the economic and environmental well being of communities, we can and must do much better.

Stopping polluting waste industries, and implementing Zero Waste also provides community health benefits. Incinerators release harmful emissions that contaminate the air that residents breathe with known carcinogens like dioxin and heavy metals like lead, mercury and cadmium. With 16 percent of Americans lacking health coverage, economically strapped people in this country simply can’t afford to pay high medical bills to treat cancer and other diseases linked to industrial pollution. As Wilkins explains about Detroit, “The highest concentration of lead-poisoned children live in the neighborhood of the incinerator. There are also very high asthma rates. I see that there is a strong connection between the incinerator and these health issues.”

Zero Waste is also critical for combating climate change. Incineration and landfilling of materials like paper and plastic bottles causes a wasteful cycle that is warming our planet. For every item that is incinerated or landfilled, a new one must be created from raw re-

Continued on page 10

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.

California

The **No Wetlands Landfill Expansion** group in Novato is working hard to fight a proposed 80% vertical expansion of the Redwood Landfill by Waste Management and Marin County. While awaiting a Planning Commission hearing on the final environmental impact report of the landfill, group members have been active writing editorials against the expansion and petitioning the Marin Board of Supervisors to hold a workshop on waste issues in an age of global warming.

The **Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition** recently released Potential Community Impacts of Nanotechnology, a report that warns of the dangers of nanotechnology. The report analogizes what we know now about the risks of nanotechnology to the landscape of the 1960s for basic chemicals - "regulations are not up to snuff, we lack monitoring and detection technology, and cleanup practices have not been established." The report can be found at www.svtc.org/.

Florida

Activists and organizers from **ACORN**, the **Farmworkers Association of Florida** and the community of Apopka attended a workshop organized by CHEJ to address environmental and health concerns in the community. Residents are concerned about a proposed expansion of a nearby landfill and about potentially toxic emissions released from the medical waste incinerator next door. Community leaders, who have been working on these issues separately, came



Florida activists attend workshop in Apopka, FL with CHEJ.

together at the end of January to combine their efforts and develop a plan to begin to address these issues in their neighborhood. CHEJ was able to help the participants prioritize their problems and identify other community groups they should involve. CHEJ will continue to provide organizing assistance to this effort.

Georgia

The **Glynn Environmental Coalition** (GEC) in Brunswick received a \$25,000 donation last December from the law firms involved in a \$25 million settlement for damages to 220 homes linked to the LCP Chemicals Superfund site. GEC has been fighting for cleanup of this and other contaminated sites in the area for 17 years.

Kentucky

Members of the **Coalition for Health Concern** (CHC) remain vigilant as they watch the slow dismantling of the LWD hazardous waste incinerator facility in Calvert City. The USEPA estimates that it will take at least six months to remove the three incinerators, the buildings and the equipment. The cleanup will cost more than \$12 million, which is being collected from former LWD customers including General Motors and Kodak. CHC wants the EPA to conduct soil and groundwater testing to make sure the site is properly cleaned up after the incinerator and buildings have been dismantled. They want the testing to include radioactive substances since there is evidence that nuclear waste was illegally burned in the incinerators.

Maryland

Residents in Baldwin are organizing to address the plan developed by the U.S. Army to cleanup portions of the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Numerous chemicals have been identified in soil including arsenic, lead, PCBs, dioxins, and PAHs. CHEJ is helping the group interpret the test results and providing organizing assistance.

Massachusetts

The **Toxics Action Center** (TAC) of Boston released Dirty Decade, A Look at the 10 years of the Dirty Dozen Awards. Each year TAC announces its "Dirty Dozen Awards" that identify 12 egregious polluters and toxic threats in New England. This year, they went one step further and identified the worst polluters of the decade. Included on the list are General Electric in Pittsfield, MA, the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority in Hartford, CT (solid waste incinerator),

Casella's Juniper Ridge Landfill in Old Town, ME, and the Wheelabrator incinerator in Claremont, NH. The full list can be found at http://www.toxicsaction.org/Dirty_Decade_Report_.pdf.

Michigan

The **Lone Tree Council** and residents living downstream from the Dow Chemical plant in Midland celebrated in January when the state Court of Appeals ruled that a lawsuit filed against Dow in 2003 could include all homes in the 100-year floodplain where dioxin has been found. As many as 2,000 homes may be affected. The residents who filed the suit allege that dioxins from Dow's Midland plant got into the Tittabawassee River and have contaminated their property, especially when the river flooded washing over the property located along its banks. The suit claims that the contamination has lowered property values making the homes difficult to sell. Hot spots of dioxins have been found in the impacted area.

Local leaders in Benton Harbor are seeking environmental justice by organizing support to stop a development project which poses an environmental threat to their community of over 90% African Americans. The location of the proposed project is a former Superfund site which has been reported by EPA to be "cleaned up." The local residents, however, do not believe this and think that they could be exposed to contaminants which may be dug up during the proposed development. CHEJ is providing organizing help.

Missouri

Members of the **Times Beach Action Group** (TBAG) were reunited recently when they learned of plans to build a housing development with about 20 homes on 10 acres in Wildwood near the abandoned area of Times Beach. The group believes the area is still contaminated and was able to convince the City Council to place a moratorium on the project in order to listen to concerns raised by TBAG and others. The group is asking for an environmental assessment of the proposed development property. The City Council did agree to do more testing at the site, but gave the authority to select an engineering firm to do the testing to the Wildwood Dept of Planning and Parks and rejected the idea of a citizen-led committee to oversee the project. The area was originally contaminated when a private hauler sprayed contaminated waste oil on unpaved roads to suppress dust. This oil was later found to contain the deadly chemical dioxin. The contamination spread to private property when the Merrimac River flooded the town of Times Beach. Several months later the USEPA provided \$33 million to purchase all the homes in the town and to evacuate everyone. Years later, the EPA removed most of the contaminated soil, but chose to burn it in an on-site

ACTION LINE

incinerator, which angered many residents including TBAG who feel that the emissions from the incinerator simply re-contaminated the area.

New Mexico

For more than twenty years, low income citizens of color in Sunland Park, near Las Cruces, have been complaining about the adverse health impact coming from a privately owned landfill near their community. The El Camino Real landfill is reported to be about 300 feet from an elementary school. Organizers want to close the landfill and more immediately they want to stop efforts to expand the landfill. Community leaders say they are suspicious of the Sunland Park City Council vote to oppose the landfill permit. In meeting with their core leadership group, CHEJ suggested the group consider using the state's Environmental Justice Executive Order to get more time to get their demands and strategies in order.

New York

More than 120 people attended a community forum sponsored by the **Community Concerned About NL Industries** (CCNL) to learn the results of a study measuring radiation levels in workers and residents living near the NL Industries factory in Colonie. The study found radioactive contamination in the bodies of workers as well as residents, even though the factory has been closed for more than 20 years. Depleted uranium was measured in urine using a new technique developed by scientists from the United Kingdom. An estimated 5 tons of depleted uranium was released from the munitions plant into the surrounding neighborhood, primarily by air emissions, from 1958 until 1981 when the plant was closed. The study, which was a joint project between researchers from Leicester University in England and from the University of Albany, is scheduled to be published in a scientific journal. CCNL is now seeking funds for additional testing of both workers and residents and has submitted a petition to the federal government calling for testing and cleanup of the uranium contaminated areas.

Leaders of **Clean Up Riverview's Environment** (CURE) in Tonawanda report a victory at hand. The members of CURE have been organizing to have the private property near the Tonawanda landfill tested. Both the Army Corps of Engineers and the DEC have not tested to the residents' satisfaction. The city has generated specifications and put out for bid a contract to do testing working closely with CURE. The Town of Tonawanda has also agreed to do soil testing on private property near the landfill. CHEJ has provided organizing and technical support to CURE and we congratulate them on their accomplishments so far.

Congratulations to residents in New York who have formed a new alliance -the New York Vapor Intrusion

Alliance. The group's goals are to 1) assist impacted residents, communities and schools across the state in addressing toxic chemical exposure from vapor intrusion; 2) explore the impact of vapor intrusion on health and property, identify commonalities, and present our findings as a means to educate the public, media, and policy-makers; and 3) collaborate with local and state officials to adopt protective remediation standards, policies, procedures and technologies to prevent or mitigate vapor intrusion that are based on 21st century knowledge and science.

North Carolina

The **Granville Non-Violent Action Team** (GNAT) originally formed in 1990 to fight the Thermalkem hazardous waste incinerator was activated last September to address the siting by the Department of Homeland Security of the proposed National Bio Agro Defense Facility in Burner, just north of Durham. The lab will conduct bio-hazard research in the center of a highly populated community. GNAT is distributing educational materials and holding meetings to explain the plan to area residents. Most people are bewildered why this location was selected for the site.

Residents living near the South Atlantic Galvanizing plant in Graham are organizing to address concerns about emissions from the plant. A day care center is located next to the plant. Soil testing on the day care center's property identified heavy metals. CHEJ is helping the residents interpret the test results.

Ohio

Over fifty people attended a statewide Environmental Justice Forum held in Mt. Sterling in early December by CHEJ and the **Ohioans for Health, Environment, and Justice**. This two-day meeting brought together groups from across the state to develop a unified vision and goal for environmental policymaking in Ohio. Following up on six previous forums held across the state in the past year, this meeting helped the participants set priorities for community participation, enforcement of environmental laws, and proposed reforms to the permit-granting process. Two working groups were formed: one to continue drafting language for a statewide environmental justice platform, and the other to create strategies to pass environmental

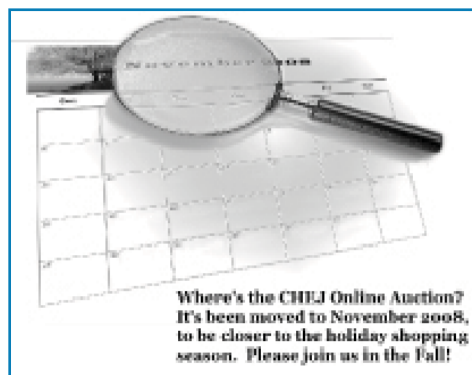
justice legislation in Ohio. CHEJ's Lois Gibbs and Ron Davis facilitated discussions and helped groups form collaborative networks. CHEJ will continue to support the citizens of Ohio in their efforts towards legislation to protect their families and homes!

Pennsylvania

Keep Erie's Environment Protected (KEEP) is continuing to organize in opposition to plans by Erie Renewable Energy Co. to build a tire-to-energy plant in Erie on the site of the abandoned International Paper plant. KEEP is concerned about air emissions, odors, noise, and truck traffic. They also see the proposed plant as unacceptably close to residential neighborhoods and a threat to tourism. The company has applied for a permit which the group is reviewing.

They are also educating the community about the risks and issues involved in the proposed incinerator.

The **Elizabethtown-Mount Joy Concerned Citizens Association** is continuing its efforts to shut down and stop the expansion of a construction and demolition (C&D) landfill in Milton Grove. A major public meeting scheduled for December was cancelled by the state when they announced that



they did not have sufficient details about the proposed expansion from Veolia Environmental Services who operates the landfill. The group was pleased to have more time to organize and educate people about the hazards of the landfill. CHEJ technical staff reviewed the monitoring well data collected at the landfill and found many inconsistencies and inadequacies and provided an analysis for the group. CHEJ is also providing organizing assistance.

Rhode Island

Bay Street residents of Tiverton, including the **Environmental Neighborhood Action Committee of Tiverton** (ENACT), celebrated the decision by Rhode Island Housing to expand the Environmentally Compromised Home Ownership (ECHO) program to include mortgage refinancing. The ECHO program provides low interest loans up to \$25,000 to homeowners living on or next to contaminated properties. Bay Street residents had found it nearly impossible to secure home equity loans due to extensive toxic soil contamination on their properties. Through partnership between local legislators, stage agency officials, Brown University students and professors, and active community members, a bill passed in 2007 creating the ECHO loan program (see Feature in Spring 07 issue of

ACTION LINE

Everyone's Backyard). Before a digging moratorium was instituted in the neighborhood, mortgage rates were high. The moratorium and the contamination prevented residents from securing home equity loans and refinancing their existing mortgages, both of which they can now do, under the new legislation and program. This relatively simple process can happen in your state too! For questions or for more information, contact Phil Brown at Brown University at phil_brown@brown.edu.

South Carolina

Concerned Citizens for Marlboro County (CCMC) packed the local high school in Bennettsville with over 200 people to hear about plans by Waste Management, Inc. to build a "mega dump" landfill in their community. The message from the crowd was loud and clear – We don't want your landfill, Go Home! Also attending the meeting were several groups from North Carolina including the statewide group the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) and residents from Scotland and Richmond counties where plans by Waste Management to site similar mega dumps were defeated. BREDL was instrumental in getting a moratorium on mega landfills in North Carolina and in helping to defeat the proposals there. CHEJ has offered organizing and technical assistance to the group who has decided to form a new chapter of BREDL. CHEJ will continue to work closely with BREDL and CCMC.

Residents in a Myrtle Beach neighborhood were outraged when they found out that AVX corporation, a major electronics manufacturer and the acknowledged source of local groundwater contamination, has filed court papers to force property owners in the polluted area to help pay for testing and cleanup costs. AVX allegedly dumped trichloroethylene (TCE), used as a degreasing chemical, into the groundwater and the city's sewer system from at least 1981 to 1995. TCE has spread from the AVX site to a 10-block area of the neighborhood. AVX is hoping a judge will find that each of the affected homeowners is a "responsible party" according to the Superfund regulations and thus responsible for a share of the testing and cleanup costs. In truth, AVX is taking a page from a standard industry tactic from the early 1990s by trying to bully individual homeowners by scaring them with this lawsuit. These homeowners are not responsible for the contamination and cannot be held liable for the testing and cleanup costs, especially when the true responsible party is clearly identified. This tactic failed in the past and will fail again here.

Tennessee

Congratulations to the Highlander Center in New Market who last fall welcomed over 1,500 friends to celebrate their 75th Anniversary.

Texas

CHEJ is providing organizing help to emerging leaders of **Citizens Against Asarco** in El Paso. The group held a meeting in January to educate and increase capacity to put pressure on the Texas CEQ to deny a permit for re-opening Asarco's smelting operations. CHEJ is providing organizing advice as well as sharing contacts of other groups that may be able to help them.

Virginia

The **Trail Bandits** based in Meadowview are continuing to oppose plans by the town of Saltville to convert an abandoned rail line into a public multi-use recreational trail. The group successfully stopped the initial efforts by the town to remove the rails and dump them in an old pit and they are pushing for a full environmental investigation before the project goes forward. The Bandits are concerned that the rail bed is contaminated with toxic chemicals due to

of the mining on the mountains and the leaching of uranium and other metals into waterways. Residents are gearing up for a fight in the state legislature over whether to lift the mining ban.

Washington

Residents in Moxee, near Yakima, celebrated recently when their city council voted 4-1 to deny a request from a company called Organic Energy Conservation Company LLC to build a pyrolysis plant that would have burned 100 tons of tires a day. The city council decided that there were too many uncertainties about the air emissions, odors, noise, and the potential for mosquito breeding. Residents who attended the meeting also cited the concerns about the location of the plant in the middle of a residential neighborhood. The company is considering whether to appeal the decision.

West Virginia

Ed Wiley, member of **Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW)** and grandfather of a student at the Marsh Elementary School in Sundial, continues his efforts to bring attention to the plight of his grandson's school by traveling to New York City to try and capture the attention of the staff of the Today Show. Ed met with a producer and is hoping the network show will decide to feature their situation. As we've reported before, the school lies in the shadow of a massive coal processing plant and silo where nearly 3 billion gallons of waste sludge sit behind a leaking impoundment dam just 400 yards from the school. CRMW wants the school relocated to a safe area. Ed has previously walked from Charleston, WV to Washington DC, fasted, and participated in a sit-in on the steps of the state capitol to bring attention to the school's plight. Ed is optimistic that his trip to NY will pay off. CRMW reported Ed saying, "I have a feeling deep in my heart that the Today Show is gonna call back... I think some good stuff is going to come out of it."

Wisconsin

Residents are organizing to address a plan by the Kenosha Unified School District to build an elementary school on the site of the former Outokumpu Copper plant in Kenosha. A review of the testing data by CHEJ revealed that hot spots of contamination remain on the property, despite prior cleanup efforts. Residual contamination of the groundwater with Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) is especially troublesome since VOCs can evaporate out of the groundwater, travel through the soil and enter buildings via a process known as "vapor intrusion." The school building is already in construction, but some residents continue to question the steps being taken by the school district to ensure the safety of the children who will attend the school. ♦



photo from www.crmw.net

The Today Show's Al Roker meets Ed Wiley.

spills and accidents involving the transport of chemical rail cars. They are continuing their efforts to get the state or federal government to get involved and CHEJ is continuing to provide technical and organizing assistance.

Residents in Pittsylvania County are organizing to oppose plans to mine uranium in what some say is the largest untapped reserve of uranium in the country. The state currently has a moratorium on uranium mining, but is considering lifting the ban. The uranium would be used to operate nuclear power plants. Residents are concerned about the impact



A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Child Proofing Our Communities

School Siting Federal Victory!

After six years of pressure by the CHEJ's Child Proofing Our Communities (CPOC) campaign, we have reached one of our major goals! Within the 800-page energy bill signed into law last December, the Office of Health and Human Safety and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency were directed by Congress to create the only school siting guidelines that take into consideration proximity to environmental contamination and the special vulnerability of children to toxic exposures. These national guidelines will be a powerful tool for community groups and school districts to pass local or state-wide siting regulations that are regionally and geographically appropriate.

Get involved with the CPOC campaign this year to make sure these guidelines are as stringent as those that we created with many of you. E-mail childproofing@chej.org to stay up to date with this tremendous victory! For more information on school siting visit www.childproofing.org.



Healthy School Summit a Great Success!

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice in partnership with the Montgomery County Public Schools Green Building Program and the Metropolitan Council of Governments Department of Environmental Programs hosted a successful day-long Healthy School Summit in Washington, D.C. The nearly 100 participants included school nurses, green architects, local activists, and health professionals, all of who learned about and shared information and case studies on environmental health issues in schools. Key speakers were CHEJ's Lois Gibbs

and Dr. Barbara Sattler from the University of Maryland School of Nursing. Other panelists from Maryland, DC and national organizations provided an astounding quantity of information and ideas. This Summit is the first step to having a deeper conversation on children's health in schools in the DC, MD and VA region. If you are not yet on our Summit network list, but live in MD, VA or DC would like to get involved, please e-mail: childproofing@chej.org.

Green Cleaning Workshop Invigorates Florida!

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice and the Florida Alliance for Healthy Indoor Environments hosted a wonderful Green Cleaning for Your Institution Workshop in Tallahassee, FL.

A diverse group of attendees from several Leon County agencies, local school representatives, state employees and citizens participated in a productive discussion about developing green cleaning programs locally. Everyone benefited from the first hand lessons speakers Tolle Graham, David Holley and Allan Wakefield shared about developing a green cleaning program for government buildings and schools. Attendees learned how to conduct a walk-through, identify and engage stakeholders, establish pilot projects and finally that green cleaning is about processes, not just products. This workshop is just the start of the discussion with Florida counties and schools. If you live in Florida and would like to discuss hosting a workshop in your area or scheduling a presentation to your local school PTA or board, please email: cheather@chej.org.

LOVE CANAL, continued from page 3

Canal out of reaction was now poisoning itself to fight for environmental justice in order to prevent harm.

Whether it is seen through a group in Pottstown, Pennsylvania working to stop a dangerous landfill gas pipeline that threatened the health and safety of over 100,000 residents, or helping to organize, empower and mentor thousands of people in local fights trying to stop landfills and incinerators, or helping groups in New Mexico to design and run a successful Nuclear Weapons Day of Action, over ten thousand groups have been mentored and become part of the journey moving us closer to eventual and total prevention of preventable toxic harm.

The Destination

We have not yet reached the destination. But we are closer. The journey of Love Canal has placed us closer to prevention than reaction because of the lessons learned, the people empowered and the accomplishments along the way. With the roadmap in hand, given to us thirty years ago during Love Canal, we are moving closer to the destination of preventing environmental health harm, a place that indeed knows zero toxic waste. ♦

Many mile markers have been reached since the journey began at Love Canal. A few of the most memorable stops along the way include:

- Over 1,000 unsafe solid waste landfills have been shutdown by grassroots groups working with CHEJ.
- Before “transparency” and “good government” became the political buzzwords of the day, the movement, led by its mentoring group, CHEJ, was instrumental in getting “right to know” laws passed at the state and federal levels in the mid-80s.
- McDonalds, the world’s most recognized fast food chain, announced in 1990 that it was getting rid of Styrofoam containers.
- 2,600 medical waste incinerators were shut down, thus reducing dioxin air emissions by 77 percent between 1987 and 1995: 90 percent of this reduction is due to the efforts of the movement.
- The medical and cleaning industries are refocusing their thoughts into safe medical and cleaning principles and practices begun when CHEJ launched the Healthcare Without Harm and Green Cleaning campaigns.
- Three of the nation’s top retailers as well as several other retail outlets, announced policies to begin phasing out a harmful chemical, PVC, from their products and packaging.
- Federal legislation passed requiring the USEPA to write siting guidelines to prevent schools from being built on contaminated sites. Had such guidelines been in place decades ago, the 99th Street School would never have been built on top of the Love Canal landfill.

Each of these mile markers represents a shift in our country’s thinking. *People no longer ask what do we do to respond to harm, they ask instead, how do we prevent harm from happening?* This shift is the journey that began at Love Canal.

ZERO WASTE, continued from page 5

sources rather than reused materials. This requires a constant flow of resources to be pulled out of the earth, processed in factories, shipped around the world, and burned or buried in our communities. The impact of this wasteful cycle reaches far beyond local disposal projects, causing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution thousands of miles away.

Let’s take the case of paper. Paper is one of the easiest materials to recycle or compost. Yet it accounts for more than one-quarter of all materials disposed of in the U.S. Because so much paper is disposed of instead of recycled, the pulp and paper industry alone causes 9 percent of all manufacturing carbon dioxide emissions, making it the 4th largest emitter of greenhouse gases among manufacturing industries. This doesn’t even account for the full impact of forest degradation that occurs to create paper. In fact, deforestation accounts for as much as 30 percent of global carbon emissions, rivaling emissions from the global transportation sector.

Key to the success of Zero Waste and other community-based economic and environmental solutions is meaningful involvement in the process for community members. As Dr. Mitchell explains, “As a community that is put upon by waste, power is having a say in how things are done in a way that benefits your community. I think that that is what Environmental Justice is all about. It is fair treatment and meaningful involvement.”

Indeed, environmental justice and health in historically polluted communities demands that residents have the right to close down and prevent the construction of incinerators, landfills and other harmful toxic projects in favor of local solutions like Zero Waste that bring real environmental and economic benefits. ♦

David Cipler is the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance (GALA) North American Coordinator based in San Francisco, CA. See their campaign Zero Waste for Zero Warming at <www.zerowarming.org>.

With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between November 1 2007 and January 31, 2008. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated. Thank you for your support

GUARDIANS' CIRCLE (Gifts of \$1,000 or more)

Guardian of Justice
Anonymous
Dr. Beverly Paigen

Movement Builder
Ralph Nader

Community Protector
Richard M. Beamish
John N. Caulkins
Dr. Norbert Goldfield
John Delicath & Anna G. Greenberg
Robert & Stephanie Harris
Sat Jiwan Khalsa
Gerrish H. Milliken
Barbara Gail Smith
Lucy B. Stroock

PARTNER'S CIRCLE (Gifts of \$100 – \$999)

Neighborhood Advocates
Electra Lester Alessio
Barbara Bott & Robert L. Jennings
Luella Kenny
Kenneth & Katharine Mountcastle
Nell Newman
Owen D. Owens
Paula B. Riggert
Peter Sessa

Ron Simon & Diane Fuchs
Catherine Vial

Family Partners
Anonymous
Chuck Berk & Debra Caplowe
Walter & Suzanne Deuchler
Michael & Krista Drescher
Benjamin & Francine Hiller
Nancy Holmstrom
Jonathan Jensen
Patricia Larson
Michael & Louise Malakoff
David G. Milliken
Dr. George E.B. Morren, Jr.
Maria Pellerano
Thomas J. Raffa
Wendy Gordon Rockefeller
Jodie M. Siegel
Peter Sills
Brad & Ann Wallace
Dawn Weithe & Mike Lawler

Health Defenders
Anonymous
Frank Ackerman
Dave Beckwith
Steven Branch
Meredith Brennan
Bunyan Bryant & Jean Carlberg
Dr. Richard Clapp
Tom Duckwall
Pablo & Helen Eisenberg
Priscilla Ellis

Bill Fowee
Don Francis
Julia K. Gibson
Gary & Cynthia Gillen
Dr. Robert E. Ginsburg
Richard & Mary Gray
Joli Gross
Ken Grossinger
Charles B. Higley
Sally Hirsh
Susu Jeffrey
Diab Jerius
Bruce Joffe
Victor Johnson
Warren K. Kaplan
Dorothy Knecht
Doug & Kathleen Kopp
Dr. Marc Lavietes
Marilyn Lehrer
Peter Lloyd
Ellen Luhman
Sal & Grace Mier
Stacey R. Nagelberg
Judy Nakatomi & Ricky Schlesinger
Louise Pape
Amelia Mimi Pickering
Dave Rich
Suzi Ruhl & Michael R. Duenas
Ross Shearer, Jr.
M. Matthews Smith, II
Toba E. Spitzer & Gina Fried
Dr. Ted P. Steegmann, Jr.
Laurie Stillman & Robert Rosofsky
David Georgis & Roberta Troughton

Joseph & Carin Vallone
Tom Webster
Marcus & Sara Weiss
Clay & Neva Whybark
John Wilborn
J. A. Wunderlich, III
Dr. Robert C. Ziegenfus
Shirley Ziplin

Organizational and Community Group Supporters

Albert F. Stager Inc.
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
Breast Cancer Network of Western NY
Clean Schools Initiative
Concerned Citizens of Clarence
Ecoprint
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Friends of Rich Fork Creek
InJoy Productions
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
The Nicholson Group/Merrill Lynch
Pennsylvania Environmental Network
RBC Dain Correspondent Services
Squirrelsnest Homeowners Association
The T. Rowe Price Program for Charitable Giving
Wood County Citizens Opposed to Factory Farming

Ever wonder where “away” is when you throw something away? Here is a terrific video that tells the story of all the “stuff” in our lives, where it comes from, and where it goes. Written and narrated by Annie Leonard, the Story of Stuff is a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-side of our production and beginning with the extraction of its production, sale, use lives affects communities at this is hidden from view. connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues and calls for all of us to create a more sustainable and just world. It'll teach you something. It'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever.



filled look at the oft-neglected consumption patterns. Begin the resources to make it, through and disposal, all the stuff in our home and abroad, yet most of The Story of Stuff exposes the

To view the video, go to <http://www.storyofstuff.com/index.html>.

LOVE CANAL

30 YEARS LATER, THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...



IN HONOR OF THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY,
WE'VE SET A GOAL TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER
OF PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT CHEJ

DOUBLING OUR SUPPORTERS WILL DOUBLE
OUR POWER TO MAKE CHANGE, AND
DOUBLE OUR RESOURCES FOR ASSISTING
COMMUNITIES LIKE LOVE CANAL

INVITE A FEW PEOPLE OVER FOR COFFEE OR WINE, AND TALK ABOUT HOW YOUR SUPPORT OF CHEJ HELPS TO PREVENT HARM TO PEOPLE'S HEALTH FROM EXPOSURE TO TOXIC CHEMICALS IN CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT. WE'LL BE HAPPY TO SEND YOU INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS TO SHARE THE STORY WITH THEM.

ASK A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE TO JOIN WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY, AND SUPPORT CHEJ!

CONTACT OUR MEMBERSHIP DESK AT (703) 237-2249, EXT 27 OR AKASH@CHEJ.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Thank you for your support!

CHEJ
P.O. Box 6806
Falls Church, VA 22040
(703) 237-2249

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Falls Church, VA
Permit No. 7346