



**Center for Health,
Environment &
Justice**

*A Project of People's
Action Institute*

2025 Annual Report



*Mentoring a Movement,
Empowering People,
Preventing Harm*

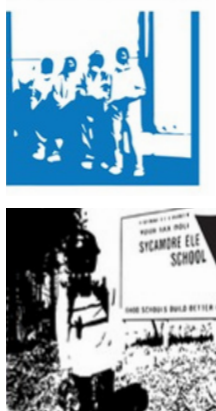


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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Health, Environment and Justice is pleased to report that 2025 was another remarkable year for the organization and for the many grassroots organizations that we serve. Not only did CHEJ staff continue to support local leaders on the frontlines fighting to stop polluters and protect their families, but CHEJ took a new and exciting step in its evolution as an organization.

For nearly forty-five years, CHEJ stood shoulder-to-shoulder with people fighting to protect their families, their neighborhoods, and their right to a healthy place to live. Together we built a national movement rooted in ordinary people who refused to accept toxic threats as “the cost of progress.”

As we approached the end of 2025, we were proud of what we had accomplished over the years but felt it was time to step aside. When we reached out to several key leaders in our network to share this news, several reacted very strongly and responded with a very clear message – “You can’t do that!! We need the guidance and focus of CHEJ. Communities need what you do.”

After several months of conversations, meetings and planning with these key leaders and with several seasoned members of the CHEJ family, we are happy to announce that the Texas Health and Environment Alliance (THEA) in Houston, Texas has agreed to take over the operation of CHEJ. We are confident that CHEJ’s spirit and resources will live on through THEA, an organization that grew out of our network and carries the same commitment to community-driven change.



Lois Gibbs and Jackie Medcalf at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site. Jackie is the founder of THEA and will carry on the work of CHEJ.

THEA is led by Jackie Young Medcalf, who got started much as Lois did by organizing her own neighbors to fight pollution coming from a nearby landfill, the San Jacinto Waste Pits. While Jackie’s fight to get the waste pits cleaned up continued, she started THEA which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2025.



THEA will continue and expand CHEJ's mission to help local leaders organize to protect their family and community by providing scientific and technical support, maintaining the CHEJ website and publications, and providing training and resources to help groups win. In short, THEA will ensure that the experience, tools, and lessons learned over four decades remain available to the people who need them most.

As we look forward to an exciting new chapter in CHEJ's history, we want to take this moment to reflect on what a remarkable journey this has been over the past 40 plus years. We want to thank the many amazing people we have met along the way. You have enriched our lives and fueled the mission of CHEJ in ways we never could have imagined when we started. We can only hope that you have taken away from CHEJ half as much as you have given to us. We couldn't have had the impact we did without this involvement and commitment to grassroots organizing.

Let us now look back on 2025, a year in which CHEJ limited some of its program work while maintaining other programs such as organizing and technical assistance. In anticipation of the coming change, we also devoted time to evaluating how best to make a transition that would allow CHEJ's work to continue.

Our work and the many victories of the grassroots communities are made possible because of the support we receive from our donors. We cannot thank you enough for the continued support you have provided. This support makes it possible for CHEJ to provide training to build leadership skills, facilitate strategic action plans, produce scientific and technical analyses and reports, and provide much-needed resources to frontline grassroots communities through our Small Grants Program.

The heart and soul of CHEJ's work is the support we provide to communities fighting for environmental justice. This includes one-on-one organizing support, skill building training and scientific and technical assistance to grassroots community-based organizations. In this report you will read inspiring stories of passion, commitment and success of several of the communities we work with. You will also read about the technical assistance we have provided to local community groups seeking to address environmental justice issues which remains a priority for CHEJ.



In this report, you will read about the wide range of training calls we've conducted which continue to be a valued resource for community leaders. This past year, 660 people registered for our training calls and 296 people attended. The recording of the call and the materials provided were sent to everyone who registered. You will also read about a special project of the science department Toxic Tuesday that provides information on the toxicity of individual chemicals as well as features on the challenges of interpreting toxic effects.

This past year, CHEJ continued to move our Unequal Response Unequal Protection campaign forward. This campaign addresses the federal government's failure to protect communities exposed to toxic contamination by proposing a new approach to investigating and evaluating health problems in communities exposed to toxic chemicals.

CHEJ's Science Director Stephen Lester and Senior Fellow, Dr. Mihir Vohra, successfully published a paper about this effort in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*. This paper introduces a model for presumptive association for evaluating the health effects in communities exposed to toxic chemicals. CHEJ hopes that this publication will serve as a scientific and theoretical backbone for future community outreach work, building awareness and a larger coalition behind Unequal Response, Unequal Protection.

Additionally, you will read about the work of the 44 organizations that we proudly supported through our Small Grants Program. In 2025, we distributed \$305,450 in grants made possible by our donors and supporters. CHEJ's Small Grants Program puts resources into the hands of grassroots groups who are fighting for clean and healthy communities. This grant program supports projects that help groups move toward their goals by building leadership, increasing capacity and/or providing training and education, as we continue to build the base of the Environmental Health Movement. In 2025, CHEJ received 111 grant applications in one grant cycle leading to 44 applications receiving funding. We provide a brief summary of the projects conducted by the organizations that were funded.

Lastly, we close this report with a section dedicated to our roots and beginnings at Love Canal. We always want to remember our beginnings and reflect on our yesterdays to build a bigger and stronger tomorrow. And now we look forward to an exciting new chapter as the movement we have built together endures.

COMMUNITY STORIES



Photo credit: Micah Green/NYTimes

Cherokee Concerned Citizens, Pascagoula, Mississippi

Pascagoula, Mississippi is a coastal community that is home to a large Chevron oil refinery and other industrial facilities. Residents of the Cherokee Forest neighborhood, located just 1 mile from the refinery, organized in 2013 to form the Cherokee Concerned Citizens (CCC) to protect the wellbeing of residents exposed to toxic chemicals. With recent concerns over the expansion of oil processing at the facility and a lack of faith in federal government response to protect residents, Cherokee Concerned Citizens is renewing their plea for Chevron to buy out their homes and build a green buffer in their place. CCC reached out to CHEJ seeking support to help the group convince Chevron to buy them out. The Cherokee Forest Subdivision is a fence line community that is exposed to over 60 different chemicals from the industrial plants in the area. Toenail clippings from children tested high in nickel, and soil in the back yards has high levels of lead, nickel, zinc, and cadmium. Over 30 residents in a neighborhood with 120 households have died in the past 6 years from cancer, respiratory problems and heart conditions. CHEJ has been working with this group to help them fight back by organizing their community to generate pressure on Chevron to give them what they want.

Dayville Residents for Clean Water, Killington, Connecticut

In response to the discovery of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination in drinking water in Killingly, CT, residents organized Dayville Residents for Clean Water, a community group that advocates for access to clean and safe water for all communities. Testing by the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) found at least 30 wells and 26 homes with PFAS levels above the state's action level that could pose a health risk. Exposure to PFAS chemicals, known as forever chemicals because they last forever in the environment, can cause prostate, kidney and testicular cancers, hormone disruption, high cholesterol, immunosuppression, low fertility, developmental delays, accelerated puberty and behavioral changes in children. The DEEP offered testing to 78 homes and is providing bottled water and water filtering systems to residents but only for a limited time (6 to 12 months). After that, the residents are on their own. Dayville Residents for Clean Water have called for increased testing, more frequent carbon filter changes in DEEP installed filtration systems, increased health monitoring, and holding polluters financially accountable. CHEJ reviewed the initial water testing results but focused its efforts more on providing organizing support and resources to the group.

Move Silfab, Fort Hill, South Carolina

Several local community organizations came together in York County, South Carolina to oppose the siting a solar cell manufacturing plant a short distance from an elementary school. Citizens Alliance for Government Integrity (CAGI) and Coalition to Protect Fort Mill (CPFM) joined together to form Move Silfab Solar. The community has been concerned that the solar cell manufacturing facility is a heavy industrial operation that involves hazardous chemicals, posing serious risks to the community. The plant which is now operating built in an area zoned for light industry only, is next door to two schools and within 3 miles of 53,000 residents. In Move Silfab's words, the factory "would be heavy industrial, engaging in pollution-emitting manufacturing and hazardous chemical and storage processes, which are not allowed in a light industrial zoned area." A leader from the community contacted CHEJ seeking support to help the community stop this project. CHEJ responded by providing organizing resources and advice on how to address this situation.



Photo credit: Alan Freed/Reuters



Photo credit: Michael Swensen/Getty Images

Unity Council of East Palestine, East Palestine, Ohio

February 2026 marks the three-year anniversary of the horrific train derailment and the subsequent decision by Norfolk Southern Railway Company to intentionally burn 5 tanker cars carrying vinyl chloride and other toxic chemicals in East Palestine, Ohio. Shortly after this disaster, CHEJ's Science Director and toxicologist Stephen Lester was invited to East Palestine to participate in a Town Hall meeting. In the three years since, CHEJ has been involved in providing science and organizing support to the residents. The primary focus of CHEJ's science work has been to help the residents understand the risks of exposure to dioxins and other chemicals that were released from the fire that burned the toxic chemicals in the tanker cars. The organizing work has focused on helping the residents form a local community-based group and develop a plan to achieve their goals and supporting the establishment of the Chemically Injured Communities Coalition (CICC) which grew out of the disaster. CICC was started to help individuals and other communities better address the many complex and difficult questions that arise when disasters like the train wreck in East Palestine occur. CHEJ continues to provide organizing and strategical support to CICC and to the residents of East Palestine.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CHEJ's technical assistance work is designed to help local grassroots organizations fight to prevent harm to their communities and families. CHEJ's scientists help local leaders understand the complex science that surrounds environmental health issues by explaining technical testing data, health studies, cleanup plans, site proposals and other technical documents. This work is critical to informing local organizing efforts and understanding health risks. It also helps people make informed decisions and gives them the confidence to influence the environmental policies and decisions that will affect their health and wellbeing.

CHEJ's technical assistance work does not take place in a vacuum. It works hand-in-hand with our organizing work to provide communities the knowledge and skills to demand that their health be protected. Because of this connection between science and organizing, our technical assistance work focuses on educating our constituency about the role and power of science in winning local community battles. We teach communities that science on its own will not solve local problems, but when used as part of a strategic plan, scientific information can be very effective in helping local groups succeed in achieving their goals.

Our technical assistance work takes many forms. The simplest is answering calls and email requests for help. These requests are often routed to our organizers to build a solid organizing structure in the community as our science team reviews various reports and information. Once the organizing base is set, our science department can provide Letter Reports or other technical support as part of a thoughtful strategic plan. CHEJ has also developed over ninety (90) guidebooks and fact packs that are routinely updated and designed to support the efforts of community groups facing environmental health threats.

In 2025, we completed four detailed technical reviews and provided technical assistance to 67 individuals, community leaders and organizations. The detailed letter reports involved analyzing lengthy technical documents or environmental sampling data and providing written comments. The technical assistance included support to Coalition for a Clean Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) and Flathead Citizens in Columbia Falls, Montana, the Chapel Hill Organization in DeKalb County, Georgia, and Never Again Moss Landing (NAML) in Moss Landing, CA. The technical assistance work provided by CHEJ to each of these organizations is highlighted below.



Columbia Falls Aluminum Company Superfund Site. Photo Credit: Credit: Justin Franz / MTFP

Coalition For a Clean Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) and Flathead Citizens, Columbia Falls, Montana

The Coalition for a Clean Columbia Falls Aluminum Company and Flathead Citizens are working together to stop the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Record of Decision (ROD) for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant Superfund site from moving forward. Their primary concerns include cyanide contaminated soil that would be left in place even after remediation to continue leaching into the Flathead River. According to the groups, the EPA never considered off-site removal. The agency deemed it too expensive to haul by truck (even though there is a viable rail yard on the premises) and made no mention of the cost whatsoever whether by truck or railroad.

CFAC submitted comments during the public comment period and has done all they can to voice their concerns, but they felt EPA was still going forward with their plan to leave the contamination in place. They reached out to CHEJ to support their efforts to slow EPA down. CHEJ began working with the groups to help them put pressure on EPA to consider an alternative cleanup. To do this, CHEJ science staff reviewed several technical documents including the Baseline Human Health Risk Assessment (BHHRA) and the risk portion of the Remedial Investigation Report (RI). Both reports were prepared by consultants for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company and were submitted to EPA.

The baseline risk assessment evaluated the risks posed by 37 defined exposure scenarios. Of these, 21 scenarios resulted in either a calculated cancer risk (15 scenarios) that exceeded the generally accepted target cancer risk benchmark of one-in-a-million, or a noncancer risk value (6 scenarios) that exceeded the generally accepted non-cancer target hazard quotient of 1.0. None of these exposure scenarios considered that a residential development was proposed to be built on property immediately adjacent to the Superfund site. For this and other reasons, CHEJ concluded that the company's risk analyses could at best only be considered an underestimate of the true risks posed by EPA's plan to leave the contamination in place. CHEJ also concluded that there are substantial health risks to the general public that need to be addressed. CHEJ pointed out that the company's own risk calculations for 21 of 37 exposure scenarios exceeded generally accepted target guideline values established by the USEPA as benchmarks for identifying "unacceptable" risks to human health. CHEJ recommended that the BHHRA be revised to include risk calculations for direct contact of residential soil for the specific chemicals found on the Superfund property and that new testing of the area targeted for development be done to determine if the historical operations at the site have impacted the land targeted for development. CHEJ is continuing its work with the Coalition for a Clean Columbia Falls Aluminum Company.

Chapel Hill Organization, DeKalb County, Georgia

The Chapel Hill Organization was formed to address numerous contamination issues in their community. Their mission is "to inspire the community to revive our quality of life." The more research they did, the more they learned how the government turned its back on their community. Previously, CHEJ had provided technical support to the Chapel Hill Organization by reviewing two Health Consultations conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). CHEJ analyzed these reports in support of the group's petition to ATSDR to conduct a public health assessment. In 2025, CHEJ reviewed two technical documents submitted to the DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management as part of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP) as well a report on the results of an indoor air sample taken from the home of a local resident. CHEJ's analyses concluded that the data submitted to the county's Industrial Pretreatment Program provided very limited information about possible contaminants in the sewer lines. The county's requirement to test the effluent discharges for only metals and traditional pollution parameters is inadequate and needs to be revised. The county should require testing for a full suite of potential contaminants including heavy metals, oil and grease, organochlorine pesticides and PCBs, priority pollutant Semi-Volatile Organic Compounds (SVOCs) and priority pollutant Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). CHEJ continues to work with the Chapel Hill Organization to help them understand the science and develop a plan of action to address the contamination in their community.

Never Again Moss Landing (NAML), Moss Landing, California

Moss Landing, California is the site of the world's largest battery manufacturing plant, which has experienced four fires at the facility since 2019. The largest and most devastating of these fires occurred on January 16, 2025, burning 4,500,000 batteries over the course of six days. Some residents complained of symptoms like headaches, nosebleeds, or a metallic taste in their mouth. The community group Never Again Moss Landing (NAML) quickly formed to advocate for the health of residents and local ecosystems and ensure that a disaster like this will never happen again. In the week following the fire, NAML organized hundreds of volunteers to take surface samples for heavy metals. In the following week, Dr. Ivan Aiello at San José State University collected soil samples from the Elkhorn Slough Wetlands, a site located 1-2 miles downwind from the facility. Dr. Aiello had periodically been testing the soil in this area for heavy metals providing a natural before and after picture of the concentration of many of the heavy metals that were generated in the fire. CHEJ independently analyzed Dr. Aiello's data and found elevated levels of nickel, manganese and cobalt, which aligned with the results of other studies of Moss Landing. CHEJ also provided support through the design and implementation of a community survey to gather information on impacts on community members and their demands for change. CHEJ continues to provide organizing and strategic advice to NAML.

TRAINING PROGRAM

CHEJ's virtual trainings aid environmental activists in strengthening the skills, capacity, and infrastructure required for effective grassroots leadership. During 2025, CHEJ conducted six virtual training sessions with 660 community leaders registering for the sessions and 296 participating from 44 states and the District of Columbia, and from the countries of Bangladesh, Canada, India, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. These trainings were recorded and can be readily accessed on CHEJ's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/wearechej>.

January 2025:

Environmental Testing

Attendees: 78

Environmental testing is crucial in establishing concrete evidence to validate the health issues in a community. In order to help facilitate successful community outcomes, communities must be able to accurately interpret technical data and understand the science. During this call, CHEJ's Science Director, Stephen Lester, led a discussion on how to determine which type of environmental tests to use, the process of testing, limitations, and how to correctly interpret the results in order to support organizing efforts.



February 2025:

Reaching Your Goal by Strategic Planning

Attendees: 48

Lou Zeller, former Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), led this webinar that addressed the importance of strategic planning and how it can be the determining factor in the success of a campaign. Strategic planning can make a difference between winning and losing and is a guide to reaching your goal. It is working smarter, not harder, which enables people to use the resources they have for as long as it takes to win. Mr. Zeller presented an outline for how communities can utilize practical methods of strategic thinking and planning to maximize their resources to win. This training was targeted to both new and veteran organizers. Our presenter, Lou Zeller had 35 years of community organizing experience that shed light on effective and practical methods of strategic thinking and planning.

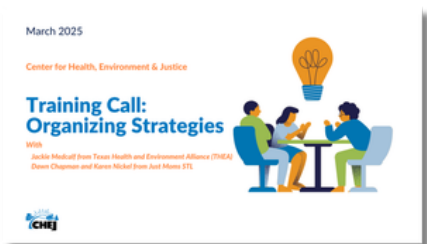


March 2025

Organizing Strategies for Winning

Attendees: 33

CHEJ was very excited to invite our members to a training call where we shared effective organizing strategies to help empower communities in their fight for environmental and public health justice. On the call, Jackie Medcalf from Texas Health and Environment Alliance (THEA) and Dawn Chapman and Karen Nickel from Just Moms STL shared personal stories, successful actions, and practical strategies that have moved their grassroots work forward. This training aimed to inspire and equip local communities with the tools they need to take action and make lasting change. Whether dealing with contamination, health issues, or other environmental challenges, this call provided valuable insights and strategies to support local work. It offered a unique opportunity to learn from experienced grassroots leaders and connect with others in the field.



April 2025:

Urban Fracking in Arlington, Texas

Attendees: 21

Liveable Arlington is a grassroots environmental advocacy organization in the Barnett Shale city of Arlington, Texas. Arlington is an egregious example of "urban drilling" - where the city permits multi-well fracking sites to extract methane/fossil gas right next to homes and daycare centers. Emissions from these sites accelerate climate breakdown and also cause severe health issues for frontline communities. In this training call, people learned about the advocacy of Livable Arlington for intergenerational, climate and environmental justice, the group's past successes, and current challenges. The presentation by Liveable Arlington also included a short clip from a film they helped develop called "The Voices of Fracking" which featured impacted community members. The featured speaker from Liveable Arlington was their executive director, Ranjana Bhandari.



May 2025

Grassroots Fundraising

Attendees: 68

This call was led by Mary Grace Wolf, co-founder and CEO of Innovative Fundraising, LLC. This training was designed to help groups increase their grassroots fundraising skills. Ms. Wolf covered useful tactics to ensure successful grassroots fundraising campaigns as well as building and maintaining relationships with donors and supporters. Fundraising is the lifeblood of strong organizations. Yet, most 'non-profit' fundraising and development training is short-term, generic, and leaves out organizing. Learners often don't get the real-world feedback they need to improve their skills. In this call, participants learned important aspects of fundraising: 1) that you need to have the skills it takes to raise real money from individuals and that 2) you need to have the right mindset about money and fundraising. Ms. Wolf also shared creative fundraising ideas that have been successful for other grassroots organizations. She brought 20 years of experience as a Fundraising Canvasser, Canvass Director, Development Associate, Director of Individual Giving, and Fundraising Director specializing in raising money from individuals and training other staff, leaders, and Board members to do the same.



June 2025:

Transformational Role of Brand Storytelling in Advancing Environmental Justice

Attendees: 48

The session was led by Gregory Kolen, CEO of All Trades, LLC an Information Technology (IT), and Graphic Design company. This webinar was designed specifically for grassroots organizers and nonprofit leaders working on the frontlines of environmental justice. Participants learned how to use brand storytelling to build trust, engage their community, and inspire action — all while leveraging new media tools like social video, podcasts, and social media campaigns. They also explored how compelling narratives can amplify the voices of marginalized communities, raise awareness about environmental issues, and inspire real change. The webinar discussed how to connect with an audience on a deeper level by making complex environmental justice concepts relatable and urgent and how to build trust with an audience through authentic and transparent storytelling. Mr. Kolen works with CHEJ as a consultant. He and has over 14 years of experience.





TOXIC TUESDAY



TOXIC TUESDAY

Since 2020, CHEJ's science team has produced a bi-weekly newsletter called *Toxic Tuesday*. This publication is posted on our website and emailed to our supporters. Each *Toxic Tuesday* highlights a specific chemical and the adverse health effects people can experience if they are exposed. The goal of this newsletter is to explain health and environmental information in plain language in order to educate community leaders about the dangers of toxic chemicals.

In 2025, we produced fourteen issues of *Toxic Tuesday*. Typical posts focus on a single chemical, explaining how and why it is produced, how it gets into the environment, potential routes of exposure, and health effects caused by exposure. *Toxic Tuesday* explains commonly known chemicals like ethylene oxide, as well as less well-known substances like benzidine.

Toxic Tuesday also includes posts that focus on the methods and techniques that the science community uses to interpret and evaluate the toxicity of chemicals. These special posts have delved into topics like the deficiencies of classic toxicology and the difficulties in accurately assessing health risks from chemical exposures. They explain some of the limitations of the science, which is crucial to understanding whether scientists can answer the questions that community leaders are asking about toxic chemicals.

In 2025, we continued the *Toxic Tuesday* series that explains newly published scientific research on a toxic chemical and its effects on human health. This included a post on a citizen science research project that found elevated levels of arsenic in previously understudied wells in northern New England. This project recruited local teachers and their students to collect data, providing crucial public health knowledge and demonstrating the value of involving community members in the process. We hope these posts help communities understand cutting edge research and stay up-to-date on the known health effects of exposure to toxic chemicals.

Toxic Tuesday Chemicals and Topics Covered in 2025

1. Aniline
2. Beryllium
3. Benzidine
4. Carbon Disulfide
5. Copper
6. Diethylene Glycol
7. Ethylene Oxide and Breast Cancer
8. Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking)
9. Lithium
10. Nitrogen Oxide
11. Pyrethrins
12. Toxaphene
13. Uranium
14. A Citizen Science Effort to Understand Arsenic Contamination in Drinking Water



UNEQUAL RESPONSE UNEQUAL PROTECTION

CHEJ started the Unequal Response, Unequal Protection campaign to address the federal government's ongoing failure to protect communities exposed to toxic chemicals. This failure stems from the lack of a structured federal response and from the inadequate scientific methods available for investigating health outcomes related to exposures to toxic chemicals. Health investigations typically take years to complete and often result in an uncoordinated investigation that rarely generates meaningful action to protect communities. The primary reason for this is the reliance on having to prove a cause-and-effect link between exposure and adverse health outcomes, an impossible standard to achieve with our current knowledge of how toxic chemicals effect the human body. Instead, we are proposing a presumptive model that does not rely on having to prove cause and effect, opening the door for government to take action to protect the health of communities exposed to toxic chemicals.

In 2025, CHEJ continued this campaign by writing blogs, articles and papers. CHEJ's Science Director Stephen Lester and Senior Fellow, Dr. Mihir Vohra published a paper in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology* that introduces a model for presumptive association applicable to communities exposed to toxic chemicals. CHEJ hopes that this publication will serve as a scientific and theoretical backbone for future community outreach work, building awareness and a larger coalition behind Unequal Response, Unequal Protection. CHEJ plans to continue reaching out to community leaders and scientists to build support for the future of this campaign.



The presumptive approach involves two key elements:

1. It identifies potential chemical health hazards in communities using a scientific approach that does not require proof of cause and effect; and
2. Empowers communities to take control of their health by giving them the authority, through a decision-making body called the Community Leadership Team, to decide what actions to take to protect their health.

The presumptive association approach mirrors the process used by the U.S. government when considering adverse health effects suffered by veterans, active military, first responders, 9/11 victims, and others exposed to toxic chemicals while serving their country or their government. Instead of requiring proof of causation in these cases, the government recognized that critical scientific information was missing or incomplete, making it necessary to make “presumptions” about exposures leading to health problems suffered by these groups. This recognition led to the government providing health care, treatment, compensation, and other assistance needed due to exposure to toxic substances. In communities where people have been exposed to toxic chemicals, the government would extend a similar application of the presumptive approach.

Throughout the year, CHEJ continued to move this campaign by writing blogs, articles, and papers about the campaign, and speaking publicly about this new and exciting approach to investigating and evaluating health problems in communities exposed to toxic chemicals.



SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

CHEJ’s Small Grants Program aids in getting resources into the hands of grassroots groups that are fighting for a clean, healthy community. In the grant year 2024 to 2025, we received 111 grant applications, 44 of which qualified for support. The 44 groups awarded grants are listed below. CHEJ was able to give a total of \$305,450 to grassroots grantees in this grant cycle. We are excited to be able to continue to provide this service to groups fighting for a healthy community and environment.



Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
350 Colorado Boulder, CO	350 CO supports and works alongside those living on the frontlines of fossil fuel development by mobilizing Colorado’s disproportionately impacted communities, advocating for increased protections of public health and leading transformative climate policy while securing justice-based climate policy and protective regulatory shifts.	1) Advocate for climate justice and public health protections, organizing opportunities to engage historically under-represented groups. 2) Prioritize training and education tools surrounding Colorado’s toxic air pollution. 3) Catalyze leadership development to build a diverse, inclusive movement to ensure those most impacted are prioritized during decision-making processes and justice-based policy.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
350 Wisconsin Madison, WI	350 WI's purpose is to organize local, statewide, Midwest, and national opposition to Enbridge's proposed expansion of the Line 5 crude oil pipeline through Northern Wisconsin. This will be done through coalition-building, regulatory approaches, training, education, and bold, creative tactics and actions.	(1) Decommission Enbridge Line 5 to reduce fossil fuel impacts on the climate, protect the Bad River Watershed and the Great Lakes, and support Indigenous rights; (2) strengthen the climate movement to fight fossil fuel projects; and (3) promote climate justice.
Air Justice/ Rubbertown Env Action (REACT) Louisville, KY	Air Justice/REACT aims to make legal, scientific and technical data more available and transparent to residents of west and southeast Louisville. Air Justice translates air pollution permits into plain language and works with fence-line communities to gather its own air quality data. Air Justice believes that open, accessible, public participation is needed for health equity and Environmental Justice work.	(1) Boost public participation in environmental justice conversations; 2) Work with decision makers to change public participation processes to make comment periods, meetings, hearings and information distribution more widely accessible; and 3) Push for stricter air quality laws that decrease air pollution and increase industry accountability.
Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) Anchorage, AK	ACAT's purpose is to: (1) restore Alaskan tribal lands contaminated by military toxics, (2) re-establish the Yupik community and traditional hunting-fishing-gathering activities; and (3) redress contaminated community members.	(1) Reopen the Defense Department's decision to prematurely end cleanup activities; (2) convince ATSDR to conduct a legally sufficient and scientifically adequate health assessment; and (3) secure a Congressional investigation into the military's failure to comply with its land use agreement with the tribes to leave land in its original condition.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Albany County Clean Water Advocates (ACCWA) Laramie, WY	Prevent degradation of local drinking water supplies through public education and advocacy.	To build ACCWA's visibility and credibility by: (1) educating residents of the local aquifer protection area on Best Management Practices; (2) researching advanced septic system technologies and funding options; (3) assisting local governments with stronger administration of aquifer protections.
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) North Myrtle Beach, SC	BREDL's purpose is to serve and promote public health, environmental democracy and social justice in the southeastern United States through advocacy and community organizing.	To educate residents on the public health risks of nuclear power generation and the planned expansion of the Vogtle Nuclear Power Plant in Georgia.
Broward Clean Air Southwest Ranches, FL	Educate and organize a grassroots community effort to oppose proposed municipal solid waste ("MSW") trash incinerators in Broward County and Miami-Dade County.	To derail plans by Broward and Miami-Dade counties to build multiple new trash incinerators in environmental justice communities, locking these areas into costly 40 to 50-year contracts, and to put these counties on the path to Zero Waste solutions such as reuse, recycling, and composting
CCLP: Bay Area Cleanup San Francisco, CA	CCLP: Bay Area Cleanup is an all-volunteer, non-government funded association teaching leadership skills and self-help advocacy to low-income workers and others without resources, how to organize for solutions to their lack of legal recourse.	CCLP's project goals are to (1) Demand responsible parties clean up the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco, the second most contaminated Superfund site in the nation. (2) Carry out a community outreach and education campaign, and (3) Conduct a tour of the site in October 2024 that will unite Bay Area residents to demand cleanup of this toxic/radioactive site.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Clean Air Baltimore (CAB) Baltimore, MD	To close the largest single source of air pollution in all of Baltimore City and County - the Wheelabrator Baltimore/BRESCO trash polluter incinerator.	CAB's project goal is to cause a fiscal crisis for the Wheelabrator Baltimore trash incinerator by causing them to lose their lucrative steam sales contract with Vicinity Energy, the company that runs the district heating system in Baltimore City. If successful, this has the potential to force the incinerator to close early.
Clean Air Now (CAN) Salem, OR	The purpose of Clean Air Now is to ultimately close the Covanta Marion waste incinerator in Salem. CAN is working to educate the public and decision makers to increase incinerator air quality regulations and to seek other ways to avoid waste production.	CAN's project goals are to expand our membership, raise our visibility in the community and ensure that Covanta complies with the groundbreaking state air toxics monitoring law our coalition helped pass in 2023, Oregon Senate Bill 488.
Cleanup Indian Point Pollution (CIPP) Castleton, NY	Clean Up Indian Point Pollution is fighting to protect impacted communities by requiring an investigation and cleanup of toxic radioactive pollution from the closed Indian Point nuclear power plant along New York State's Hudson River. After over 60 years of operating, this toxic plant has left a legacy of pollution.	The Environmental Health Justice project will pressure the state to conduct an investigation and clean up any pollution in a 20-mile radius around the Indian Point reactor. This site is the only one in America where a "baseline" environmental study was done before reactors began operating.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Clinch Coalition Wise, VA	Clinch Coalition goals are to protect the environment (forests, waters, air, biodiversity) in the Central Appalachian region of southwestern Virginia and to lead the fight for environmental justice for the vulnerable communities that comprise what is called the "Coalfields" against what we believe is the latest iteration of Appalachian Colonialism.	To continue our grassroots movement to challenge the federal, state, and local government entities/ representatives and special interests which have a fast-track plan to implement numerous energy projects (including small nuclear reactors) which will impose environmental damage to our land and bring new health issues to the local people.
Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW) Naoma, WV	Coal River Mountain Watch's mission is to stop the destruction of its communities and environment by mountaintop removal mining, to improve the quality of life in our area, and to help rebuild sustainable communities.	CRMW's goals for this project are to 1) Have mountaintop removal mining and other polluting coal industry operations shut down, denied, delayed, and abated; 2) Generate more citizen complaints and comments, providing tools to do so; 3) Educate people locally to globally about the coal industry's environmental health and justice threats; and 4) Raise sufficient funds to support the program through 2025.
Community Members for Environmental Justice (CMEJ) Minneapolis, MN	Community Members for Environmental Justice is a coalition of caring community members, mothers, and youth who are committed to addressing the environmental injustices occurring disproportionately in pollution-burdened neighborhoods in the City of Minneapolis.	Community engagement to plan, acquire and remediate the former Northern Metal site into a community resilience hub, a public-serving space that will offer education on resilience and environmental justice. Residents will share ownership of this hub through a cooperative ownership model co-designed and managed by Hope Community and Nexus Community Partners.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Cultural Fire Events (CFE) Provo, UT	Cultural Fire Events (CFE) hosts events through cultural and educational experiences for Indigenous communities and the general public in the state of Utah. CFE's purpose is to increase the physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being of the Indigenous community while encouraging our youth to learn and practice traditional ways of life.	CFE is organizing a large-scale powwow in Moab, UT with an expected 1,250 participants to celebrate Native heritage in the state. They will offer educational programming on mining issues within Indigenous communities across the state and collect information on community member engagement for Tribal Nations.
Delano Guardians Delano, CA	Delano Guardians is working to win cleanup of the contamination in the City of Delano. Their mission is to ensure Environmental Justice by disseminating organizing practices to empower communities to gain a voice in the decision-making process and achieve desired results. This is done through ongoing issue organizing, education and trainings.	Delano Guardians project goals are to (1) Educate our community on Carbon Sequestration; (2) Keep vigilant on the closed Covanta plant that is proposing to use Carbon Sequestration; (3) Protect our health from Carbon sequestration pollution impacts; (4) Participate in the AB 617 Delano community-led implementation to identify and develop the community emission reduction project (CERP) will reduce air pollution and advocate with the California Air Resource Board (CARB) and San Joaquin Valley Air District asking for funding to implement the community identified CERP; and (4) Get training on organizing skills and issues based to increase our group's capacity.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Delco Environmental Justice Springfield, PA	To rapidly end Delaware County's use of the trash incinerator in the City of Chester by building community pressure for full implementation of the new Delaware County Zero Waste Plan by the county and its 49 municipalities	To organize municipal teams to pressure their local governments and to leverage the power of residents and their municipal governments to quickly move the county government to fund a path away from incineration in the soonest time possible.
Ditch The Dump Harrison, OH	Ditch the Dump is working to stop a municipal waste landfill that is adjacent to a 300 home Senior Citizen community, is adjacent to the Whitewater River, an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Exceptional Warmwater Body and one of the cleanest rivers in the state of Ohio containing the endangered Northern Madtom Catfish and mussels. The landfill property is at the top of a valley with two large creeks that drain down into the Whitewater River before it converges with the Great Miami River.	To increase awareness of the hazards of a former Monsanto Landfill outlined in a lawsuit settlement with the state of Ohio. The site is one of several environmental catastrophes in the area that the local media will not cover.
Downwinders At Risk Education Fund Dallas, TX	Downwinders at Risk is committed to working for environmental justice with communities impacted by the worst pollution; to deliver the best science to those communities; to making decisions about pollution and polluters more democratic; to providing solutions to the problems we spotlight, and to funding staff devoted to grassroots empowerment.	To broaden and diversify Downwinders at Risk's funding sources, retain recurring donors, create donor engagement strategies, and increase organizational training development-related work.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
The Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition (FCAC) Fairbanks, AK	Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition organizes communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They elevate climate justice solutions and foster a fair, equitable, and just transition – locally, regionally and globally.	FCAC plans to implement its strategic plan and host strategic campaign development trainings, build community through outreach efforts and events and provide funding for stipends and coaching so volunteer member leaders can take on crucial leadership roles in ongoing climate justice campaigns.
Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future, (FaCT) Mentor, OH	Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future is an Ohio based, interfaith environmental organization - educating, inspiring, advocating and organizing for a just transition to renewable energy sources, sustainable practices and policies that address climate change. We are very concerned about radioactive brine waste and its health implications, particularly for individuals and families living in the Appalachian counties of Ohio. Over the past several years, FaCT along with the Buckeye Environmental Network and the Ohio Brine Task Force has brought the spreading of radioactive brine waste on county and private roads to an all-time low. FaCT is now transitioning to a program focused on the continued danger of radioactive brine waste and its effect on the environment.	1) To recruit and train three college interns majoring in environmental studies in three regions of Ohio (Northeast Ohio, Mid-Ohio and Southeast Ohio) to implement an educational program focused on the continued harmful effects of radioactive brine waste. Each intern will be responsible for recruiting a team of four volunteers (college age) to help with this effort. 2) Each team will work with FaCT to develop teaching tools that appeal to people of all ages. 3) Interns will be tasked with reaching out to college environmental groups, civic, community and faith organizations within their region to schedule presentations. 4) Interns and volunteers will promote advocacy and provide tools to make it accessible during presentations. 5) Interns will track results.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Greater Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP) Birmingham, AL	Greater Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP)'s mission is to advance healthy air and environmental justice in the greater-Birmingham region through education, advocacy, and collaboration	GASP's project goals are to use funding to support its staff and board collectively developing a participatory strategic planning process during a time of leadership transition and after assessing needs from members post COVID-19. This is also important as GASP enters a new election that will impact its work.
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice San Francisco, CA	Greenaction's purpose and mission is to mobilize community power to win victories that protect health and change industry and government policies and practices to promote environmental, social, climate, racial, and economic justice.	Greenaction's specific project goal is to successfully pressure the Navy, USEPA, and state agencies to require a full, comprehensive cleanup of all radioactive and toxic waste at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard Superfund Site located in the multiracial low-income and working-class neighborhood of Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco, California.
Hardwick Concerned Citizens Hardwick, MA	Hardwick Concerned Citizens' goal is to support, promote, and encourage community-wide engagement in the sustainable and responsible growth and development of the town of Hardwick, including all of its four villages; to educate the community about its role as an informed populace, and to help preserve community resources and Hardwick's rural quality of life.	To increase its organization's capacity to oppose Casella's proposal to reopen its long-closed landfill and to work with regional organizations to permanently safeguard the site and its critical water resources.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Jesus People Against Pollution (JPAP) Columbia, MS	Jesus People Against Pollution seeks to hold several planning meetings leading up to hosting a mid-year 2025 statewide Environmental Climate Justice Summit.	(1) To host at least two planning meetings to pull together the ECJ Leaders to help put the Statewide Summit together for mid-year 2025 and (2) seek to leverage more funding support by bringing everyone together to work on green solutions for the pollution dealing with contamination of our land, air, water and health.
Just Moms STL Maryland Heights, MO	To advocate for the health of our community by ensuring the start of EPA's removal remedy at the West Lake Landfill Superfund Site and expanding the groundwater investigation offsite all the way to the Missouri River. To ensure the lowest cleanup levels legally possible under CERCLA are used for the cleanup of areas along Cold Water Creek with radioactive waste in peoples' backyards. We use grassroots community advocacy and outreach to help community members with full engagement with cleanup of those sites.	Removal of all radioactive wastes within 20 feet of the surface at West Lake Landfill and to add 5 more off-site groundwater wells near the river to investigate groundwater vinyl chloride plume movement. 24-hour air monitors set up during removal of all hazardous wastes. Cleanup levels of thorium-230 lowered from 15 to 5 picocuries per gram in residential areas and backyards along Cold Water Creek.
K Martin Group Gloster, MS	To advocate for state and federal laws that protect the public health of the people in marginalized rural communities, and that hold the wood pellet/biomass industry accountable by making polluters pay.	Their goal is to engage the community through grassroots organizing, empower leaders with advocacy training and resources, and educate the community on the harmful health impacts caused by hazardous air pollution from the wood pellet (biomass) industry.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Local Environmental Action Demanded (LEAD) Agency Vinta, OK	LEAD Agency organized to serve its region to educate its diverse communities to the potential human health and environmental harms of human caused contaminants in its environment. Through public education, outreach, action, involvement with appropriate government agencies, LEAD works to organize a citizen response toward cleanup and restoration of environmental harms while striving for pollution prevention and environmental sustainability.	Seeking Connections through Art will integrate playwrights, filmmakers, poets and musicians into LEAD's annual Tar Creek Conference but also engaging the community and students to prepare works and take part in the environmental justice actions promoting the protection and cleanup of Tar Creek to make it safe again.
Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) Baton Rouge, LA	The purpose of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) is to foster cooperation and communication between individual citizens and corporate and government organizations in an effort to assess and mend the environmental problems in Louisiana.	LEAN has expanded significantly in the past 2 years to provide innovative resources to our communities, including our one-of-a-kind air monitoring program and Environmental Justice curriculum. LEAN plans to expand its staff's capacity to assist communities and successfully execute its current programming.
Native Daily Network (NDN) Tacoma, WA	Native Daily Network (NDN) leads Indigenous-driven environmental stewardship, advocating for climate action, sustainable practices, and biodiversity protection. Through activism, education, and community engagement, NDN amplifies Indigenous voices, protect ʔṇčí Maká (Grandmother Earth), safeguard natural resources, and promote equity and resilience for a sustainable future.	The "Rock of Burden" action in Tacoma will use symbolic boulders to highlight the severe environmental and social injustices from local industrial activities and hostile city policies. These boulders, carried by activists, will display messages about the detrimental impacts on health and life expectancy, linking environmental degradation directly to social injustice.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Newburgh Clean Water Project (NCWP) Newburgh, NY	The Newburgh Clean Water Project (NCWP) is a nonpartisan grassroots group of Newburgh residents that engages its community in advocating for Newburgh's long-term access to clean drinking water, comprehensive health resources for those who've been affected by PFAS and lead, and the restoration of our watershed— now and for future generations.	To foster knowledgeable self-advocacy amongst the community and engage in public education and sharing, ultimately leading to expansion of leadership and membership support. Hosting community restorative circles with focus on education, open discussion and testimony to individual experiences and creation of visual artwork/storyboards to be shared at specific public spaces.
Parents Against Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) Los Angeles, CA	Parents Against SSFL (Parents) aims to protect children and families from exposure to toxic and carcinogenic contamination from the Santa Susana Field Lab, site of one of America's worst nuclear accidents.	To execute a high-pressure campaign to overturn last year's Programmatic Environmental Impact Report and to persuade electeds to enforce instead the legally binding 2007 and 2010 cleanup agreements to remediate to background levels of contamination at the SSFL.
Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) – Pennsylvania Philadelphia, PA	Communities across Pennsylvania are being made sacrifice zones by toxic industry. Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Pennsylvania educates and collaborates with impacted communities, individuals and organizations to advocate for health focused policies.	The Environmental Movement Assembly will engage diverse and often neglected demographics in a social movement meant to build power and capacity in response to the toxic industries that impact health. PSR PA will accomplish this through virtual and in person education, leadership development and shared resources.

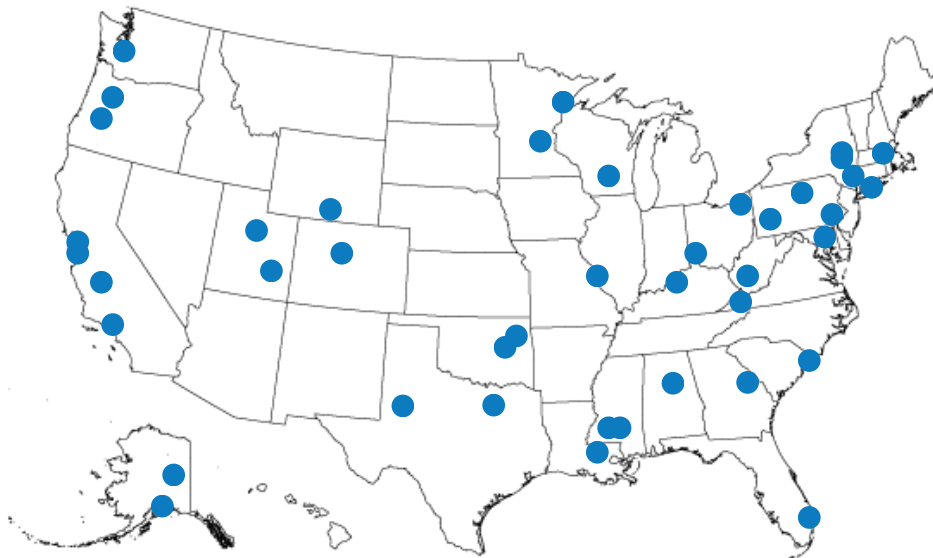
Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Protect PT (PPT) Harrison City, PA	To ensure the safety, security and quality of life from the effects of fracking and air pollution in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties	Protect PT's goals include educating the community around the landfill to take action to reduce exposure in order to build their capacity for grassroots advocacy, better civic engagement, and essential organizing skills while base-building engaging the regulatory authorities to reduce pollution.
Rensselaer Environmental Coalition (REC) Rensselaer, NY	Rensselaer Environmental Coalition (REC) is fully engaged in increasing opposition to the permit renewal for the Dunn Construction and Demolition Landfill which is only a few hundred feet from a 1,000+ student public school.	To secure denial of the permit.
Richmond Shoreline Alliance (RSA) Richmond, CA	The Richmond Shoreline Alliance is dedicated to environmental justice, environmental protection, and an accessible and healthy Richmond shoreline now and for future generations.	Educate the public in Richmond and the broader bay area to support a complete cleanup of the AstraZeneca Superfund qualified toxic waste site.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Savannah Riverkeeper Augusta, GA	Healthy Communities Augusta under the office of the Savannah Riverkeeper is a dynamic coalition committed to empowering the Augusta, Georgia community through comprehensive education, active engagement, and robust advocacy. Our mission centers on raising awareness about critical air and water contamination issues while underscoring the vital connection between economic dynamics and public health. We are dedicated to fostering personal connections to environmental stewardship by equipping community members with essential tools and resources from platforms like KnowYourRiver and the EPA.	To hold a series of community engagement actions focused on combating the building of 4 different related polluting industries in Augusta - pyrolysis, copper smelter, copper plating, and sulfuric acid facilities. We will combat the narrative of Augusta heroically becoming the missing key to closing the "recycling loop." We will do this by building power, influence and educating the affected communities located around the planned facilities. We will empower residents to begin to redefine their communities not as sacrifice zones but as healthy communities steep in history and rich culture worth protecting. A place worth investing in without polluting.
South Coast Neighbors United (SCNU) East Freetown, MA	South Coast neighbors United (SCNU) strives to preserve and protect our community, its natural resources, the environment, and the quality of life for folks who live, work, attend school, and engage in recreational activities.	This campaign will prevent the construction and operation of a solid waste transfer station in the New Bedford Business Park. SCNU is simultaneously working with city officials on developing options for viable and sustainable Zero Waste solutions and education surrounding this issue.
Southeast Queens Residents Environmental Justice Coalition (SEQREJC) St. Albans, NY	Southeast Queens Residents Environmental Justice Coalition (SEQREJC)'s purpose is to resolve the issue of groundwater flooding in the Southeast Queens community. SQREJC also seeks to address environmental justice issues and to inform our community on green initiative programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	To put in place specific communication systems (website, Zoom, etc.) that allow SEQREJC to have an information portal for: (1) environmental justice issues in our community (i.e. flooding), (2) climate change (3) global warming, and (4) existing green initiatives.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Texas Permian Future Generations Forsan, TX	Texas Permian Future Generations is the Texas Permian's first and only environmental non-profit. Their goals are to protect the residents of the Permian Basin from the pollution caused by the oil industry, such as air quality problems, groundwater contamination, and earthquakes.	The Equal Pollution Protection Petition aims to lower all of Texas' pollution limits to the level currently in place in the Barnett Shale in North Texas. It also demands more air monitors in West Texas, of which there are currently 6, compared to 28 in Dallas Fort Worth and 45 in Houston.
Tulsa Area Arkansas River Advocates (TAARA) Tulsa, OK	Tulsa Area Arkansas River Advocates (TAARA)'s purpose is to raise awareness of the deleterious effects of pollution on the health of its communities and on the environment for the 7.32 miles of the Arkansas River that are under extreme duress as a "super" sacrifice zone.	TAARA is adamant that the opening of Zink Lake for the City of Tulsa's "Dam Big Party" is going to be a "Dam" Big Mistake. Their goal is to disrupt this vanity project with the truth and improve their community's ability to advocate for themselves as a united front.
Uranium Watch (UW) Moab, UT	Uranium Watch (UW) educates and advocates for protection of public health and the environment from impacts of uranium mining and milling, nuclear waste disposal and other nuclear industry operations including impacts to Indigenous and rural communities. UW engages regulatory agencies and provides information to the public and media.	1) Educate and organize the La Sal community regarding the La Sal Mines Complex operation, which provides uranium ore to the White Mesa Mill, the only operating conventional uranium mill in the US. 2) Engage regulatory agencies and 3) Stop the Mines expansion.

Organization	Organizational Goals	Project Goals
Valley Neighbors for Environmental Quality and Safety (VNEQS) Corvallis, OR	Valley Neighbors for Environmental Quality and Safety (VNEQS) purpose is to prevent ANY MORE expansions of the Coffin Butte Landfill – an egregious polluter of the environment and exacerbator of climate change via its massive methane leaks – and ultimately bring about its closure once its currently permitted capacity is filled (if not sooner).	The landfill operator will be applying for another permit to expand soon. VNEQS's goals are to revamp our website – a major communication/ information-sharing tool for fighting this expansion – and send a postcard mailer to 6,100 households that wouldn't otherwise be notified, before (website) and when (postcards) that application lands.
Water Legacy Duluth, MN	Water Legacy uses science, organizing, and law to protect Minnesota waters from toxic pollution and its effects on ecosystems, health, and environmental justice. With the economic and political pressure opposing metallic mining in Minnesota, their passion and resources are focused on preventing sacrifice zones in rural and tribal communities.	Water Legacy's BLT Capacity Project will share research and strategy with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and provide workshops and mentoring to strengthen local capacity to effectively oppose a toxic Talon nickel mine during the critical stage of environmental review on which all future organizing and advocacy relies.

Locations of Small Grants Recipients





1) Lois at work with her two children, Micheal and Melissa, 2 and 3) Residents of Love Canal protesting, and 4) Lois on the phone with the White House, learning that she has won relocation for 700 families

OUR STORY

It all started in 1978, in Niagara Falls, New York. Lois Gibbs was struggling to raise a family, which included two children suffering from a number of rare illnesses. Soon she realized they weren't the only ones suffering. Nearly every family in the Love Canal neighborhood was facing its own medical nightmare.

Lois discovered that her home, and those of her neighbors, sat amongst 20,000 tons of toxic chemicals. In response to this shocking news, Lois stepped up to lead her neighbors in the battle to protect their families from the hazardous waste in their backyards.

Lois and her neighbors developed strategies to educate and organize their community, assess the impact of the toxic chemicals on their health, and challenge corporate and government disposal policies. After a nearly three-year fight, Lois' leadership led to the relocation of 833 Love Canal families.

Through this experience, Lois realized that no local, state, or national organization existed to provide communities with the strategic advice, guidance, and scientific and technical assistance necessary to win such a battle.

To ensure that no other community would have to face a toxic health threat alone, Lois founded the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste (CCHW) on April 6, 1981. CCHW became known as the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ) in 1997 and in January 2017, we joined People's Action Institute (PAI), as one of their special projects.

The core of CHEJ's mission has always been to prevent harm to human health. This is achieved by providing scientific and organizing support to individuals and communities facing toxic hazards. On average, CHEJ receives hundreds of requests for these kinds of support each year. Over the past 44 years, CHEJ's work has touched over 15,000 individuals and groups.

2025 marked the beginning of a new chapter in CHEJ's storied history. At the end of the year, CHEJ transitioned to new leadership under the Texas Health and Environment Alliance (THEA). THEA will continue and expand CHEJ's mission by helping local leaders organize to protect their family and community by providing scientific and technical support, maintaining the CHEJ website and publications, and by providing training and resources to help groups win. In short, they will ensure that the experience, tools, and lessons learned over four decades remain available to the people who need them most.

CHEJ's spirit and resources will live on as CHEJ at THEA will continue to harness the power of grassroots organizing to help communities protect their health, as Lois did many years ago.

At CHEJ, we believe that everyone has a right to a clean and healthy environment. Together, we can create one powerful voice in favor of protecting our health and the environment, and promoting economic justice.



Lois Gibbs with Jackie Medcalf, who is the founder of THEA and will carry on the work of CHEJ.