

# EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 24 No. 3 Fall 2006



## TAKING PRECAUTIONARY ACTION

Highlights from the First  
National Conference  
on Precaution

## BRINGING YOUR MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE

Messaging as part of  
your organizing work



*The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement*

Center for Health, Environment and Justice

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### On the Cover:

Photos from the First National  
Conference on Precaution in  
Baltimore, MD, June 2006.

photos by Libby Sinback

# PRECAUTION UNITES US

This summer an extraordinary meeting was held in Baltimore, Maryland to explore ways to establish precautionary policies and goals in government, corporate and consumers purchasing choices.

To achieve this vision—which is to take action to prevent harm even in the absence of scientific certainty—decision makers need to ask fundamentally different core operating questions. They must ask: how much harm can we avoid in our actions, rather than how much harm can the earth, people and creatures tolerate?

To some, the idea of precautionary actions and policies at first sounded wonky and abstract. With a little explanation, though, it became clear to the 300 plus people who attended the conference that this concept is just common sense—we take precautionary actions every day. In fact, many of the participants realized that they have been working on precaution-based goals for decades.

For example, thirty years ago, grassroots leaders said “no” to new nuclear power plants and completely halted their construction—to prevent harm from radioactive materials. Thousands of incinerators were halted or closed because local communities said “no” to any level of pollution. Citizens began demanding that corporations eliminate toxic materials. Twenty years ago, CHEJ launched the successful McToxics campaign to stop MacDonald’s from using Styrofoam. Similar efforts today have convinced Johnson and Johnson and Microsoft to phase out PVC. This prevents harm where toxic packaging is produced, used and disposed.

Even when the genie was out of the bottle, such as with contaminated sites, grassroots leaders have consistently argued that a permanent cleanup was the answer—to prevent future harm to the environment, and human health.

Yes, we’ve waged this battle for a long time, but in narrow issue networks where deliberate collaboration didn’t and in some cases couldn’t happen. The conference set the stage for new ways to move together with strategies, messages, frames, networks, resources and more.

One critical step—a precautionary step—everyone can take this fall, regardless of issue focus, is to educate people about our issues, and then get people to the polls to vote in November for the candidate that best supports our goals. Precautionary policies are easier to pass if our elected representatives support our positions and see widespread public support for a precautionary vision.

This journey will be a difficult one, with many bumps in the road and obstacles to overcome. It is an entirely different way for us to work together. But when we succeed, we will have created a safer, healthier world in which to live, work, play and pray.

For a healthy environment,  
Lois Maire 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 ANNE RABE, CHEJ BE SAFE CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

# TAKING PRECAUTIONARY ACTION

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PRECAUTION

*Given that numerical risk assessments have allowed the entire planet, and all of its inhabitants, to become contaminated with toxic chemicals another approach seems in order. The precautionary approach includes a constant search for the least-harmful alternative; involvement of affected people in decisions; a commitment to consider the consequences for the seventh generation; and an explicit, acknowledged duty to monitor outcomes and to take action to prevent harm, with nature and human health being given the benefit of the doubt.*

Peter Montague, Environmental Research Foundation from the “Getting Out of the Risk Assessment Box” Workshop.

This past spring, an awe-inspiring collection of precautionary campaigns and policies were featured at CHEJ’s *Taking Precautionary Action Conference* in Maryland. The June event brought together over 300 activists and affirmed precaution is a powerful unifying force that is changing the way environmental policy is made in America. A precautionary approach shifts the questions we ask about environmental hazards from “what level of harm is acceptable?” to “how can we prevent harm?”

The gathering provided a rich feast of ideas and experiences. People were struck by the overlaps across diverse topics such as toxic chemicals, nuclear waste, pesticides, and worker safety that showed how similar our struggles, visions and strategies are. This was the first national conversation across issue movements dedicated to advocating for a paradigm shift in society—taking precautionary action. The conference included a “remarkable army of people who are trying to get precaution implemented at state and local levels,” said one participant. It was a major information-sharing gathering that prompted one activist to say “I learned just how very basic to our value systems the precautionary principle is and that applying it successfully will have a profound effect.”

### How are people taking precautionary action? What are the lessons learned?

Joan Reinhardt Reiss of Breast Cancer Fund described their coalition efforts that resulted in the first municipal precautionary principle law in San Francisco in 2003. The key components that led to the 2006 Portland Toxic Reduction Strategy were detailed by Neha Patel of Oregon Center for Environmental Health, including building community support and developing a community-government partnership.

On the state level, Mike Belliveau of Environmental Health Strategies Center described how their Maine alliance first seized on chemical-specific opportunities with laws banning brominated flame retardants and other chemicals. Now, they are working towards broad reform with a Safer Chemical Policy. They achieved success by framing the problem as a public health issue focusing on children’s health, building a health-based coalition, highlighting the inherent hazards of a chemical (as opposed to trying to determine how much risk is “acceptable”), and emphasizing safer alternatives.

Nuclear-free zones were described by Dr. Gabino Aguirre of Mayors for Peace, where governments commit to be wholly free of military weapons and nuclear waste. Bill Sheehan of the Product Policy Institute explained how a local government got fed up with footing the bill for picking up

after producers of toxic consumer products, resulting in San Francisco’s Resolution on Extended Producer Responsibility, which reverses the burden of responsibility and encourages safer alternatives. Peter Montague talked about a pioneering Liberty Township (PA) ordinance that prohibits “chemical trespass”—toxicants entering our bodies without our consent. Labor-community campaigns are preventing cancer by working on local problems of carcinogens in the environment, said Bill Chedore of Canadian Labour Congress, and they plan to build a national cancer prevention network. These and other precautionary initiatives are described in the Conference Proceedings available at [www.besafenet.com](http://www.besafenet.com).



Stacey Gonzalez, CHEJ, and Kevin Kamps, NIRS, share ideas at the poster session.

### Skills-building Workshops

Workshops were featured that provided cutting-edge precautionary tools and strategies on topics such as health, economics, safer alternatives, and media messaging. Steven Gilbert of the Institute of Neurotoxicology & Neurological Disorders described how we can get out of the “risk assessment box” by using a new “precautionary assessment” approach to evaluate scientific, safety, community, ethical and social issues related to a compound or procedure. For instance, the community assessment piece includes evaluating community needs through a democratic process, ensuring the decision protects future generations, and looking at safer alternatives.

“Economics has been used as the number one argument against the precautionary principle, against regulation, against protective policies

*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.

## HELP US BUILD A MOVEMENT FOR PRECAUTIONARY ACTION

Want to work on a regional meeting on precaution? Want help on moving a precautionary action program in your municipality or state?

Over three hundred activists who attended the First National Conference on Precaution in June (see feature story, page 3) came up with an exciting array of ideas to continue to build the movement for precaution. CHEJ's BE SAFE Initiative invites you to become part of this national collaborative by participating in one of the following activities.

- Join us in building the movement for precaution as a big "tent" with expanded outreach to parents, teachers, labor, faith-based groups, health, environmental justice and community groups working on the full range of environmental hazards.
- Participate in a regional meeting, or hold a workshop, to share successful models and precautionary tools, develop a common vision and a strategic plan to achieve local, regional or state precautionary policies and programs.
- Contribute to the CHEJ BE SAFE Precautionary Clearinghouse with new local or state policies, cutting-edge precautionary tools and resources on media, messaging, precautionary economics and safe alternative assessments.

## NEW RESOURCES ON PRECAUTION

Great new resources from the conference are available from CHEJ's BE SAFE website at [www.besafenet.com](http://www.besafenet.com).

**Conference Proceedings** – Learn from over 40 great speakers about innovative precautionary programs and strategies by viewing their power point presentations, speeches and educational handouts.

**Resource Guide on Precaution** – This valuable guide includes websites and a bibliography by subject of publications, videos, and resources on media and messaging, organizing and fundraising.

**Platforms and Statements on Precaution** – Includes the 1998 Wingspread Statement, the 2002 Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow Plan, the 2003 BE SAFE Platform and the 2005 Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals.

Contact us for resources and assistance at [anne@besafenet.com](mailto:anne@besafenet.com) or call CHEJ's BE SAFE Coordinator Anne Rabe at 518-732-4538.

## JOIN THE PVC DAY OF ACTION OCTOBER 11TH AT YOUR LOCAL TARGET STORE!

Join with parents, consumers, and students from around the country on October 11, 2006 and demand Target stores phase out PVC, the poison plastic, and switch to safer, healthier consumer products. Target, one of the nation's largest retailers, sells many common consumer products such as children's toys, baby products, and shower curtains made out of the poison plastic. These products are dangerous to our health and environment – in the factory, at home, and in the trash, releasing dangerous chemicals linked to cancer and birth defects. The good news is safe and cost-effective alternatives exist and other retailers are phasing out PVC.

**Organize a local event as part of the national PVC Day of Action** and we'll send you a kit with everything you need, including flyers and other resources to spread the word about this poison plastic. Hazmat suits you and your friends can wear outside your local Target store are available. Organizing an event is easy, fun, and most importantly a great way to educate the public about dangerous chemicals in common consumer products. This Day of Action is being held in conjunction with the launch of our new educational online video, *Sam Suds and the Case of PVC, the Poison Plastic* (see back page for details). **Contact Mike Schade, CHEJ's PVC Campaign Coordinator at 212-964-3680 or [mike@besafenet.com](mailto:mike@besafenet.com) to get involved today!**

## NEW PVC CAMPAIGN WEBSITE LAUNCHED - CHECK IT OUT

Hot off the press is CHEJ's new PVC Campaign website: <http://www.besafenet.com/pvc>. With a brand new slick design, the site features essential information on the hazards of PVC, examples of common PVC products in your home, resources on safe alternatives, simple things you can do to protect your family from dangerous chemicals in consumer products, and more! If you have a website, link it up. Don't forget to sign up for the PVC Action Network and to tell a friend about this important campaign. Point your browser to <http://www.besafenet.com/pvc> today.

BY STACEY GONZALEZ, CHEJ CPOC CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

# BRINGING YOUR MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE

## MESSAGING AS PART OF YOUR ORGANIZING WORK

Traditionally, messaging, branding and advertising have been perceived as part of corporate America's strategies. We're activists, not marketing experts. We organize with the coins collected in a coffee can, not the billion dollar advertising budgets of our opponents. This often leaves our movement with the sentiment that if we can just prove that we're right through facts and figures, then everyone will come to their senses and fight for justice.

Since that hasn't happened, we should consider revisiting this essential component of successful organizing, and figure out how we can do it well and make it work for us.

Powerful and effective messaging is not born out of facts or figures. It is created by appealing to the core values of people just like us, but who may not see themselves as a part of this movement. Our work is about protecting and enhancing the livelihood, health and well being of hard-working families, and our messages should express nothing less.

### The Complicated Put Simply

This past year, many of you helped stop EPA from allowing private companies from testing pesticides on children and pregnant women. More than 80,000 individuals joined us in the fight to halt that deal in its tracks. Over 70% of federal Senators joined in as well.

What was it that catalyzed this momentum? Simply put, it was an effective message: "We Don't Test Pesticides on Pregnant Women and Children." This message appealed to the most basic of human beliefs about a core value system, and it begs the response, "well, of course we don't." It also explicitly stated what we were fighting for.

Another example of simple messaging comes from groups we work with in Florida where local activists opposed plans by EPA to allow raw sewage mixed with heavy rainfall to by-pass waste water treatment and be dumped directly into rivers that serve as a source of drinking water. Given the two statements below, what message do you think got more attention from the general population, "Vote No on Sewage Blending!" or "No Poo Poo in our Drinking Water!"

These statements don't convey the same thing to the non-expert. Sewage blending is a technical term that sounds harmless. The second message says what sewage blending actually is, and gets through to the least technical person in a quick and compelling way. You want a statement like this that sends a clear message to the public, and you never want to use your opponent's words because it reinforces their message.

To truly win a healthy community, we must have many tools in our toolbox, including well-researched alternatives, credible science, and technical experts. But of equal or greater importance are lots and lots of people, usually for a few meetings, a petition, or a key vote. We do not need to educate a thousand people on the technical information surrounding sewage blending or pesticide testing and regulations. We simply need to

tell them a story that gets them to say "Oh No, Not in My Backyard."

### Memes and the People Who Love Them

According to *smartMeme* ([www.smartmeme.org](http://www.smartmeme.org)), a meme (pronounced meem) is: "A unit of self-replicating cultural transmission (ex. ideas, slogans, melodies, symbols) that spreads virally from brain to brain. A meme often operates as a container, anchor or carrier for a larger more complex story."

One of the oldest memes used by our opponents is NIMBY, or Not In My Backyard. A true self-replicating meme, NIMBY was created by the PR firms hired by the polluters and was cleverly used to marginalize the leaders of thousands of local struggles. The power of this meme is that **it has longevity, it says what it means to say, you can remember it, and people can see themselves within it.** Those not involved in a local struggle can be persuaded by this meme into thinking that local activists are selfish and community-centric. It implies "I don't care where it goes so long as it's not in my backyard."



*A good example of simple messaging, from the Pennies of Promise campaign.*

Thus, a successful meme conveys the essence of what you are fighting for, and when done well, it carries life and power way beyond how you ever used it. The details come after the meme. In debating our opponents, we often go toe-to-toe on the science and the process, and we often forget to reach those not yet involved in a creative, simple way that gets to the heart of what they care about, and not inundate them with so many details that they go running for the hills.

In 2006, grassroots groups used some great memes to win their fights. The Coal River Mountain Watch group is fighting mountain top removal in their communities and to block a proposal for a new coal silo next to an elementary school. CRMW adopted the meme: "Remembering the Past, Working for the Future." It respects the deep heritage of West Virginia coal mining, while conveying what the group is working for - a

*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.*

## ALASKA

This spring, the city of Anchorage began using safer biological controls instead of pesticides to control insects. The controls, part of what is called Integrated Pest Management (IPM), include manual removal of eggs, sticky pest traps made from natural tree resins and pheromone traps (attracting bugs with natural hormones). The change was due in part to residents' outcries about recent large-scale pesticide applications. Mayor Mark Begich also believed in switching to safer alternatives, saying, "The city is moving to less toxic and biological methods because it's healthier for our children and it will also save taxpayers money." Community members, including Pam Miller, Director of **Alaska Community Action on Toxics**, are encouraged by this major step forward for their community.

## ARIZONA

**Citizens Against Covance** (CAC) are organizing in Chandler to oppose a plan by Covance Laboratories to build a large animal testing research facility. While Covance claims they are bringing opportunity to Chandler, CAC isn't buying any of it and claims that Covance has spent "thousands of dollars on misleading and deceptive mailings to Chandler residents introducing their new 'Covance-Chandler' facility" when, in fact, they have not even submitted plans, let alone received approval. CAC is hoping to generate the kind of public opposition created by residents in Alameda, CA who spoke out and convinced city officials in 2000 that Covance was not welcome in their community. CAC is concerned about air emissions from an on-site incinerator that is likely to burn biohazard, hazardous, and animal waste generated by the facility.

## CALIFORNIA

The **Environmental Health Coalition** (EHC) is calling on residents of western Chula Vista to come together to convince LSPower, the company that recently purchased the aging South Bay Power Plant, to replace it with a renewable energy plant. Currently, LSPower plans to replace the fossil fuel burning plant with another of the same type. EHC commissioned a report that demonstrated that the large plant would produce increases in pollution over a large area. EHC is calling for a comprehensive public participation process, involving all families, starting

now. They say this is a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to make a change in this neighborhood.

The community group **El Quinto Sol**, the **California Safe Air for Everyone Coalition**, and **Pesticide Action Network North America** (PANNA) released a technical report this past summer documenting unsafe levels of airborne pesticides in Lindsay. Using a "Drift Catcher" air monitoring device, the groups discovered several periods during the past two years where levels of chlorpyrifos—a pesticide banned for household use but still applied to

before deciding whether its pesticide regulations need to be changed.

## FLORIDA

Congratulations to Joy Towles Ezell from **Help our Polluted Environment** in Perry who traveled all the way to Washington, DC to attend a public press release held by the National Academies to release a long-awaited review of the USEPA's dioxin reassessment. Joy challenged the committee chair who described dioxin exposures as a "thing of the past." Her statement made clear that people are still being exposed to dioxins at very high levels and are sick and dying from these exposures. Her testimony was a cold reminder of the real world suffering occurring as industry and government continue to stall regulations to protect the public. The committee's review supported the basic scientific conclusions in the EPA report including that dioxin is a human carcinogen and that the non-cancer effects pose serious public health risks. See CHEJ's press release for more information at <http://www.chej.org/dioxin/>.

## A VERY LONG WALK

As previously reported in *Everyone's Backyard*, Marsh Fork Elementary in Sundial, WV lies in the pathway of a massive coal company processing plant and silo where nearly 3 billion gallons of toxic sludge sit behind a leaking impoundment dam just 400 yards from the school. In an effort to remove Marsh Fork children from danger, Ed Wiley, grandfather of a Marsh Fork Elementary student, began a 40-day 450-mile walk from Charleston, WV to Washington, D.C. in August to raise money to build a new school for Marsh Fork students as part of the **Pennies of Promise** campaign. Ed stopped at dozens of cities and towns to educate and fundraise along "The Pathway to a Brighter Future."



To read about Ed's travels and find out how you can support the Pennies of Promise Campaign, visit [www.penniesofpromise.org](http://www.penniesofpromise.org).

crops — exceeded government safety levels. "We want a buffer zone to prevent spraying around vulnerable areas, like schools and houses, so we can protect our children," said Margaret Reeves, senior scientist and program coordinator for PANNA. County and state pesticide regulators said they must scientifically verify the group's data

.....  
*In Memory:* We want to extend our prayers and sympathies to the family and friends of Jan Fletcher from Sarasota, who passed away this past Spring. Jan was a tireless advocate against the use of pesticides, especially in schools. We will miss her.  
.....

## GEORGIA

The Brooks County Commissioners voted in June to deny a request by Onyx Waste Services to build the Magnolia Ridge landfill, in part due to the nearly 600 people who voiced their opinions at a public hearing. Chairman Wayne Carroll, the tie-breaker in the vote, called the outcry "overwhelming." Opposition to the landfill stemmed from concerns over health effects associated with toxic chemicals seeping into the air and groundwater from leaks in the landfill. Residents cited the possibility of leakage due to weakening of the liner caused by common household chemicals typically present in landfills. The landfill was also opposed by a legal representative of Nestle Springs Bottling Company, who expressed concern that contamination of the local aquifer from the landfill could harm their company. The commission was presented with a petition signed by more than 1,600 Brooks County citizens who opposed the landfill.

## LOUISIANA

As the one-year landmark of Hurricane Katrina's devastation drew near, the **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** (LABB) unveiled "Life in the Wake of Katrina," an exhibit featuring photographs taken by residents of St. Bernard Parish. "Photographs are one of the best ways to articulate

# ACTION LINE

what cannot be put into words – they portray emotions, perspectives and thoughts. What happened here cannot be put into words...these photos will move you,” said photographer Piper Hanson, curator of the exhibit and the person responsible for collecting the photos from the community. LABB volunteers and friends plan to take the exhibit on a tour of museums and universities across the country.

This July, Chalmette residents, also known as the **Marietta Gang**, demanded that the CEO of Murphy Oil create a cleanup plan for their neighborhood, which was affected by a million gallon oil spill. Though Murphy Oil has settled with the families, the company refuses to clean up every yard in the spill area, leaving some yards with persistent oil deposits. Murphy Oil claims it has cleaned up based on soil samples tested by a private company, the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health. However, many believe the tests were not comprehensive. Anne Rolfes of the **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** said, “Murphy’s soil sample results give absolutely no assurance of health and safety. The people have a right to demand a cleanup.”

## MASSACHUSETTS

Congratulations to **Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group** (MASSPIRG) and its allies on securing enough votes to stop a proposal to convert Outer Brewster Island, part of the Boston Harbor Islands State Park and National Recreation Area, into the nation’s largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal and storage depot. They recruited support and collected letters from 16 senators and 58 representatives that opposed the legislation just in time for the March 8th hearing. The proposal would have brought huge tankers to the island, damaging habitat and restricting recreational and commercial access to the island. A private company is continuing to push for the lease of Outer Brewster Island, but MASSPIRG continues to work to protect the Boston Harbor Islands.

Problems with PCB contamination continue to plague the new Keith Middle School in New Bedford. It was announced in early August that the opening of the new school would be delayed after construction crews unearthed a cap, which was supposed to keep contaminated soil below ground. An environmental consultant has been hired to investigate the incident and to determine if, in fact, the mandated cleanup procedures set by the state were carried out. “We don’t want to put any child or teacher or anyone else in harm’s way by putting them in a place on a daily basis when there are things that could be harmful to their health,” said Eddie Johnson of the community environmental watchdog group, **Wasted Away**.

## MICHIGAN

In late July, environmental groups confronted Michigan lawmakers over dioxin cleanup standards along the Tittabawassee River. **The Lone Tree Council** (LTC) presented a letter in which Howard Frumkin, director of the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Control, confirms that state lawmakers have misused the federal action cleanup level of 1,000 parts per trillion for dioxin. The letter stated that this level should trigger environmental action, rather than serve as a baseline for levels of dioxin considered acceptable for public health. Michelle Hurd Riddick, spokesperson for LTC, said the letter “should put to bed the notion that the federal action level should dictate cleanup in Saginaw and Midland counties. For years, legislators from the region of Dow

Chemical’s headquarters in Midland have been trying to weaken the state cleanup level for dioxin in order to relieve Dow of liability for the contamination of an entire river system that flows into Lake Huron.

## MINNESOTA

Native Americans from all across North America gathered in Cass Lake to combat the effects of mining, toxins and border racism in Indian country during the 14th Annual **Indigenous Environmental Network** (IEN) Protecting Mother Earth Conference in July. Highlights from the conference included gathering wild edible plants, straw bale construction, Native youth training, a talent show, youth mural painting, and honoring the late environmental and treaty rights activist Red Cliff Ojibwe. Though Native cultures face unique and disproportionate environmental problems in this country, the prevailing voice of the conference was one of positive determination. “I foresee an increase of Native activism doing more direct actions on environmental and economic issues,” said Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of IEN.

hearings in May and June on whether there should be state-imposed controls on mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. There are currently no laws requiring controls. MEIC also collected and delivered 1,600 petitions supporting mercury emissions controls to the governor’s natural resource policy advisor. According to MEIC, coal-fired plants emit 92% of the mercury, a dangerous neurotoxin, in Montana’s air each year. The Department of Environmental Quality drafted a rule for consideration in 2006, but MEIC found it flawed, because it did not require plants to meet emission requirements until 2015. MEIC and other groups in Montana continue to fight for swift action for coal-fired power plant emissions controls.

## NEW MEXICO

Thanks to the efforts of the **Southwest Research and Information Center**, **Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety**, **Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping**, and numerous citizens, hundreds of changes have been made to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) draft

## “NO MEGA-DUMPS” CAMPAIGN WINS MORATORIUM!

In July, the North Carolina legislature passed a Landfill Moratorium, prohibiting new landfill construction in the state from August 2006 to August 2007. Labor and environmental groups teamed up to put a freeze on mega-dumps that would have brought tons of out-of-state garbage to mostly poor, rural communities in the state, and made NC the fourth largest waste-importing state in the nation. **The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League**, **Scotland County of Tomorrow**, **the Teamsters Union**, **North Carolina Sierra Club**, and **the North Carolina Conservation Network** all were part of the “No Mega-Dumps” campaign, whose efforts included constant pressure on elected officials using phone calls, emails, and personal visits to demand a “trash time-out.” The campaign also included a billboard bearing the message, “I Don’t Love New York Garbage” and a website where voters could contact their state legislators to demand the temporary moratorium. “We applaud the Assembly for refusing to mortgage North Carolina’s future in return for pennies from the waste industry,” said Jack Cipriani, President of Teamsters Local 391 in Greensboro. “This is truly a VICTORY FOR THE PEOPLE Ya’ll, it’s time to CELEBRATE!” said another excited campaign member.

## MISSOURI

Jefferson City Parks, Recreation and Forestry go fragrance-free! **Missouri Awareness Chemicals Cause Environmental Sickness and Suffering** (MO ACCESS), a determined, student-led community group is making it their mission to spread awareness about the sensitivity of many people, especially those with asthma, to fragrances in perfume, aftershave, scented lotions, hair products and other common products. The group enlisted the help of their school district, state and local organizations, and CHEJ’s own Green Flag Schools Program to help promote awareness and action around asthma and fragrance sensitivity. The Parks and Recreation Department’s decision followed an extensive presentation by MO ACCESS explaining the connection between asthma and fragrances. MO ACCESS has also succeeded in achieving a fragrance free middle school, and two hospitals.

## MONTANA

The **Montana Environmental Information Center** (MEIC) and 21 other organizations convinced the Montana Board of Environmental Review to conduct public

permit issued by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). These changes reduced the amount of highly radioactive waste accepted at WIPP and decreased the expansion of storage and disposal capacities. These changes were agreed upon following 17 days of negotiations and 18 months of outrage and complaint by more than 2,000 people and organizations. The original draft, issued last November, would have substantially loosened the health and safety requirements and would have increased the allowed amount and lethality of waste entering the site. Final decisions over which changes will be included in the final permit will be made by NMED Secretary Ron Curry and are expected in late September.

## NEW YORK

**Residents Against Mining** (RAM) had a major victory in July when the Town of Nassau in upstate New York voted to extend a moratorium on large mining operations. Local Law #4 prohibits commercial mining in all of the town’s districts. RAM’s previous victories include beating back proposals from mining companies such as Martin Marietta and Hilltop Basic Resources. Their rural community is currently facing three proposals for major mining of greywacke

# ACTION LINE

stone, which residents and town officials have been fighting for months. For more information, visit RAM's website at <http://www.residentsagainstmining.org/index.html>.

Four members of the **Cheektowaga Citizens Coalition** showed up at the home of Buffalo Crushed Stone's president, Steven B. Detwiler, to present him a dubious polluter award. The group's "Dirty Dozen Award," annually presented to the cream of the polluting crop, is intended to draw attention to local sites that pose environmental health hazards. "This is an ambush!" shouted an unpleased woman from inside Detwiler's Orchard Park home (Detwiler was apparently not at home). "This is minor compared to what happens every day around the quarry from its operations," rebutted coalition president John C. Stonefield. Buffalo Crushed Stone's two limestone mines and two asphalt plants are creating health risks for residents in the Bellevue area of Cheektowaga. Barring a preferred shut down of operations, the coalition wants the company to clean up its act.

## OHIO

**Neighbors for Clean Air and Ohio Citizen Action** recently released a report on Eramet Marietta, a metal refining plant in southeast Ohio. The report is based on their own investigations, as well as information from the EPA and Eramet. They found that manganese and chromium products from the plant's operation were present in all eight sampling locations, amongst other disturbing details. Locals are now having blood tests done to determine manganese exposure. Though research is somewhat lacking, manganese exposure is linked to brain damage in children and a Parkinson's-like disease in adults. Eramet claims the groups' report is flawed and that it contains false accusations. Citizens and group members are excited, however, with the release of the report and anticipate further developments.

**Ohio Citizen Action** and local neighbors have been actively fighting to reduce air emissions from the Lanxess Corp. plastics plant in Addyston for nearly two years. After seeing their complaints ignored, the group questioned the timing of the U.S. EPA's announcement in June charging Lanxess with violating the Clean Air Act. The plant was cited for excessive air emissions of the carcinogen 1,3-butadiene, failure to comply with standards to prevent pipe leaks, and four other violations. When Ruth Breech, southern Ohio program director for Ohio Citizen Action learned that the company was already addressing four of the six violations, she had this to say about the EPA's announcement, "It's a little after the fact." The group remains concerned about the air emissions from the plant and EPA's apparent cozy relationship with Lanxess. A health study released earlier this year by the state reported that the cancer rate in this village of 1,000 is 76 percent higher than expected.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Citizens for a Quality Environment** of Chambersburg led a broad community effort that successfully halted the construction of a Penn-Mar corn ethanol distillery. Residents circulated petitions, put signs in their yards and bumper stickers on their cars, wore "No Ethanol Distillery" T-shirts and buttons, made financial contributions, and wrote letters to the editor or elected officials. They claimed the distillery was too close to residences, schools, churches, and day care centers and could have had negative impacts on local health. As a result, the Board that had

initially been waiting for Penn-Mar to buy the land declined to grant the company an extension of time.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Hats off to **Mountain Justice Summer (MJS)** for their creative week-end of demonstrations and street theatre in conjunction with the National Governors Association conference in Charleston! MJS familiarized the governors with their mission of ending mountaintop removal and their vision for a clean energy future for Appalachia by (1) flying a plane with a banner reading, "Manchin: Stop Destroying my Mountains - God," over the governors' private golf outing, (2) greeting them at the site of their evening entertainment and refreshments with a banner reading, "End the Destruction of Appalachia - Stop Mountaintop Removal," (3) staging a "wedding" where King Coal and the Appalachian states' governors tied the knot, and more!



Photo from Mountain Justice Summer's street theatre demonstration.

## TEXAS

**Community In-Power and Development Association (CIDA)** filed a legal challenge against the Motiva/Shell expansion proposal. If approved, the expansion would make the Port Arthur plant the largest refinery in America. The group says the proposal is an environmental injustice to the African-American community living next to the refinery. A frequent site of civil rights and environmental justice complaints, "Port Arthur residents on the west side are tired of being dumped on and left out of the benefits of these billion dollar projects," said Hilton Kelley of CIDA. The group is represented by environmental attorney Jim Blackburn, the **Environmental Integrity Project** of Washington, D.C., attorneys from Lowerre and Frederick, and **Lone Star Sierra Club**. The refinery expansion would increase emissions by 31% over 2003 levels. The group has presented a list of seven demands, including a decrease in emissions and an integrated warning network for emergencies.

## UTAH

Residents whose homes abut Stericycle's North Salt Lake Foxboro medical incinerator are starting to question what they are being exposed to by living on the fence line of the plant. Concerns are mounting about why they were not informed about the dangers of plant emissions such as mercury, lead and dioxin before they moved in, and why the land was rezoned from commercial to residential in the first place. There's now talk of forming a campaign

to urge Stericycle to switch to a less-polluting autoclave technology. Cindy King of the Utah chapter of the **Sierra Club** echoed the sentiment of many Foxboro residents. "We need industry, but let's make sure the safest alternatives are used and that government plays their proper role." **GreenAction** has been educating and helping organize the residents of the development.

## VIRGINIA

The **Trail Bandits** formed in late 2005 to address a popular plan to convert abandoned rail lines to public multi-use trails in the far southwestern region of the state near Saltville. The Bandits are concerned that portions of the rail lines are contaminated by spills and accidents involving the Olin Corporation who used the rail system to transport chemicals in and out of their former chlorine plant in Saltville. The Olin site is now a federal Superfund site. The Trail Bandits are upset that no testing was done before construction began to remove the rails. Limited testing paid for by the group found arsenic, lead, mercury and other heavy metals in the soil and water. They want the state or EPA to do more testing, but both agencies refuse to get involved. The Bandits are just now realizing they are in for a fight!

## WEST VIRGINIA

In June, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced plans to suspend permits for four mountaintop removal mines in West Virginia. Activists say this is the first time the Corps has voluntarily suspended permits. Vivian Stockman, a member of the **Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC)** said, "We are very glad to see that destructive mining practices at these mines will stop at least for now." Nonetheless, she and others bemoan the flawed process by which the Corps approved these mines in the first place, a process by which they violated the law and allowed mining at the wrong sites. The Corps permit suspensions may have been influenced by a lawsuit filed by the **Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment and Earthjustice**, on behalf of OVEC, the **Coal River Mountain Watch**, and the **West Virginia Highlands Conservancy**.

## WISCONSIN

Congratulations to the **Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger (CSWAB)** for successfully convincing the US EPA to prohibit the open burning of PCB waste found in old buildings owned by the military. This decision prevents the Army from burning abandoned buildings contaminated with PCBs at the Badger Army Ammunitions plant and at hundreds of other military sites across the county that have been closed. PCBs were found in paint, pipes, walls and other surfaces at the Badger facility at levels as high as 22,000 parts per million (ppm). The EPA's decision prevents burning any material with PCB levels that exceed 50 ppm. CSWAB organized locally in opposition to the Army's plan to burn the PCB-contaminated buildings at the Badger facility and then took on a national campaign targeted at EPA. Local leader Laura Olah expressed cautious relief at the EPA's decision, "There are safe alternatives to open burning," she said, "The EPA decision is an opportunity for change, but the Pentagon has to be willing to come to the table and be part of the solution."



A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

# Child Proofing Our Communities

## NEED HELP MAKING YOUR SCHOOL CLEAN AND GREEN?

CHEJ/CPOC have produced a green cleaning packet containing everything you need to start a green cleaning program in your school and beyond. The Florida Alliance for Healthy Indoor Environments has already teamed up with CPOC to promote green cleaning in schools and day care centers in Florida. Find out how you can use the packet to clean and green your community. Contact Stacey Gonzalez at [sgonzalez@chej.org](mailto:sgonzalez@chej.org) for a copy.

## LANDMARK GREEN BUILDING BILL NEEDS YOUR HELP!

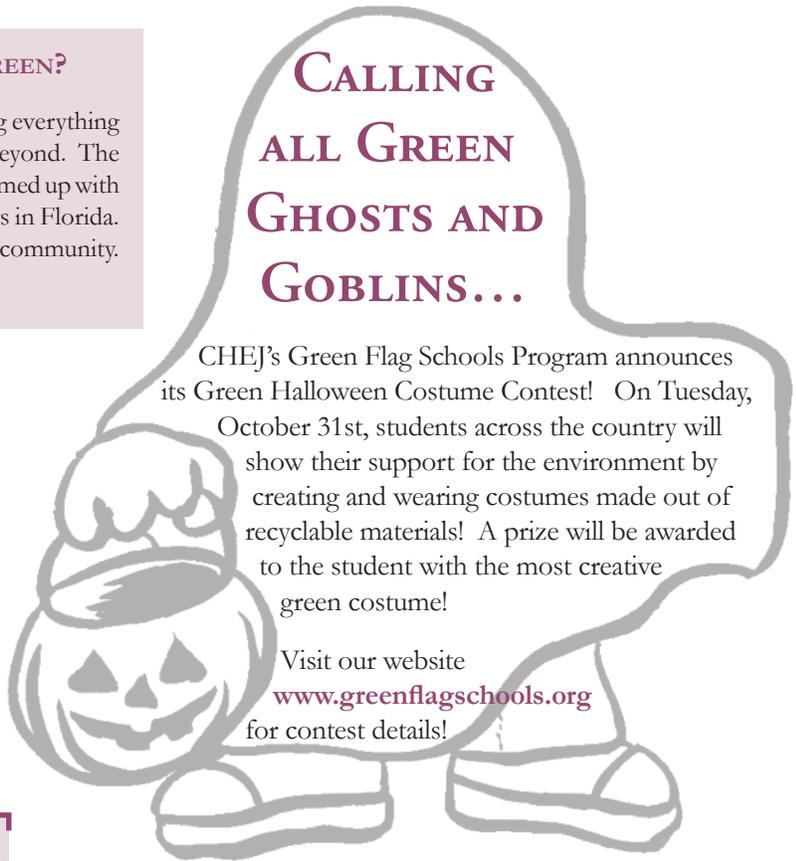
*New bill would stimulate green construction*

In June, Senator Jeffords (I-VT) introduced "The High Performance Green Buildings Act of 2006" (S-3591). The bill mandates that all newly constructed public buildings (including schools) be environmentally "green" with requirements for energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and much more. The bill is meeting with some opposition, so please call your Senator to urge him/her to support S-3591 to create healthy, energy efficient public buildings! Also, visit our website, [www.childproofing.org](http://www.childproofing.org), to sign on to a letter supporting the act.

## CALLING ALL GREEN GHOSTS AND GOBLINS...

CHEJ's Green Flag Schools Program announces its Green Halloween Costume Contest! On Tuesday, October 31st, students across the country will show their support for the environment by creating and wearing costumes made out of recyclable materials! A prize will be awarded to the student with the most creative green costume!

Visit our website [www.greenflagschools.org](http://www.greenflagschools.org) for contest details!



## 2006/2007 GREEN FLAG CONFERENCE CALL SERIES CALENDAR

- October 3rd: Welcome Back, and Green Halloween Costume Contest Kick-Off!
- November 8th (Wednesday): Faith-Based Schools Raise the Green Flag!
- December 5th: Buying Green: The Power of Eco-Purchasing
- January 2nd: Healthy Resolutions for the New Year
- February 6th: Let's Pass an Environmental Policy at Our School!
- March 6th: Green Cleaning With Green Flags!
- April 3rd: Earth Day Action!
- May 1st: Chemical Cleanout: The Science of Safety
- June 5th: Green Flag Show and Tell

Green Flag Conference Calls are a great way to share ideas and successes, get updates from Green Flag Staff, and hear from expert guest speakers. Calls are held on the first Tuesday of every month from 3:30 to 4:30 pm EST, 12:30 pm Pacific (dates are subject to change). All calls are free! E-mail [ludwigsv@chej.org](mailto:ludwigsv@chej.org) for details.

## GREEN FLAG/GREENFAITH PILOT PROJECT KICKS OFF!

### APPLY TODAY FOR THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY!

CHEJ and GreenFaith have launched an exciting new pilot project to foster environmental stewardship in New Jersey faith-based schools. Apply to be one of the 10 faith-based schools that will work to achieve green results with personal assistance from our NJ-based, Green Flag/GreenFaith Project Coordinator. Download an application from our website, or contact Stacey Kennealy at [skennealy@greenfaith.org](mailto:skennealy@greenfaith.org) for more information. All schools, regardless of state or affiliation are welcome to participate in CHEJ's national Green Flag Schools Program. Contact Sherman Ludwig at [ludwigsv@chej.org](mailto:ludwigsv@chej.org) to get started.

*MESSAGING, continued from page 5*

healthier economy and environment.

River Rescue, of Peoria, Illinois adopted the meme “Enough is Enough!” to halt the Peoria Disposal Company’s proposal to triple the size of its hazardous waste landfill. This meme simply stated what the group stood for, which was that they would not accept any more pollution in their already overburdened community.

### Message, Message, Message - Say it Again and Again

Consistent use of the same meme is a critical factor in successful messaging. Your main meme (e.g., Enough is Enough!) becomes the central idea or theme for all your outreach materials and activities. It must be a short (less than 12 words), declarative, and believable statement that addresses your target audience. It should be repeated over and over through the life of the campaign.

Messages can be followed by three supporting points that reinforce its importance, uniqueness and believability. For instance:

Enough is Enough! No More Landfills in Libertyville!

- Libertyville has a full landfill that will be in our community for generations and has already reduced property values in the town;
- Landfill gases pose serious health threats to nearby residents and to the environment;
- Traffic on already congested Route 123 will increase by 40% if this expansion is approved.

These three simple points appeal to the core values of most people: livelihood, health and quality of life.

### Crafting a Winning Story

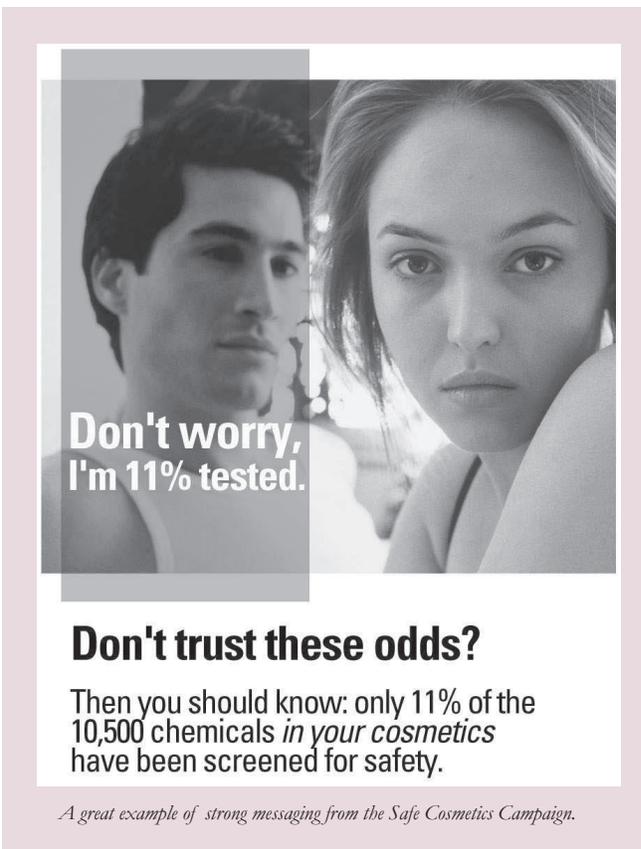
Messaging is much like story telling. To be effective, your story should be told through a consistent voice, enforce a value-based theme, and speak to a specific audience. The story itself should:

- Highlight one **conflict** and make the choice plain and clear;
- Use **sympathetic characters**, i.e. the local farmer or the young child;
- **Show** what you mean by appealing to the values of your target audience, and;
- **Offer vision** - Is your group advocating going back to the Stone Age, or looking towards a vibrant, healthy, forward thinking community?

Messaging is an additional tool, along with scientific/technical information, basic organizing strategies, and direct action you need to build the capacity of your organization and to make your group a visible, compelling, well researched and persuasive advocate for a healthier tomorrow. Get smart! 🌟

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*Messaging by the Smartmeme team was one of the skills based trainings at CHEJ/BE SAFE’s Conference on Precaution (see the other feature in this newsletter). Look out for more skills trainings, including on messaging, offered by CHEJ in the coming year.*



*CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS, continued from page 3*

of all kinds,” stated Nancy Myers of Science and Environmental Health Network in the economics workshop. “How would we use the precautionary approach to do an economic analysis? It means assigning value to human health and the environment. That’s the precautionary ethic. That doesn’t necessarily mean dollar value. It means taking uncertainty into account in some meaningful way. It means describing full costs and harms as well as benefits and describing the distribution of those costs—fairness is inherent in the precautionary ethic. Finally, we’d be examining safer alternatives.”

“How much is it worth, per life saved, to prevent pollution that would otherwise kill a certain number of vulnerable people each year?” noted Frank Ackerman of Tufts University in this same workshop. “Attempts to assign artificial prices to such externalities rarely succeed in producing meaningful numbers...*This is the realm of precaution per se, where it is important to act on the basis of credible early warnings, rather than waiting for impossibly complete information.* Dioxin is an extraordinarily potent carcinogen according to most (but not quite all) scientists; should we work to phase out substances like PVC that give rise to dioxin, or wait for more scientific research? These questions cannot be resolved by definitive, bottom-line cost calculations; they call for precautionary value judgments about protecting ourselves, our environment, and our future.”

A critical component of precaution is the solution-oriented substitution and alternatives assessment approaches to find safer materials and practices described by Joel Tickner of Lowell Center for Sustainable Production. A great example was provided by Peter Sinsheimer of Occidental College with the first policy that “created the greenest shade of clean” through substitution of PCE dry cleaning in the LA Region.

*Continued on next page*

# With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between May 13 and August 17, 2006. 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.

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

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Norbert Holmblad

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David Harris & Megan Draheim  
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Foundation for Worker, Veteran, & Environmental Health  
Health Care Without Harm  
Jewish Organizing Initiative  
Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation  
Malcolm Pirnie  
Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition

*CHEJ wishes to give special thanks to our late friend Norbert Holmblad, a generous supporter of our cause who passed away last year. As both an activist and a member of CHEJ's Partners' Circle for nearly two decades, Mr. Holmblad inspired us with his spirit and passion. His generous bequest to CHEJ is deeply appreciated and ensures that his vision for a healthier world lives on.*

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS, *continued*



Saerom Park, Public Citizen, at the State Multi-Issue Precautionary Policy Workshop.

The Health Studies workshop, led by Dr. Richard Clapp of Boston University, addressed how health studies strategically fit into the organizing work of local groups and challenged the audience to think about

how studies can help achieve community goals. Participants learned about the different ways health data can be collected and evaluated, the strengths and limitations of these methods, and considered whether these options could provide the information needed to help achieve community goals.

Effective messaging and publicity are crucial to any successful campaign and Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough of the *smartMeme* Strategy and Training Project described how we can reach the public using compelling stories with values-based messaging. A number of these excellent presentations are available at [www.besafenet.com](http://www.besafenet.com). The site also includes a summary of the *Pioneer of Precaution* awards that honored the ground-breaking work of eighteen groups and institutions, ten individuals and three companies.

In other sessions, participants developed precautionary action strategies on toxic and nuclear pollution, pesticides, schools, marketplace campaigns, nanotechnology, land use and other issues. Many speakers prepared posters for a popular Poster Exhibit which graphically portrayed numerous precautionary laws and campaigns. Lastly, participants created an exciting list of activities to create a precautionary world that included: 1) Building a bigger "tent" of diverse groups; 2) Creating a common vision; 3) Organizing days of action and regional meetings; 4) Taking political action; and 5) Developing more effective messaging. These action steps are further described on the BE SAFE Campaign Page of this newsletter. ☀

Sam Suds, PI (poisons investigator) is no ordinary detective - his job is to protect the Johnson household from dangerous toxins. He'd been a hero in the past, locking away household villains like lead and DDT. Now, he faces one of the most toxic offenders yet: PVC - the poison plastic. But the trail had gone cold. Word around the bathroom was he was washed up.

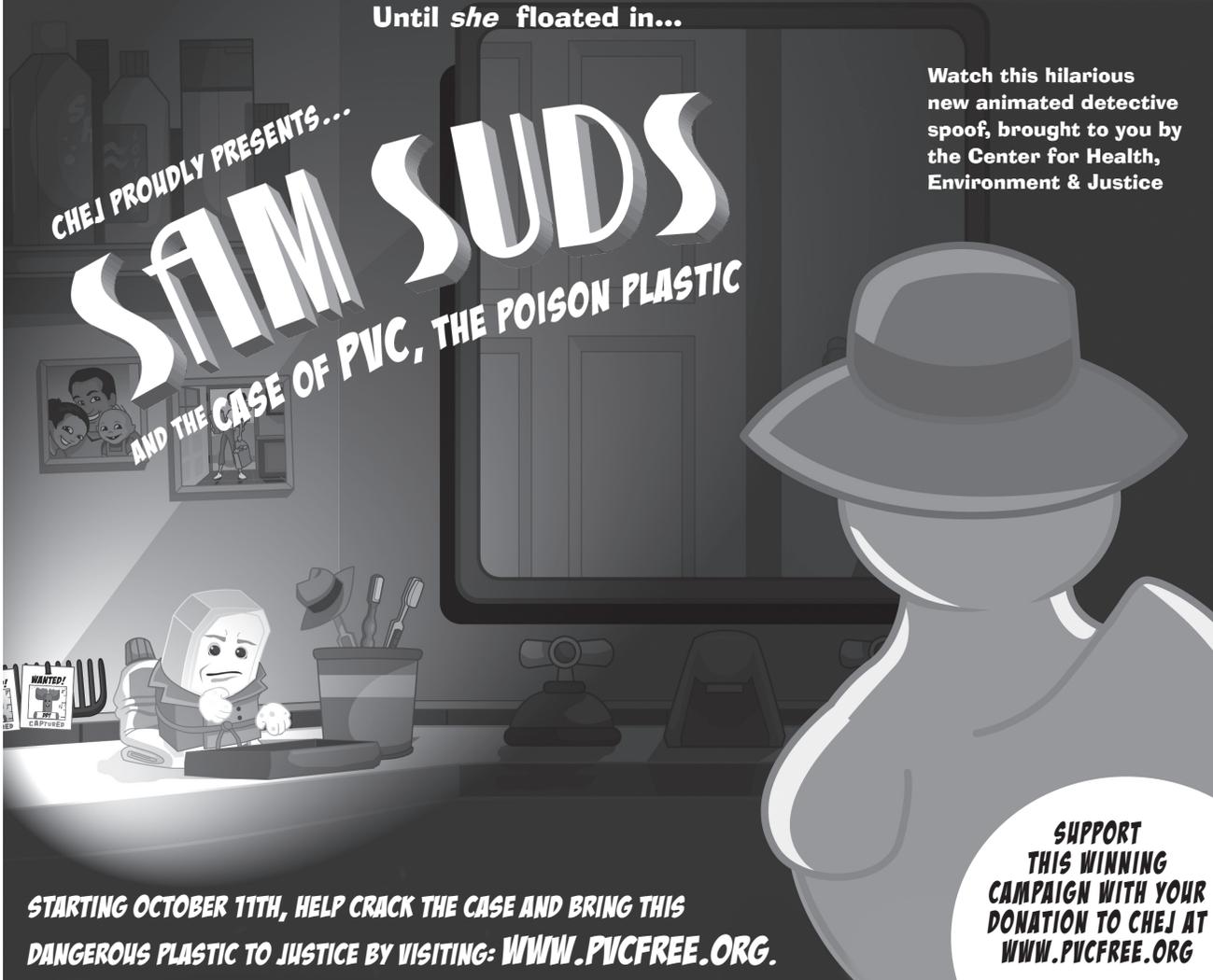
Until *she* floated in...

CHEJ PROUDLY PRESENTS...

# SAM SUDS

AND THE CASE OF PVC, THE POISON PLASTIC

Watch this hilarious new animated detective spoof, brought to you by the Center for Health, Environment & Justice



STARTING OCTOBER 11TH, HELP CRACK THE CASE AND BRING THIS DANGEROUS PLASTIC TO JUSTICE BY VISITING: [WWW.PVCFREE.ORG](http://WWW.PVCFREE.ORG).

SUPPORT THIS WINNING CAMPAIGN WITH YOUR DONATION TO CHEJ AT [WWW.PVCFREE.ORG](http://WWW.PVCFREE.ORG)

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