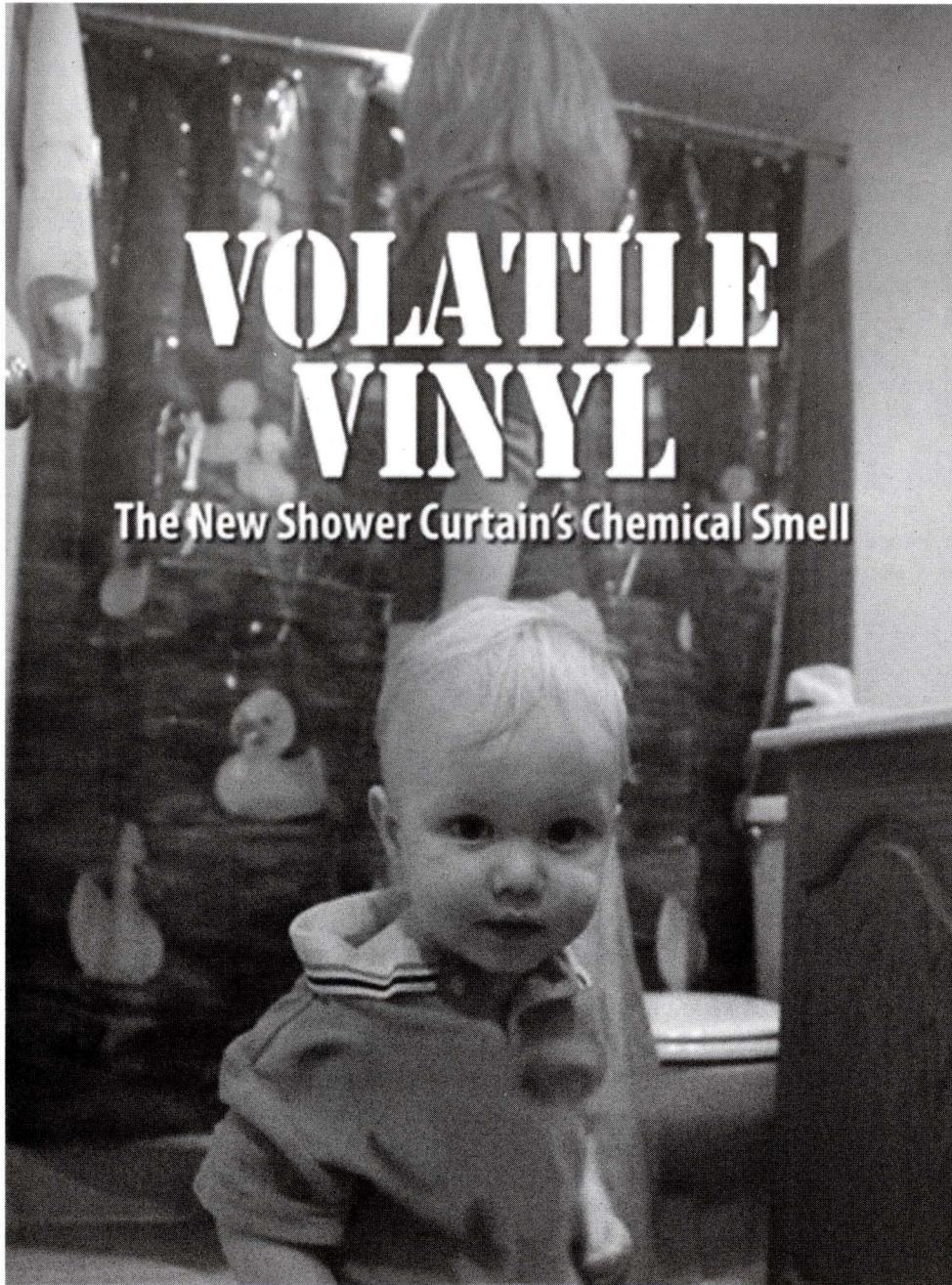


# EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

Vol. 26 No.2 Summer 2008



America's  
New Green  
Wave

The Love  
Canals  
of Today



The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement

[www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org)

Center for Health, Environment and Justice

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**On the Cover:**  
**CHEJ's New Report**  
**Volatile Vinyl: The New Shower**  
**Curtain's Chemical Smell**

# THE POWER OF DOOR KNOCKING

As this spring arrived, I began thinking about what happened 30 years ago at Love Canal. What did we learn then that might be helpful to share?

I remember reading in the local newspaper that 20,000 tons of dangerous toxic chemicals were buried in the Love Canal dump three blocks from my home. This was the first time I had heard about the dump and was shocked. The news article went on to describe how the elementary school that my five year old son attended was built on the edge of the dump and that the playground was on top of the landfill.

I became frightened and convinced that the dumpsite and playground had something to do with why my five year old son was sick. I knew that others were reading the same article and that someone would soon be knocking on my door asking me to sign a petition, write a letter, or something. So I waited, but no one came. More frightening articles were published in the paper.

Finally, tired of waiting and concerned about my ill son, I drafted a petition to close the school and began to go door-to-door. One woman who answered one of the first doors that I knocked on said, "thank god you are here. I've been waiting for someone to come and give me some guidance about what to do."

Many people at Love Canal read the same newspaper and watched the story unfold on TV, but like me, were waiting for someone to help them figure out what to do about it.

This is an important lesson that we need to keep in mind as we move forward to create change. There are many people that agree with us, or who want to better understand the issue so they can decide how they stand on the issue. But they are waiting for someone to knock on their door. These people are often characterized as lazy or apathetic because they don't get involved. And they may not come out to meetings initially. Many of these people will, however, get involved if you reach out to them.

My advice is always, go door-to-door and talk with people. There is a reason why candidates go door-to-door during elections. There is no substitute for talking directly with people if you want them to become part of your effort. Even today, 30 years later, with the internet and other electronic communication options, door-to-door campaigns still work best.

Take a walk this spring or summer and knock on some doors and talk with people about the issue you care most about. You're likely to find some interested people who may have been waiting for someone to knock on their door and give them guidance about what to do.

For a Healthy Environment,  
Lois Marie Gibbs

## ABOUT CHEJ

CHEJ mentors a movement building healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm caused by chemical and toxic threats. We accomplish our work through programs focusing on different types of environmental health threats. CHEJ also works with communities to empower groups by providing the tools, direction, and encouragement they need to advocate for human health, to prevent harm and to work towards environmental integrity. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for families living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ to continue the journey. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help families and communities prevent harm can be found at <http://www.chej.org>.

# TODAY'S LOVE CANALS

## THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The journey launched at Love Canal in Niagara Falls, NY not only started a movement working towards the prevention of harm caused by toxic and chemical threats, it also helped to define for a nation the life cycle of chemical contamination. The term Love Canal has entered into America's consciousness, symbolizing the fight to stop chemical exposures and cleanup dumpsites. Today's Love Canals encompass communities, workers, and families exposed to toxic chemicals at different stages of this life cycle. Because of the suffering seen by the world during Love Canal, Americans are now more open to believing, understanding and connecting the dots between exposure to hazardous substances and human illness. People are beginning to understand that the fight at Love Canal continues today in their own lives.

### Love Canal – The Life Cycle of Chemical Contamination

Countless communities today battle their own Love Canals. A community in rural North Carolina is trying to stop a proposed national biohazards defense facility. In New Bedford, Massachusetts students, parents and teachers are bewildered as to why a middle school was built across the street from a high school where high levels of PCBs were present in the soil. In Fort Bragg, California, residents are getting organized to address the cleanup of an old paper mill site with high levels of dioxin that is targeted for development. These are just a few examples of the places on the toxic life cycle that begins with the production of a chemical, sometimes occurs with the use of consumer products, and continues during disposal.

For years CHEJ has been campaigning against the poison plastic known as PVC (polyvinyl chloride) precisely because of the harm that this plastic can cause to consumers, workers and neighboring communities. Prior to successful efforts to

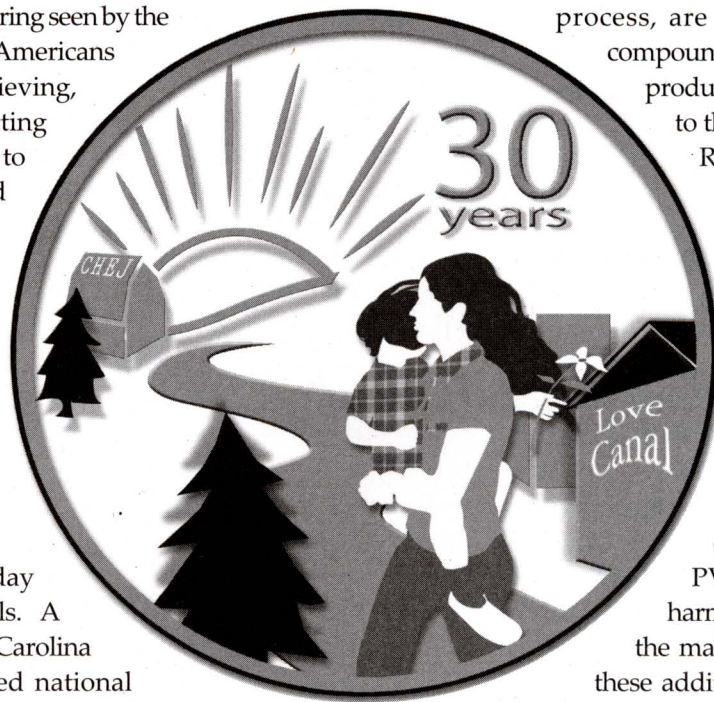
get major retailers to phase out PVC products and packaging, parents routinely purchased products made from PVC such as baby bibs and toys. But the harm did not start there. When PVC is made, workers are exposed to toxic chemicals including vinyl chloride, a known human carcinogen, and residents living in the area surrounding these plants are exposed to toxic air emissions and to ground water contaminated by waste water discharged from the plant.

Dioxins, formed as a by-product of the PVC production process, are a highly toxic group of chemical compounds that accumulate in dairy and meat products. They can cause cancer and damage to the immune and reproductive systems. Residents in Mossville, Louisiana, the PVC capitol of America, were found to have three times more dioxins in their blood than the average U.S. citizen and cancer rates for their local parish were almost two times the national average.

Exposures and harm do not stop with the workers or the people who live near the production plants. They continue with the consumers who use PVC products. PVC plastic contains harmful chemicals—additives used to soften the material and to prevent decay. Many of these additives are not chemically bound to the PVC, so they easily leach or evaporate out of products, such as flooring, shower curtains, or children's toys. Additives can include lead, cadmium or phthalates, which have been found to cause reproductive damage. Ultimately, when these flexible PVC products are discarded, they will either be buried in a landfill or burned in an incinerator, where dioxins are formed and released amidst the surrounding community, giving toxic birth to one more Love Canal.

### Love Canal: The Legacy Continues

One of today's Love Canals can be found in Pensacola, Florida, dubbed "Mount Dioxin" by those living in its shadow. Mt. Dioxin is a sixty foot tall mountain of soil contaminated with dioxins that was created by the EPA as part of a cleanup plan to remove soil from this community. It contained dioxin levels that were over 30,000



Continued on page 11



# BE SAFE Campaign

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

## Volatile Vinyl – The New Shower Curtain’s Chemical Smell

This June, CHEJ released a major new report, *Volatile Vinyl: The New Shower Curtain’s Chemical Smell*, which found the familiar “new shower curtain smell” may be toxic to your health. CHEJ found:

- PVC plastic shower curtains purchased at Bed Bath & Beyond, Kmart, Sears, Target and Wal-Mart all contained avoidable toxic chemicals including volatile organic compounds (VOCs), phthalates, organotins and metals.
- PVC shower curtains can release over 100 VOCs into the air inside our homes.
- Some chemicals were found in the air 28 days after a PVC shower curtain was unwrapped and hung.
- Some of these chemicals cause developmental damage as well as damage to the liver and central nervous, respiratory and reproductive systems.
- The levels of Total VOCs measured after 6 hours were over 16 times greater than the recommended guidelines for indoor air quality established by the U.S. Green Building Council and the Washington State Indoor Air Quality Program.
- The results of our testing are consistent with previous studies by the U.S. and Danish Environmental Protection Agencies.

### What you can do:

- Visit our website to learn more, download the full report, and take action to protect your home from PVC shower curtains:  
<http://www.chej.org/showercurtainreport>.
- Avoid shower curtains made with PVC (vinyl). These are not always labeled, though some may be labeled as “vinyl” or “PVC.”
- Purchase PVC-free shower curtains made from safer materials including organic cotton.

## Baby’s Toxic Bottle – CHEJ Shines Light on Toxic Baby Bottles

CHEJ has been a major player in the movement to get the toxic chemical, bisphenol A (BPA), out of baby bottles. In February, CHEJ co-authored and released a new report, *Baby’s Toxic Bottle*, which found that leading baby bottle manufacturers sell baby bottles that leach BPA when used and heated. Through our work, CHEJ’s BE SAFE campaign has helped convince Wal-Mart, CVS, and Playtex to get BPA out of baby bottles. CHEJ was featured in the Washington Post, ABC National News, the New York Times, and many other media outlets. To learn about the dangers of BPA and simple steps you can take to protect your family from this unnecessary toxic chemical, visit our new website:  
<http://www.babystoxicbottle.org>.

## Dozens of State Legislatures Say: Get Toxics Out of Toys

Several states are moving legislation against toxics in children’s toys and products. Washington recently passed the nation’s toughest law strictly limiting lead, phthalates and cadmium in toys sold or made in the state. Maine approved a policy to establish a list of 100 priority chemicals requiring safer alternative assessments so less toxic or non-toxic materials can be used in children’s products whenever possible. CHEJ’s inflatable 25-foot Be Safe Duck “Betty” visited both WA and ME as part of her multi-state toxic toys tour, helping to generate media and political support to pass these precedent-setting policies. Betty also visited CA, CT, NJ, and MN. Twenty-seven other states are moving forward with bills to address the toxic toy scandal. CHEJ’s BE SAFE campaign is working with groups in New York on toxic toy legislative reforms. Want to get it moving in your state? Contact us at 518-732-4538 or [annerabe@msn.com](mailto:annerabe@msn.com) for a packet of sample toxic toy laws and bills.

BY ANNE RABE, CHEJ BE SAFE CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

## AMERICA'S NEW GREEN WAVE

America is in the midst of a new green wave. Across the country, communities and governments are going green, whether it's reducing pesticides in schools, switching to green purchasing or reclaiming polluted Brownfield sites. A renewed commitment to recycling and waste reduction to achieve "zero waste" is also taking off in both rural and urban neighborhoods. Retailers from Wal-Mart to Toys-R-Us are scrambling to outdo each other with green policies, and every month another manufacturer agrees to phase out a dangerous toxic substance from their product.

How did this green wave get started? This is truly a case of "if the people lead, the leaders will follow." You and I have created this growing trend as more and more people see the wisdom of preventing harm by adopting greener lifestyles, through purchasing of safer products, reducing waste, recycling and more. Consumer desires are really changing corporate practices as we hold manufacturers and politicians accountable for protecting public health and transitioning away from a toxic tomorrow.

Studies show that toxic chemicals from everyday products are contaminating our bodies. Health problems, such as the breast cancer epidemic, have been linked to our exposure to chemical cocktails throughout our lives. Consumers are telling companies to stop playing a Russian roulette guessing game about whether a certain chemical will or will not harm us—just stop using it and switch to a safer alternative. The recent scandals about lead in lunch boxes, bisphenol A in baby bottles, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) components such as lead and cadmium leaching



out of kids' toys underscores how America's out-dated regulations are failing to protect us from dangerous toxic exposures. People are saying enough is enough. We want safe products. We want to stop spraying toxic pesticides around our children at school. We want recycling and waste reduction instead of mega-dumps and incinerators.

People are telling government and industry to take a "better safe than sorry" approach motivated by caution and prevention. This precautionary approach is really a systemic change that is transforming the way America regulates environmental hazards. It is rooted in a paradigm shift away from risk/cost/benefit decision-making that asks, "What level of harm is acceptable?" to a precautionary approach which asks, "How can we prevent harm?"

Here are just a few exciting highlights of the new green wave to prevent harm.

### Highlights of the New Green Wave

**Safer Baby Products** - Wal-Mart, Target, Sears, Kmart and Toys"R"Us are phasing out or restricting toxic chemicals such as phthalates, lead and the "poison plastic" PVC in children's toys and baby products.

**Eco-Friendly Beauty** - Consumer protests over toxic ingredients in beauty products have led to many cosmetic companies switching to non-toxic ingredients.

**Safer Toys** - Leading toy manufacturers such as International Playthings and Lego Systems are phasing out PVC, and Hasbro and Mattel are following the European Union ban on phthalates in children's toys.

**Toxic Toy Laws** - Washington and Maine passed laws against toxics in children's toys with requirements for safer alternatives; 27 other states are following their lead.

*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.*

## Alabama

**East Coosa Concerned Citizens (ECCC)** in Kellyton is organizing to block the siting of a rock quarry. The group packed the volunteer fire department building and nearly everyone wore buttons that read "NO Quarry." Every local and state elected official supports the group and their efforts to stop the quarry. Despite this, the state regulating agency told the crowd that there is no law that prevents the operation of the quarry and that there is nothing they can do to stop it. Though frustrated, ECCC is not giving up and is now applying pressure on their county commission to create ordinances that make the company liable for future health issues. They also want the company to post a bond with the required business license issued by the county.

## Arizona

**The Corona Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** is fighting to clean up a severe mold problem at the Corona Del Sol High School in Tempe. The mold resulted from a poorly functioning ventilation system that's 30 years old. The system is being replaced this summer, but the school district has no plans to clean the entire building of the mold and is creating holes in the walls to release the fumes instead. They are only cleaning areas of mold that are clearly visible. CHEJ has been providing organizing assistance to the group who is considering doing its own health survey. CCAC, whose main goal is to protect the children and staff at the school, is also considering filing a lawsuit because of how many children, teachers and workers are ill.

## California

**California Alliance to Stop the Spray (CASS)** wants to stop the aerial spraying of pesticides that will affect nearly 7 million people in the Bay Area. The state wants to eradicate the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) by spraying a pheromone (sex-attractant substance) for months at a time for anywhere from 5 to 10 years. However, little is known about the effects of the pheromone on human health and the environment. The state briefly sprayed last September over Santa Cruz and Monterey and over 600 cases of illness were reported. Scientists from UC Santa Cruz and UC Davis have spoken out against the use of this pesticide calling it ineffective and unnecessary. CASS has filed lawsuits to buy time, but the decision is in the hands of the Governor, who has ordered safety tests.

A judge in Santa Cruz has ruled that an Environmental Impact Report must be completed before spraying can resume, which is now scheduled for mid-summer. CASS is not expecting the state's tests to reveal any harm, so they are organizing an educational effort to stop the spraying. CHEJ has been helping with organizing strategies.

Residents in Fort Bragg are getting organized to address the cleanup of the Georgia Pacific paper mill site that's contaminated with dioxins and other chemicals. Residents are concerned that the testing done at the site is inadequate. Dioxin spread throughout the site and the community when wood waste was burned there. Ash piles from the burning remain on-site and represent some of the highest dioxin concentrations found. The mill, which has been closed for years, is now targeted for mixed use development which also has the residents concerned. CHEJ's Lois Gibbs visited the site in 2006 when the dioxin results were first released to the public. CHEJ's technical staff is working with community leaders to provide information on dioxin levels found at the site.

## Connecticut

Members of the **Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice** celebrated their latest success when the state legislature passed the state's first environmental justice law after five years of effort. The bill now goes to the governor for his signature. If passed, the law will recognize 25 low-income towns as distress municipalities and 34 low-income neighborhoods in other towns throughout the state as environmental justice communities. Proposals in these communities to site certain types of polluting facilities would be required to 1) get approval for an enhanced public outreach plan, including a public meeting at least 60 days before the state would make any decisions, and 2) negotiate with the chief elected official and the environmental justice community about environmental benefits to offset any likely environmental hazards that would result from the proposed facility. For more information, see [www.environmental-justice.org](http://www.environmental-justice.org).

## Florida

**Floridians Against Incinerators in Disguise** held a press conference in Tallahassee to expose proposals by Green Power Systems and Goplasma to build plasma

arc facilities to process garbage as incinerators in disguise. The group warned of the potential dangers of these facilities and launched a campaign to stop them. Speakers from **Greenaction** and the **Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives**, both based in California, addressed misleading claims made by companies proposing plasma arc facilities in the state, as well as around the world. They also discussed the troubled history of this technology and explained why they are incinerators in disguise that emit dioxins and other pollutants into the air.

Congratulations to the **Farmworker Association of Florida** in Apopka who celebrated 25 years of work and accomplishments in the struggle for the rights of farmworkers in Florida.

## Georgia

**North Georgia Against Septage Spreading (NGASS)** want the land application of septage waste in White County stopped. Many of the members of this group are neighbors of LHR Farms/Rocking H Ranch that accepts septic waste for disposal. They do this mostly by spreading the waste on their 350 acre site. For years, neighbors have complained to local officials about odors and other health issues to no avail. But as they began organizing their protest and going door to door, they started noticing a trend – there seemed to be a great number of illnesses and unexplained, undiagnosable symptoms surrounding this unmarked waste facility. NGASS now believes the land owner may be accepting hazardous waste and they are organizing to find out and shut down this operation. CHEJ is providing organizing support.

Residents in Elberton organized to draft a proposed ordinance to deal with the rapidly expanding chicken industry in their county. Working with the Elbert County Land Use Committee, they drafted recommendations for regulating this industry. Their proposal called for a 1,500-foot set-back between chicken farms and residential property lines. Prior to this effort, a 400-foot set-back existed. The County Commission adopted the 1,500-foot set-back requirement for public places such as churches, parks, and schools, but they only granted a 750-foot set-back between chicken farms and residential property lines. Over 120 citizens turned out in support of the recommendations from the citizens and Land Use Committee. The group also presented hundreds of signatures on a petition in support of their recommendations. Organizers did not get all they wanted, but they considered it a win because they got more than what they had. Commissioners will vote on the final law soon.

## Idaho

**The Idaho Conservation League** and local residents celebrated when the Potlatch Corp withdrew its plan

# ACTION LINE

to obtain a permit to burn alternative fuels at its pulp and paper mill in Lewiston. Company officials cited difficulty in finding a supplier capable of providing a steady stream of fuel, including construction, demolition and other waste, as the reason for their decision. Local residents felt their opposition to the plan might have had something to do with it as well. Congratulations!

## Louisiana

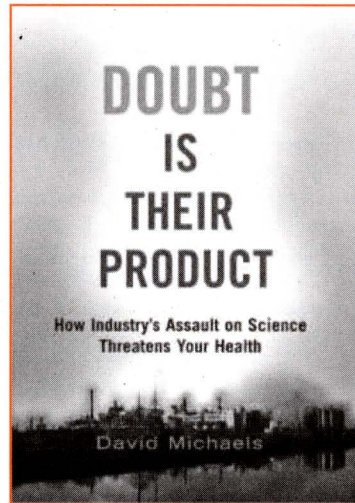
Activists in St. Charles Parrish are leery of a donation of land by British Petroleum (BP) that is targeted for a new library. The group wants the library, but they don't want it built on contaminated soil. The site was once the location of a BP refinery. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality evaluated test results from the site and determined that the property was suitable for use as a public library and many other non-residential land uses. CHEJ's review of the data found that the testing was limited and insufficient to evaluate the risks posed by the site. CHEJ has encouraged the activists to organize and get others involved to address this situation. What started as a \$3 million renovation of an existing building has escalated into the \$8 million construction of a new building on contaminated land. Activists have documented a clear case of violations, but the vote to move the project to the next step is up to the Parrish Council, the latest target of the group's organizing efforts.

## Massachusetts

Residents in Billerica and surrounding towns are organizing to oppose a proposed 348-megawatt power plant burning natural gas and diesel fuel on the banks of the Concord River. Several groups formed including the **Billerica Watchers Group**. Residents are concerned about air pollution, the location in a crowded residential area, impacts on water quality, traffic, and noise. Billerica officials are awaiting the results of several studies commissioned to evaluate the impact of the plant on the environment, water supply and sewer capacity. There are numerous permits and approvals that will be needed and the groups are organizing to educate people about the proposed plant. CHEJ has been asked to provide organizing support and we are hoping to bring together the groups that have formed to oppose the plant.

## Michigan

**The Tittabawassee River Watch** in Saginaw sent letters to their federal legislators asking them to investigate the firing of EPA Region V Administrator Mary Gabe. Gabe told reporters that she was fired because of aggressive enforcement against Dow Chemical for their dioxin contamination. Last spring, EPA ordered Dow to cleanup dioxin contamination along the Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers that included some of the highest levels of dioxin in the



## Great New Resource

*Doubt is Their Product* is a convincing account of how scientists-for-hire and corporate spin experts help polluters and manufacturers of dangerous products thwart government regulators and defeat the lawsuits of victims seeking compensation. The success of the tobacco companies in manufacturing doubt about health risks has fostered a new industry of scientists who challenge scientific findings in order to cast doubt on studies that identify risks to public health. Many of these scientists-for-hire have moved on to defending pharmaceuticals, asbestos, chromium, and other toxic chemicals. This is a must-have book for all toxic activists.

Nation. Dow has done nothing except challenge EPA's cleanup order. One local resident had this to say. "We have watched Dow manipulate legislators, local officials, and the Governor in Michigan for too many years. They are now apparently calling the shots at the federal level and we want to know why?"

## Nevada

Activists are organizing to address possible health threats caused by run off from the Sunrise Landfill in Clark County, just east of Las Vegas. Developers have built more than 900 homes at the edge of the landfill. This new development is home to mostly low-income Latino residents. Although the landfill was closed in 1993, it was never properly closed. A clay cap was poorly installed causing cracks to form that provide a pathway for water to mix with waste. This "leachate" drains into the area where the new homes were built, raising safety and environmental questions. Landfill odors are also a concern. A flood in 1998 resulted in tons of waste from the landfill being washed out into the newly developed area, raising concerns about potential contamination. County officials estimate it will cost millions of dollars over 30 years to maintain the cap, monitor the groundwater, and collect and burn off the landfill gases. Some of the new homeowners are upset that they were never told about the landfill and the problems it poses for homes built so close. CHEJ is providing organizing support to the residents.

## New Jersey

Residents of Haledon are unhappy with a neighboring cement plant and are organizing to get their voices heard. Residents want the cement-mixing plant to become a better and more respectful neighbor. They want operating hours to be reasonable; aesthetic barriers built between their homes and the plant; and a better dust management plan. They are meeting with

city leaders to present a proposal for making this plant a better neighbor. Local organizers expect to get what they want because they are working together with a consistent message and persistent effort.

## New York

Residents in North Tonawanda are trying to figure out what's the source of a foul smelling milky substance that's in their storm water drainage system. The sulfur-like odor has not been identified and citizens want to know if it is toxic. The public health agency has been less than candid about the substance, leading to growing suspicion. A neighborhood group is forming with help from CHEJ. They are demanding proof that this substance is not toxic or a threat to their health.

Over 50 community leaders and local officials called for a full cleanup of the GE Dewey Loeffel Superfund toxic dump at a recent public meeting in Nassau, near Albany. **United Neighbors Concerned about GE Dewey Loeffel Landfill (UNCAGED)** urged the state to cleanup the polluted Nassau Lake, build a new dam and begin a health study to better understand if illnesses have increased from exposures to the over 46,000 tons of toxic waste at the site. UNCAGED is concerned that contaminants have moved beyond the landfill site and have impacted surrounding neighbors.

## Ohio

**Community Justice League (CJL)** and **Organize Ohio** want to stop the demolition of Roosevelt High School in Dayton because of possible contamination spreading to the neighboring homes. CHEJ was asked to provide organizing support. CJL and Organize Ohio petitioned the federal, regional and OH EPA to stop the demolition arguing that because the community is African-American and low-income,

# ACTION LINE

the demolition group had not done its due diligence of informing the residents about possible dangers. Among the contaminants of concern are asbestos, chloroform, trichloroethylene and perchloroethylene. CJL has requested a delay in demolition until adequate safety procedures can be put in place to protect the residents.

Members of the **Northwest Neighborhood Alliance** (NNA) are organizing to stop a proposed 6 million chicken egg farm from locating in York Township. The group is facing an uphill battle according to state regulators who say that nothing the group can do will stop the proposal. "If the farm meets all the regulations and requirements for permitting, the director doesn't have a choice - he has to approve it. He would be sued if he didn't. The laws were set up this way by the legislature and only they can change them." Although local officials are frustrated that they have no say in this matter, NNA refuses to accept defeat and is pushing on in opposition to the egg farm.

## Pennsylvania

Residents in Collegeville and **Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future** celebrated recently when they learned that Superior Tube Co announced that the company would eliminate the use of trichloroethylene (TCE) from its manufacturing process. A spokesperson for the company said that TCE, a suspected carcinogen, would be replaced by another chemical. The community has been fighting to get Superior Tube to stop using TCE for over a year since learning that air monitors in the town had detected the highest levels of TCE recorded in the state. Congratulations to all involved for this hard earned victory!

**Alliance for a Clean Environment** (ACE) in Pottstown cried foul, when the state agreed to accept \$34 million from Waste Management to close the Pottstown Landfill. "The public will end up paying not only with their health, but also financially," said Donna Cuthbert of ACE. "The \$34 million bond is absurd. That wouldn't begin to cover costs for environmental damage already done, much less problems that may occur in the future, she said in a guest editorial. ACE feels that Waste Management is getting away cheap and that the public will have to foot the bill when the landfill needs repair and cleanup.

## South Carolina

Over 250 residents of Anderson County turned out at a public hearing to oppose the siting of a construction & demolition landfill. Residents are concerned about the landfill's impact on the watershed, water tables, groundwater, roads and other issues. The leaders have requested an extension on the public comment period and are considering numerous legal challenges. They are also continuing to collect signatures to pass a zoning ordinance that would prohibit landfills in areas

zoned for farming. CHEJ is providing organizing support to the leaders of this effort.

## Texas

**Fort Worth Citizens Against Neighborhood Drilling Ordinance** (FWCANDO) formed in response to natural gas drilling activities encroaching on their neighborhood. They believe gas drilling and related activities are a threat to people, property and wildlife and have generated a list of demands including an immediate moratorium on gas drilling in Fort Worth until a new ordinance can be written that includes input from the citizenry, an evaluation of the effects of gas drilling on property values and marketability, and an independent study of gas drilling's effect on air pollution in Fort Worth. A leader in the group contacted CHEJ looking for help in finding a lawyer to take on the oil and gas company. CHEJ staff discussed various organizing strategies with the leader including whether a legal

out to be an overloaded inadequate pipe. CITGO will likely face fines from the state.

## Virginia

CHEJ is working with an emerging group of families who formerly resided in military housing in Virginia Beach which they believe was built on an old landfill. The residents believe that Navy AS Oceana buried toxic waste as well as live munitions in the landfill and that their health has been affected by chemicals migrating into the air and soil and leaching through broken pipes into their water supply. Although the housing was closed and demolished by 1997, the area remains a "wasteland." The residents are organizing to expose what happened to them and many other families who lived in this housing.

## Washington

Congratulations to the **Washington Toxics Coalition** and other groups in the state who helped pass the Children's Safe Products Act. The new law dramatically cuts the amount of lead, cadmium, and phthalates, a chemical used to soften hard plastics, allowed in children's toys, cosmetics, jewelry, teething items, and car seats made or sold in the state. The Governor signed the bill in April.

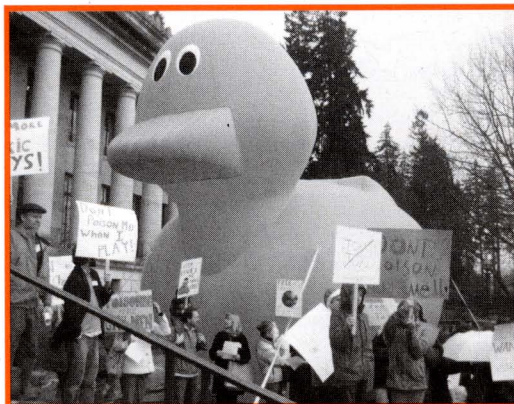
## West Virginia

Local leaders in Fairmont contacted CHEJ looking for information and organizing help to address local sewage back-up problems. Residents are frustrated that the town's sewage system periodically fails allowing sewage to back up into their homes. The governing

body in the county has appointed a commission to come up with a response. Impacted citizens are seeking immediate relief since this problem was caused by a change in the way the county treats the sewage. A legal suit awarded the county a \$3.5 million judgment to repair the system; however, little has been available to assist people.

## Wisconsin

**Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger** (CSWAB) are continuing their efforts to monitor the activities at the Badger Army Ammunitions Plant. CSWAB is challenging the US Army and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to require additional cleanup at the site before the property is transferred to the state. The group is concerned that the risk assessments used by the Army to define the cleanup levels on the 1,800-acre site were too limited and did not take into consideration impacts on wildlife and humans through the ingestion of food. The Army feels they have done enough. CSWAB plans to continue to confront the Army until the final cleanup levels pose no threat to human health or the environment. ♦



Washington Toxics Coalition protests toxic toys.

strategy was their best option. The leader spoke about people being offered \$15,000 and more to sell mineral rights in residential neighborhoods and cases where others are building expensive homes on sites and then being told that the mineral rights have already been sold. CHEJ is encouraging FWCANDO to involve as many people as possible in their efforts to take on the oil and gas companies.

**Citizens for Environmental Justice** (CEJ) with support from the **Global Community Monitor** collected wipe samples from their neighborhood and found toxic chemicals that resulted from a major release of chemicals at the CITGO Refining and Chemical Co. facility in Corpus Christi. Numerous polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), many of which are carcinogenic, were found in two samples, one taken from the hood of an automobile. "While CITGO was passing out car wash tickets, they should have passed out gloves and masks too, said Suzie Canales of CEJ. An investigation of the accident concluded that CITGO could have avoided the accidental release with a better design for what turned





A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

# Child Proofing Our Communities

## Empowering the Next Generation of Activists

CHEJ often gets calls from people in crisis. Whether it's a mother uncovering a severe mold problem in her child's school, or a teacher fighting to prevent a school from being built on contaminated land, people across the country are beginning to realize that our society does not prioritize the prevention of harm. If we want this to change, we need a new vision, one that does not accept chemical exposure as routine, especially contamination in the bodies of our children. By encouraging our children to join the environmental health movement and by including them in decisions that prevent polluting facilities from being built or shut down, the next generation has the opportunity to help shape a society that stops harmful environmental practices before they begin and can cause harm.

The Green Flag School Program is one way to implement real change in our communities, and to allow the next generation to be the environmental stewards of today. By organizing fellow students and assisting school districts in setting environmental policies, students can find their own place in making change happen. They can be the decision makers and gain the leadership skills needed to create a future in which preventing harm isn't just a lofty idea, but simply the way communities and society functions.

Adi Segal, a freshman at Columbia University, considers himself to be an environmentalist, a social activist, and an educator. He has been interested in social and environmental justice his whole life and in 2006, Adi's high school was selected, along with nine other schools,

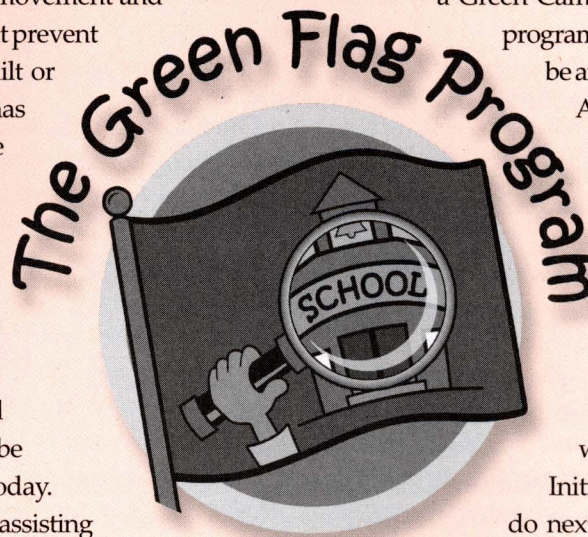
to launch the Green Flag, GreenFaith Schools Program in New Jersey. During that year, Adi learned what it means to take action, mobilize a community, and lead with a vision. The accomplishments his school made while participating in this program inspired him to see how far he could really go.

Last summer he brought his leadership skills to Camp Ramah, a summer camp in the Berkshires. He started a Green Camp Initiative that included a recycling program and led workshops on what it means to be an environmentalist fighting for change.

After that first summer, Adi decided it wasn't enough and with the help of Stacey Kennealy, the Green Flag, GreenFaith Coordinator, applied for a 2008 Conscious Lifestyle Venture grant. Conscious Lifestyle grants empower students and schools to be more socially responsible. Adi laid out a plan, wrote a proposal, and won a grant to expand his Green Camp Initiative. When asked what he wants to do next, Adi replied, "I want to change the environmental impact of all summer camps."

The lesson we can all learn from Adi is that the time to take action to protect our children's health is now, and that our children can lead us into a safer tomorrow.

*For more information about starting a Green Flag program at your school, contact Renee Blanchard at 703-237-2249 x 21 or [rblanchard@chej.org](mailto:rblanchard@chej.org). Also visit <http://www.greenflagschools.org/>.*



GREEN WAVE, continued from page 5

**Banning BPA** - Parents, stores, state governments and even an entire country (Canada), are ditching plastic baby bottles and other items containing the chemical bisphenol-A as an increasing number of studies on BPA show adverse health problems.

**Green Building Wave** - From Los Angeles to New York City, an increasing number of builders are following green building rules by using safer materials and cutting millions of tons of climate change pollution.

**Green Roofs Popping Up** - Designed to curb air pollution, decrease energy expenses and reduce storm runoff, environmentally friendly green roofs are growing strong in urban skylines.

**Safer Hospitals and Schools** - Many hospitals are phasing out mercury in products and following environmentally-friendly construction principles, while dozens of schools are adopting green cleaning practices and phasing out pesticide use.

**Reclaiming Blighted Brownfields** - Polluted lots are being cleaned up, and industrial waterways are being transformed by state and federal Brownfield programs.

**Green Cleaning** - As consumer concern over chemical cleaning products grows, more homes and institutions are switching to environmentally-friendly cleaning supplies.

**Green Gadgets** - Green is a hot color in the housewares industry with more natural or biodegradable materials appearing in home furnishings and products.

**Cool Cities** - From anti-idling ordinances to energy saving practices, municipalities are taking the environmental lead amid growing public concern over climate change.

**Green-Collar Jobs** - Jobs in green industries are growing, including eco-friendly construction, renewable and alternative energy, green chemistry and sustainable agriculture.

**Students Go Green** - Eco-activism is hitting college campuses as students tackle climate change, recycling and other issues with teach-ins and organizing campaigns.

**Eco-Friendly Agriculture** - Sales of organic, pesticide-free food and support for locally based community supported agriculture programs (CSAs) are experiencing major growth.

**Bag the Plastic** - Whole Foods Market, the largest U.S. natural foods grocer, stopped using disposable plastic bags at its checkout counters, joining some local governments in prohibiting their use.

**Green TV is Red Hot** - From thrillers to documentaries, environmental shows are this year's hot favorites with TV producers worldwide.

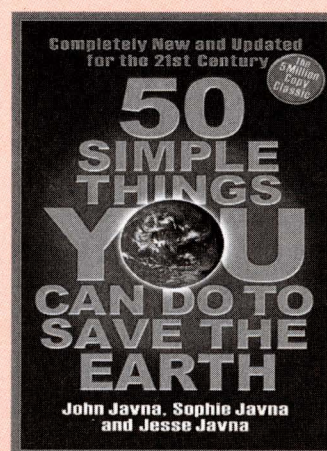
**First Green Pope** - The Vatican added "polluting the Earth" to the Church's list of sins, and issued strong statements on global climate change. ♦

*Do you have a green wave example? Do you need help in starting to green your community and tackle a local toxics problem? Check out the new Save the Earth book (see box) and contact CHEJ at 703-237-2249 or [annerabe@msn.com](mailto:annerabe@msn.com) or [ron@chej.org](mailto:ron@chej.org). Together we can transform our communities, governments and industries and prevent harm with safer, green solutions.*

## Best Selling Save the Earth Book is Back

The #1 New York Times best seller, 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth, is back! And this time, the authors have joined forces with 50 leading environmental groups, including CHEJ. Our Green Flag Schools Program is prominently featured in Chapter 28. For information, go to:

<http://50simplethings.com/books.html>.



## THE TOXIC 10: TOP CORPORATE POLLUTERS IN U.S.

1. E.I. Du Pont de Nemours & Co.
2. Nissan Motors
3. Archer Daniels Midland
4. Bayer Group
5. Dow Chemical
6. Eastman Kodak
7. General Electric
8. Arcelor Mittal
9. U.S. Steel
10. Exxon/Mobil

Source: Political Economy Research Institute, Univ Massachusetts. See: [www.peri.umass.edu/toxic100-Index.430.0.html](http://www.peri.umass.edu/toxic100-Index.430.0.html)

# With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations and pledges to support our work between February 1, 2008 and April 30, 2008. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated. Thank you for your support!

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Kathy Pillsbury

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(Gifts of \$100 – \$999)

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Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

## TODAY'S LOVE CANALS, continued from page 3

times higher than the state cleanup level, as well as arsenic and dieldrin, a banned pesticide. Decades earlier, wooden utility poles, railroad ties and foundation pilings were treated at the nearby Escambia Treating Company, causing chemicals to spread into the community. In the early 1990s, Mt. Dioxin was created and covered with a plastic liner intended to last for a few years, but that liner remains to this day. During the 1990s, CHEJ worked hand in hand with the local group Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE), and in 1996, CATE successfully won relocation for over 350 African American families living in the affected area. Left behind, however, were residents living in areas where dioxin levels were not high enough for the government to relocate them. It took another 10 years, but these residents also won relocation when the EPA agreed to move the remaining 58 families in 2006. CATE, however, continues to fight for the cleanup of their Love Canal, demanding "complete detoxification" of the contaminated soil that makes up Mt. Dioxin.

Hope, inspired by the victory at Love Canal, is the inspiration that energizes the residents in East Liverpool, Ohio as they continue to fight against an incinerator forced upon them over twenty years ago. The smokestack from the incinerator, clearly visible to children at a nearby elementary school, belches hydrogen chloride, dioxins, mercury, lead and chromium. Only 1,100 feet from the school, along a floodplain, only 300 feet from the closest house, a Swiss company now operates this hazardous waste facility, despite the fact that Ohio law prohibits incinerators from

being any closer than 2,000 feet from a school. Even with the law on their side, these families – suffering from high cancer rates – have learned they need to do more. The experience, success and stick-to-itiveness first exhibited by Love Canal residents, is the fuel that fires the local group Save our County and other East Liverpoolers in the face of their Love Canal.

Other Love Canal fights are just getting started, as in Collier Heights Canal, Georgia, so dubbed by one of its residents to symbolize the Love Canal struggle. The number of rare cancer deaths in the area coupled with strange stains emerging along driveways and streets in one section of this historic African American community, where Martin Luther King Jr. once lived, are enough for residents to reach out to state environmental officials and to CHEJ. Mentoring and working with leaders in this community, CHEJ has begun working to find answers for the residents.

Today's Love Canals are places along the life cycle of chemical contamination. Yet, the Love Canal journey is not a cycle, but rather continually moves forward towards prevention of the harm caused by exposure to toxic and chemical threats at all stages of this cycle. A public awakened to the consequences of exposures to the toxic chemicals at all stages in this life cycle is one more key mile marker on this journey that illustrates the lessons learned from Love Canal, where the journey began. ♦

# COMMEMORATE THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF LOVE CANAL IN A MEANINGFUL WAY!

CHEJ supporters tell us that one of the many pleasures that comes from reading *Everyone's Backyard* is the valuable information they get to share with family, friends, and colleagues.

This year, you have the special opportunity to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of Love Canal and help grow CHEJ's membership base with an extra donation of just \$30!

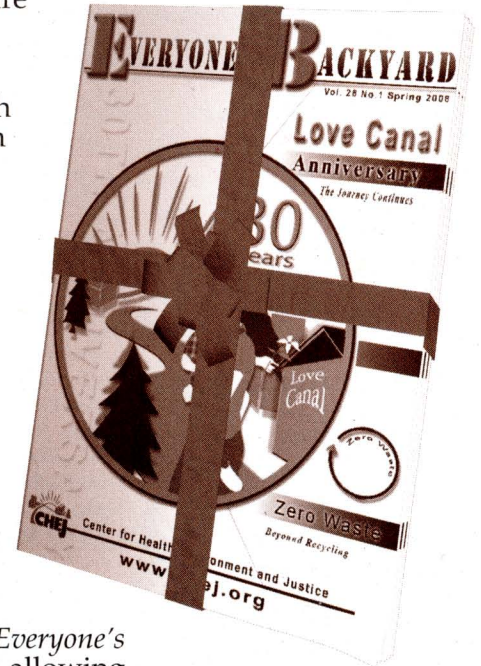
Know someone that would benefit from a subscription to *Everyone's Backyard*?

At just \$30, a yearly subscription to *Everyone's Backyard* is the gift that keeps giving to recent graduates, expectant mothers, newlyweds—anyone who wants to know how to protect themselves and their families from harmful chemicals in their environment.

Would you rather give *Everyone's Backyard* to someone CHEJ knows could really use it?

Your extra gift of \$30 this year will make possible a gift membership of *Everyone's Backyard* to a person that CHEJ works with in an at-risk community, allowing him or her to tap into the latest successful organizing strategies and how-to resources.

**TO GIVE THIS IMPORTANT GIFT NOW, PLEASE CALL CHEJ AT 703-237-2249, EXT. 27, OR VISIT [WWW.CHEJ.ORG](http://WWW.CHEJ.ORG) AND CLICK ON THE "DONATE NOW" BUTTON.**



**Thank you for your support!**

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