

# EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

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## Growing Resistance to Mountaintop Removal



## Using Twitter in Your Organizing Work



The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement

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

Center for Health, Environment & Justice



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### On the Cover:

Civil Disobedience in Protest  
of Coal River Valley, WV  
Mountaintop Removal  
photo by Vernon Haltom

# CREATING GOOD ENDINGS

Since President Obama took office, the country has been in a nasty whirlwind with the economy crashing, unemployment rising, attacks on health care reform, problems in the Middle East and more. But among these challenging issues there is some good news; something that's new, exciting and raising expectations in the grassroots environmental movement.

Grassroots leaders have access. We are being invited to participate in conversations about how to change the way government agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR), and federal offices concerned with children's health set priorities.

Lisa Jackson, the EPA Administrator met with me and other leaders to talk about the Science Advisory Board's review of the dioxin reassessment. We also spoke about School Siting guidelines and she agreed to include CHEJ's Science Director in the agency's process to develop the guidelines.

The Director of ATSDR, Dr. Howard Frumkin added CHEJ to their leadership council to explore how the agency can better serve the public around environmental chemical exposure and human health risks. Additionally, over 300 people, many from communities across the country that CHEJ has worked with over the years were invited to a "public conversation" about the agency's future direction.

The Obama administration has openly supported the reinstatement of the Superfund fee on corporations. These funds will provide the resources for more cleanups of the worst contaminated sites in the country. Additionally this administration has put a stop to the debate of whether Climate Change is real or not and is taking action to curb its effects.

Leaders are excited about this new access and the ability to participate, as they should be. But what does this really mean? We have a seat at the table, but how can we be sure that we don't get complacent and become part of the problem? It is easy to get caught up in being part of a conversation around an agenda that doesn't really focus on the root problems. For example, at the ATSDR public conversation meeting, the agenda was designed to discuss ideas for the agency to move forward. There was no place for a conversation about past activities, successes or failures except when it related to their forward facing agenda. Consequently, one community leader forced the meeting decision-makers to stop and talk about the serious problems that communities have experienced with ATSDR over the past 20 years before moving forward. It's important to learn from our history.

I'm excited to see this administration inviting more than the traditional established professionals to the table. However, it is our responsibility to ensure that we come to those seats with community driven goals for change and that participants be brave and speak up, take some risks. This is our opportunity to get it right.

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>.



BY BO WEBB

## GROWING RESISTANCE TO MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL

If ever there was a poster child that expressed “corporate profit before humanity” and exposed a government that aided and abetted such greed, one need to look no further than the Marsh Fork Elementary School, located in the Coal River Valley near Sundial, WV. Surrounded by a 2,000 acre mountaintop removal operation run by Massey Energy, this school sits in the shadow of a coal silo that loads diesel burning locomotive coal trains a

mere 200 feet from its back door. A chemical scrubber coal washing plant operates just 150 yards away, while a seeping toxic sludge dam containing 2.8 billion gallons of coal waste ominously looms over the school. In 2006, the Governor was hand delivered a scientific report which concluded that the children and staff at Marsh Fork Elementary were breathing fine particulate coal dust laden with chemicals and heavy metals. To this day the Governor has refused to act, electing instead to instruct the state school board to check the school for mold. After finding no mold, the Governor declared the school safe. Even more perplexing is the fact that the scientist who conducted the coal dust study is the vice chair of the Governor’s Environmental Quality Board.

### Abused regulations and a bought and paid for government

To fully understand how something like mountaintop removal could happen in America, one would need to study the history of West Virginia. Suffice it to say that long ago the Coal Barons shaped the state government to their liking, and they continue to wield a heavy hand of influence to this day. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is the mine permitting agency that rubber-stamps the permits. Governor Joe Manchin is the lead lobbyist and cheerleader for the coal industry.

### Resistance

A serious and growing resistance to mountaintop removal began in 2002 shortly after the Bush administration redefined the clean water act allowing



*Mountaintop removal protesters stopped by WV State Police as they approach the entrance to the Massey Energy plant next to Marsh Fork Elementary School, near Sundial, WV.*

photo by Vernon Hatton

“fill material” to be placed in U.S. streams, and then quickly followed that with redefining mountaintop removal waste as “fill material.”

In late 2004, a relatively small group of people representing West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina began meeting to discuss a campaign intended to ban mountaintop removal. It would be called Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) and was shaped much like the historical campaigns of Redwood Summer

and Mississippi Freedom in that it would use non-violent, non-destructive civil disobedience as one of its chief tactics. The first act of civil disobedience by MJS took place on May 24, 2005 when two local residents attempted to cross the bridge leading to Massey Energy’s mining complex next to the Marsh Fork Elementary School. They were arrested by the state police after refusing to leave Massey property before delivering a list of demands to the mine president. One week later, on May 31st, Mountain Justice Summer volunteers along with local Coal River Valley residents marched from the school to the same bridge where 16 more people were arrested after refusing to leave. Those arrests, coupled with similar arrests that year in Tennessee and Virginia exposed the shocking practice of mountaintop removal to the American public.

### Mountaintop Removal

Mountaintop Removal by definition is the removal of as much as 800 feet of a mountain in order to extract thin layers of coal deemed un-mineable by conventional underground methods. As underground coal mines in West Virginia are being mined out, coal industry owners led by Massey Energy have decapitated more than 500 mountains in their quest for more coal. The process begins with the removal of all vegetation as the forest is quickly bulldozed to the ground and burned. Once void of all trees and underbrush, the mountain is blasted and its carcass is dumped into nearby valleys. Today, more than 2,000 miles of Appalachian head water source streams are buried beneath blasting waste from mountaintop removal valley fills.

As of today, mountaintop removal has not been banned, but the resistance has steadily grown into what is now an unmistakable movement. After exhaustive lobbying since 2005, letter writing campaigns and building the movement, the time has

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# 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.*

## Pricing Pollution?

*Vinyl plastic is a bargain. Chemicals bring good things to life. Nuclear power will be too cheap to meter.* We've all heard these claims of cost-effectiveness for environmentally destructive practices, technologies or chemicals. You know that industry is not taking into account all the "true costs" when they make these claims, and government and industry do not fully account for the economic costs that pollution creates. What are the real costs of environmental damage?

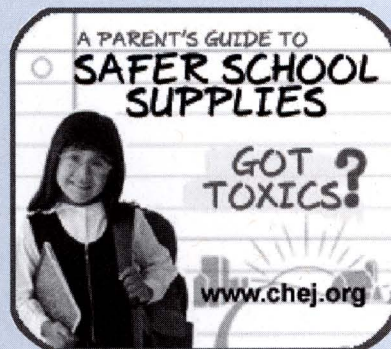
The truth is that vinyl is unacceptably expensive when you take into account the serious health effects and environmental damage it causes from production to disposal. The true costs of using toxic chemicals in products should include increased illnesses among workers and consumers and water and air pollution. The nuclear industry neglects to include the astronomical cost of taking care of highly radioactive waste for the tens of thousands of years that it remains dangerous.

CHEJ's **True Cost Environmental Tool Kit** provides you with information on how organizations are uncovering the true costs of environmentally hazardous chemicals and technologies. Fact sheets by experts describe the powerful tool of precautionary economic analysis and studies looking at the costs of environmental disease. Links are provided to 16 studies that have uncovered the real cost of environmental hazards, including the health-related cost of using toxic chemicals. Go to [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org).

## Getting Media Coverage

Struggling to make your voice heard over industry's public relations consultants? Trying to get your side of the story covered by the newspapers? Wondering where to start? CHEJ is here to help with our new Media & Messaging Tool Kit of Fact Sheets, sample News Advisories and News Releases and more. Find all the tips and tricks to help your group compete with the corporate media machine. Learn how to use the new "social media" of blogs and tweets to get out your message. Go to [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org).

## Go PVC-Free for Back-to-School!



Worried about toxic chemicals in your children's school supplies? This year, when you send your kids off to school, send them off with school supplies that are free of PVC, the poison plastic. The Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) is proud to announce the release of our 2nd annual **Back-to-School Guide to PVC-Free School Supplies** to help you make healthy shopping choices that are safer for your kids, your community and the environment. This guide lists the most common back-to-school supplies made out of toxic PVC and suggests safer PVC-free alternatives in over 20 product categories. We also have a handy wallet-sized version of the guide. **Get your free copy right now at [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org).**

## Why Shop for PVC-Free School Supplies?

Many children's school supplies, such as lunchboxes, backpacks and binders, are made out of PVC—a toxic plastic that is dangerous to our health and the environment. PVC is unique among plastics because it contains dangerous chemical additives. These chemicals include phthalates, lead, cadmium, and/or organotins, which can be toxic to your child's health. These additives can leach out or evaporate into the air over time posing unnecessary dangers to children. Over 90% of all phthalates are used to soften or plasticize PVC products. **Children are at risk from even small exposures to these toxic chemicals.**



BY MOIRA BULLOCH, CHEJ'S DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

## INTO THE TWITTERVERSE

### USING TWITTER IN YOUR ORGANIZING WORK

Twitter. It's everywhere. All the talking heads on television gush over it but the rest of us just think, 'Isn't Twitter the website where teenagers write about what they had for lunch?'

You may think that Twitter is trivial, but it has become a powerful tool for community activists. Twitter has been described as the modern-day salon; the space where we exchange ideas. It has become the new leveler, where you can interact with journalists and policy-makers that you might never meet in real life.

Everyone is using twitter, from the President to your local journalist to the mom next door who is keeping tabs on her teens. Senators use Twitter to communicate with their constituents. Journalists use Twitter to find interviews. Polluters and other corporations monitor Twitter for mentions of their brand, making Twitter a powerful forum for corporate campaigns. Bloggers brainstorm ideas on Twitter, and activists connect with others.

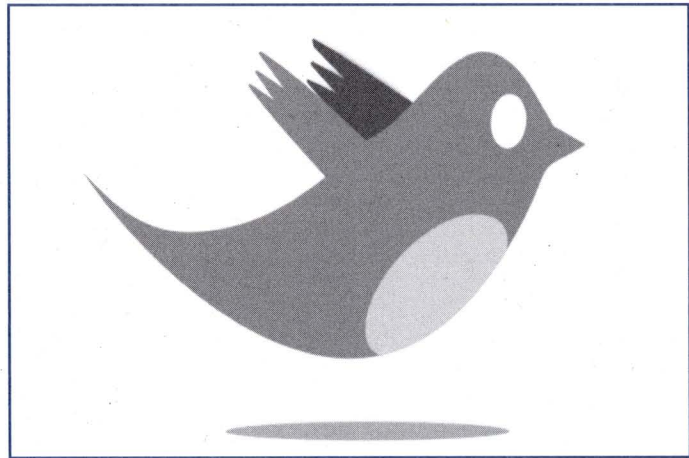
But what exactly is Twitter? Twitter is a website-based tool that people use to see what others are thinking about. You publish your thoughts, in one or two brief sentences and anyone can read it, even if they are not Twitter members. You can use Twitter to get an answer to a question, for feedback on a new idea, to hear breaking news, or just to keep up with your network of activists. You can also use twitter to publicize your latest report.

Before getting started, let's first take a look at what Twitter can do for the community organizer.

#### Organizing Tools on Twitter

**Petitions:** Twitter may be a very basic service, but third-party developers have created tools that make Twitter useful for community organizers. Use <http://act.ly> to start a petition on Twitter. Other Twitter users can sign using Twitter, and you can even direct the petition at a certain Twitter user, such as @BarackObama (or any politician or corporation).

**Tweetups:** Twitter can be used to connect in person as well. Organizers use Twitter to bring people together in spontaneous meet-ups, or in Twitter parlance, 'Tweetups'. Spread the word via Twitter for your next town hall meeting or rally by using the



#tweetup hashtag and ask those in your network to retweet the invitation. Websites like <http://twtvite.com> help you share maps, RSVP lists, and other important information.

**Tweet-Ins:** You could also take action by hosting a 'Tweet-In' on an issue by organizing to have everyone tweet about it during a set time period. If you organize enough people to tweet with a certain keyword, you can make it onto the list of trending topics that appears on every Twitter user's homepage and capture the interest of hundreds of thousands of people. In July, Greenpeace staged an anti-PVC action against Hewlett-Packard and increased awareness by having hundreds of people tweet about the demonstration on the same day. Tweet-ins allow supporters to be there in spirit if they cannot attend your event.

**Events:** Twitter is also a powerful tool for networking at conferences. Organizers often designate a hashtag for the conference (#NameOfConference). Attendees can comment on the speakers, or suggest a breakout session by including the hashtag in their tweet to meet like-minded people.

#### Getting Started

To get started, you need to create an account. Go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and click the green button 'Sign Up Now' and join the conversation. Your next step is to choose a username for your account. Select a username that allows others to find you; consider using your full name or the name of your organization. Another option is to use your email name or the name of your blog if it is widely known among your contacts. On Twitter, you will be known as @username. For example, my username at CHEJ is @chej, just like our website, [www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org).

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# 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 more than 25 years of operation. We welcome and encourage contributions.*



## California

Environmental activists nationwide mourn the loss of Luke Cole, founder and executive director of the **Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE)** in San Francisco who passed away in June while on vacation in Uganda. After graduating from Harvard Law, Luke made it his priority to bridge the worlds of traditional environmentalism and civil rights with the field of environmental justice. In establishing CRPE, Luke sought to help and empower low income communities of color in their struggles. Luke understood environmental injustice and racism as fundamentally political issues that must be addressed from the "bottom up". His legacy within environmental justice advocacy resonates deeply with CHEJ's mission, and although we will mourn his passing, we will not forget the lessons he taught and practiced. Our sympathies are with his family.

Parents in **Kettleman City** are organizing against the influx of pollution in their community and the impact it's had on the health of their children—a recent health survey by **Greenaction** found that 30% of children born within a 14 month period had birth defects. Parents were joined at a recent press conference by environmental justice groups and other community leaders to press government agencies to declare a state of emergency in the region. The advocacy groups **El Pueblo**, **Kids Protecting Our Planet**, **Greenaction**, and the **Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment** organized a march and rally to honor infants who have passed away due to pollution and to pressure the government to stop the expansion of the Chemical Waste Kettleman Hills toxic dump as well as a proposed energy plant in nearby Avenal.

## Colorado

Residents in **Delta** are organizing to oppose a proposed asphalt plant in a rural area with few zoning requirements. CHEJ is working to help the residents form a group and organize their efforts. The group had a large turnout at a County Commission meeting where many people spoke out against the proposal. Although the commissioners granted the permit, it was restricted to the time needed to complete the road work and contingent upon their getting a second contract from the state. The leaders hope the issue may be moot since the owner did not get the state contract.

## Connecticut

Dozens of local residents in **Waterbury** marched in protest to a rally in front of the site of a proposed food waste-to-energy facility. Over 60 individuals from church congregations, civic organizations, neighborhood groups, businesses, civil rights groups, and local politicians marched against Chestnut Hill BioEnergy's proposed incinerator, which would bring nearly 600 tons of garbage a day to the city. Using a bullhorn, protesters called on the governor to heed the will of the people and stop the proposed incinerator. The mayor of the city who opposes the proposed plant attended the rally and encouraged the protesters.

## Delaware

After testing by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) found higher than normal levels of mercury, manganese, and lead in emissions from the Evraz Claymont Steel facility, community members of **Claymont** have charged the plant for their failure in reducing the hazards. With assistance from the **Global Community Monitor** and financing from Evraz Claymont Steel via an agreement with the DNREC, residents have successfully organized their own monitoring program and continue to apply pressure against the industry.

## Florida

**Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE)** did not share EPA's glee when the agency announced that it had received \$2.5 million via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that it planned to use to complete the cleanup of the

Escambia Treating Company Superfund Site in Pensacola. These funds allow the agency to finally remove the last of the 225,000 cubic yard dioxin-contaminated soil that has been stockpiled at the site since 1991. CATE is not happy that EPA's cleanup plan involves burying the stockpiled soil, coined "Mt Dioxin" by local residents, on-site. They want the contaminated soil removed from the site.

The **Farmworker Association of Florida** in Apopka is working with concerned parents to stop the siting of a new school on the site of an old orange grove contaminated with pesticides. The group has been organizing for about a year and thought the fight was over after they met with the superintendent of schools about the school. But now the plan to build the school in the same location is back and the parents are re-energizing their efforts to block the school.

## Indiana

**Concerned Citizens of Crawford County** are organizing to oppose a plan to build a biomass energy generating power plant in Crawford County. According to the company, Liberty Green Renewables Indiana, the plant would burn clean wood for fuel as well as crops such as switch grass or corn stover. Residents are concerned about air emissions, health impacts, water use, and waste water disposal and have been working to involve as many people as possible to stop the facility. Their focus now is on the air quality permit. CHEJ is providing organizing and technical support.

## Kentucky

Residents of Rubbertown cheered a recent court decision that will help them address toxic air pollution from 11 plants in their neighborhood. In the midst of a fairness hearing between one of the plants, Zeon Chemicals, and those living within two miles of the site, a judge ruled that the proposed settlement was unfair because some residents would receive compensation while others would not. **Rubbertown Emergency Action** had actively organized against the lawsuit arguing that anyone living within two miles of the facility was forced into the settlement without choice. With this ruling, community members will not be bound by terms of an unfair ruling, and can continue to organize against polluting industries in the region.

## Louisiana

**Save Lake Peigneur** wants to stop AGL Resources of Georgia from expanding its natural gas storage facility below Lake Peigneur in Jefferson Island. The group is concerned about the safety of doubling the size of the facility and increasing the massive amounts of highly pressurized natural gas that



# ACTION LINE

## Need organizing help?

Visit [www.chej.org/assistance](http://www.chej.org/assistance)  
or call 703-237-2249 x17.

would be stored in the middle of a community of 5,000 people. Another major issue is the 9 billion gallons of fresh drinking water AGL needs to create more gas storage. The expansion would also result in dredging portions of the lake which residents say will stir up pollutants that have settled on the bottom of the lake and will impact fish and other wildlife. CHEJ is working with the group leaders on tactics and strategies.

### Maine

Residents in **Auburn** cheered when the City Council voted 4-0 to shut down a local incinerator. Burning fuel made from sludge, the facility has been faulted for some time due to necessary repairs and debates over its safety, as well as concerns about air emissions. The sludge will be removed from the incinerator while engineers assess the damage; however, city officials have noted that it will most likely stay closed. Officials are thinking of replacing the incinerator with an anaerobic digester, which will transform the sludge into compost and energy-producing natural gas. Residents want to know more about the health and safety risks of this alternative.

### Michigan

The Detroit incinerator mess continues. Although the mayor was voted in on an anti-incinerator stand, an authority run by people he appointed has decided to extend a contract with Coventa to continue burning the city's trash for another year. The City Council, however, disagreed and voted 6-2 to seek a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction against further trash burning in the city. At the same time, the city launched an expanded recycling program, anticipating a shift away from burning its trash. If the city wins the injunction, waste will likely be sent to a landfill while the recycling program gets established. Activists led by the **East Michigan Environmental Action Council** held a major rally targeting the mayor who seems to have switched his position on the incinerator.

### Missouri

Residents in **Cameron** are getting organized to address concerns about high rates of brain tumors in their area. The state health department evaluated the cancer rates in the county and told the residents that "there is no cause for alarm." The group isn't buying it. For over 25 years, sludge waste from a tannery has been used by area farmers as fertilizer. The sludge is believed to contain chromium from the tanning process. CHEJ is helping the group get organized to get the soil, air and

water tested and has offered to review the testing done thus far.

### New Jersey

Three environmental advocacy groups, **Edison Wetlands Association**, **NY/NJ Baykeeper**, and **Raritan Riverkeeper** recently filed letters of intent to sue National Lead, along with several state agencies, for violating both the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Clean Water Act by polluting Raritan Bay. A study by EPA detected high levels of lead contamination—up to 198,000 parts per million (ppm)—in soil samples along the bay, far exceeding the state standard of 1,200 ppm. Another study found the same contaminants in mussels and fish. The agency has since ordered the closure of three coastal sites along the bay, and formally recommended Raritan Bay to be a Superfund site. The groups are hoping to pressure the agency into finally addressing the contamination of the bay.

**New Jersey Environmental Federation** continues to organize with residents of Lacey Township against the relicensing of the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station, the oldest operating nuclear plant in the nation. Built in the 1960's with outdated safety technologies, the facility has had a terrible environmental and safety record. **Stop the Relicensing of Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Plant Coalition (STROC)**, a coalition of citizen groups, has had several legal victories, including a ruling by the Atomic Safety Licensing Board that faulted AmerGen—the company in ownership of the plant—for intentionally using poor science to establish the "safe infrastructure" at the station. STROC has begun a campaign to get Congress to rewrite the nation's radiation exposure standards which fail to include vulnerable populations such as infants, pregnant women, and the elderly.

### New York

**The Clean Air Coalition of Western New York (CACWNY)** achieved a major victory as the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released the results of the Tonawanda Community Air Quality Study, which connected high levels of benzene in the community to emissions from the Tonawanda Coke plant, the group's primary target. The DEC conducted the study after community members took bucket brigade air samples. The group has recently gained the support of Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) who both wrote terrific letters to Tonawanda Coke and the US EPA. CHEJ has been providing organizing support and technical assistance for several years and recently participated in a 4-hour strategic planning meeting with the group. We congratulate CACWNY on their victories and growing success



A CACWNY community meeting at the Kaufman St. Fire Hall in Tonawanda which included a visit from Lois Gibbs.

**Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus** continue to support Superfund cleanup of the Gowanus Canal, located near Carroll Gardens in Brooklyn. Mayor Bloomberg opposes listing the site on Superfund because of concerns that it will hamper development. CHEJ's Anne Rabe attended a forum in July organized by the **Center for Urban Pedagogy** that provided a discussion on the pros and cons of listing the site on Superfund. Currently, over 600 residents have signed a petition supporting listing the site.

### North Carolina

**CHEJ** continued its collaboration with the **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)** as CHEJ's Science Director Stephen Lester visited Clinton in Anderson County to address resident's concerns about the dangers of waste incinerators, notably burning chicken litter waste. Fibrowatt has proposed building 3 chicken litter waste incinerators all located on a county line, where the county that decides on the permits is upwind in each instance. Attendees from both sides of the county line were fired up after the meeting and agreed to work together to oppose the proposed plan. CHEJ and BREDL also co-sponsored a sludge forum in Orange County that focused on the public health and environmental risks of the land application of wastewater sewage sludge. Over 50 people attended the forum including members of the Sewage Sludge Action Network who is very concerned about the use of sewage sludge as fertilizer and is working to educate the public about the health and environmental risks posed by this practice.

### Ohio

Residents in **Nelson Township** are getting organized to stop the land application of liquid waste by US Liquids, Inc. The company has requested a variance in their permit to dispose

photo from [www.cacwny.org/](http://www.cacwny.org/)



# ACTION LINE

of waste liquids. The permit was granted by the Garrettsville Zoning Board with the stipulation that there be no smell or overnight storage. The owner is using an old turkey farm sewage treatment facility to process liquid waste. Residents are complaining about the smell, various permit violations and possible public health dangers. The owner has a poor record of managing and paying taxes, so the group is looking into Ohio's "Bad Boy" laws. CHEJ is providing organizing support to the developing group.

**Behr VOC Area Leaders (BVOCAL)** worked with CHEJ to host an environmental justice town hall meeting in the McCook Field neighborhood in Dayton this past spring. Three years ago, people who live in this neighborhood learned that the nearby former Chrysler Airtemp plant, now owned by Behr, had leaked trichloroethylene (TCE), into the ground and that toxic vapors from the spill were coming up into homes at unsafe levels. Over half of the 400 homes that were tested were found to have elevated TCE; levels as high as 650 times the official "action level" were found. One school has already been closed. The USEPA made it a Superfund site in July. CHEJ is continuing to work with BVOCAL who want more homes tested.

The city of **Cleveland** celebrated the 40 year anniversary of the Cuyahoga River Fire of June 22, 1969. The consequence of an oil slick, debris, and other industrial pollutants, the fire drew attention to environmental concerns nationwide, leading eventually to the passage of the Clean Water Act. In the decades since the disaster, residents have witnessed drastic improvements in the river's quality including lower pollution and bacteria levels. The anniversary provides a strong example of lessons learned in the continual movement for clean water and a safe environment.

## Oregon

Residents in **Portland** are getting organized to address air emissions from numerous industrial plants in the northwest section of the city. The group is focused on the permit renewal for the ESCO facility and they are considering various strategies to get the company to voluntarily reduce its emissions following the success of residents in Marietta, OH who, after years of public pressure, finally convinced Eramet to voluntarily spend \$150 million to upgrade its pollution control equipment and reduce its air emissions. CHEJ is working with the residents to help them form a local group dedicated to reducing air emissions in this area.

## Pennsylvania

The **Elizabethtown-Mt. Joy Concerned Citizens Association** continues working on safety concerns at the Veolia C&D landfill in Milton Grove that is seeking to expand. The group recently discovered a pipeline that collects leachate from the landfill was not in compliance and demanded that the state take

control of the pipeline. A rupture in the line could adversely impact over 40 private wells. The township agreed to test the pipeline. The group was also buoyed by the news that the state DEP had denied a permit expansion to the Brads Landfill in nearby Blythe Township citing the potential costs/liability to township residents posed by the construction, operation, maintenance of the proposed expansion and closure and post-closure expenses; air quality impacts; environmental impacts; visual impacts; wetland impacts; and traffic impacts. Many of these same deficiencies exist at the Veolia landfill. They plan to use this decision to encourage more of their neighbors to join their effort.

## South Carolina

Having urged county officials to stop burning their trash, residents of **Charleston** applauded the decision by the City Council to end its contract with Montay, the county's waste disposal company. Residents had frequently complained of truck traffic, strong odors, and dangerous emissions. They also questioned the energy generated by the controversial waste-to-energy plant. The decision directs Charleston County to improve its recycling rate from 10 to 40 percent and to establish private/public partnerships regarding waste disposal. According to residents, this decision allows the county to embrace greener and safer technologies for waste disposal.

## Texas

**Citizens of Tropical Garden (CTG)** is opposing a plan by Marlin Atlantis White to build a waste water treatment plant on Gum Bayou in Dickinson and has requested a hearing with the state TCEQ. CHEJ is working with the group on getting more people involved and has contacted several statewide groups to see if they can support CTG's efforts. CTG has filed an appeal with TCEQ to have the permit request overturned because key evidence was not considered. CTG is spreading the word about their fight, focusing on pressuring key decision makers and evaluating whether a legal strategy might be effective.

Congratulations to CHEJ Board member Suzie Canales of **Corpus Christi** who was one of three recipients of the 2009 Houston-Galveston Environmental Research and Outreach (HERO) Awards presented by the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. The award honors individuals whose work has improved the quality of the environment in coastal Texas. The other honorees were Hilton Kelly of Port Arthur and Juan Parras of Houston.

## Virginia

Congratulations to the **Bristow Opposition Group**

(**BOG**) who appear to have successfully defeated plans to build two asphalt plants in Bristow. One plant was touted as a "green asphalt" plant (an oxymoron?). Both plants would have been within 1/2-mile of the Victory Elementary School. Residents were angry that an initial permit was issued to one of the plants before they knew anything about the plan. They quickly mobilized opposition, writing letters, contacting politicians, and pressuring the Board of County Supervisors who need to issue additional permits. Concerns raised by the group included foul odors, particulate fall-out, air, water, land and noise pollution, road noise and exhaust due to increased traffic, hazardous material transport, and dangers from possible plant disasters. Hundreds attended even the initial public meetings. The green asphalt plant withdrew its application in the face of this opposition and the Board of County Supervisors has indefinitely put off a vote on the second plant. BOG is pleased but they're keeping an eye on the supervisors to make sure no votes are taken without first informing the public.

## International

25 years after the 1984 Bhopal Disaster—where an explosion at a Union Carbide pesticide plant exposed over 500,000 residents to 42 tonnes of toxic methyl isocyanate gas—Dow Chemical, the company that bought Union Carbide, has continued to avoid cleaning up the contamination at the plant site. Marking the anniversary of the event and its continuing effects, 20 activists from Bhopal marched on Dow's headquarters in **London**. The activists carried bottles containing water from the contaminated ground of Bhopal—B'EAU Pal water—to demonstrate the fact that the groundwater, vegetables,

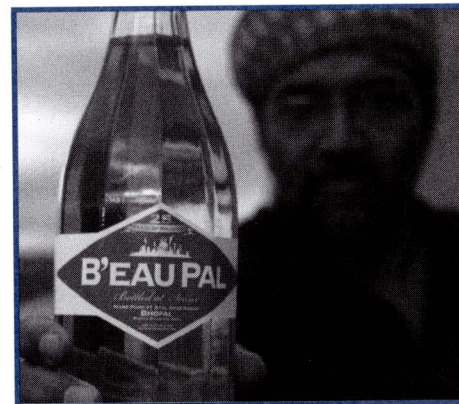


photo from [www.theyesmen.org](http://www.theyesmen.org)

*Bhopal activist, Sathyu Sarangi, holding a bottle of "Beau-Pal" water to highlight Dow Chemical's refusal to take responsibility for the Bhopal catastrophe.*

and breast milk in the Bhopal region are still contaminated with toxic substances such as lead, nickel, chromium, mercury, and volatile organic compounds released by the explosion. They also pointed out that many children born in a nearby community continue to be born with birth defects after all these years. Local activists vow to continue to pressure Dow Chemical who refuses to take any responsibility for arguably the worst industrial disaster in history. ◆





A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

# Child Proofing Our Communities

## Safe School Siting Update

EPA missed its Congressionally directed deadline on June 30, 2009 to release national voluntary school siting guidelines. But here's the good news. CHEJ has been invited to participate in a stakeholder task group brought together by the EPA Office of Children's Health and Education to help create a draft of the voluntary guidelines that is set to be released for public comment later this year. We feel that this process may help develop guidelines that we can support and that communities will be able to adopt. Meantime, continue to call EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson at 202-564-4700 to express your hope that these guidelines will be strong and comprehensive enough for your community to adopt.

Look for CHEJ's *Safe School Siting Toolkit* later this fall. This toolkit will include sample school district resolutions and policies, sample community presentations, an organizing tip sheet, and a copy of our Model School Siting Legislation. There will also be a conference call where you can learn how to take full advantage of all the great information included in this toolkit. Contact Renee Blanchard at [rblanchard@chej.org](mailto:rblanchard@chej.org) for more information about the Safe School Siting Toolkit.

## Green Flag Ideas for the New School Year

Summer is over and our kids are heading back to school, hopefully, with a mission to make it more environmentally friendly. CHEJ's Green Flag Schools Program is a great way to make this happen. Download materials from [www.greenflagschools.org](http://www.greenflagschools.org) and start your own Green Team. EPA Administrator Jackson acknowledged the success of the Green Flag Schools Program when she sent the EPA's Senior Advisor on Children's Health to attend a parent student poetry reading at a Chicago Green Flag School this past June. Starting a Green Flag program is easy and a great way to start off the new school year.

Here are five ways to get started:

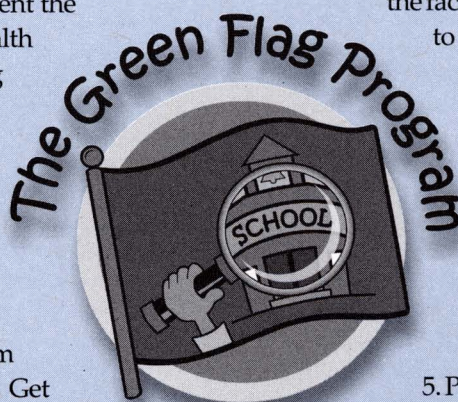
1. Introduce the Green Flag Schools Program to your school by hosting a "Get Green, Get Started!" meeting. Hang flyers on the halls and make announcements through your school's news sources.
2. Complete a survey and find out how well your school is doing and where it could use improvement. This is a great activity, which could be framed as a scavenger hunt,

to get students involved in understanding what it means to go green.

3. Throw a green cleaning party! Make improvements by replacing old toxic cleaning products with more environmentally friendly ones. Hold an open conversation with students, the facilities director and the principal about how to make sustainable changes to your cleaning practices.

4. Host a Green "Clean-Off." Get people involved by challenging classes to compete for prizes to be "The Greenest" classroom by being environmentally sustainable, eliminating toxic chemicals, and saving energy.

5. Pass a Green policy. Once you've built some momentum, give a presentation to the School Board about how the entire school district can be more sustainable. The states of IL, NY, MN, and MD have all passed state-wide green cleaning policies. Why not your school district, too? If enough school districts take action, you can build momentum for statewide policy change.





## Posting Your First Tweet

Once you have an account, you are ready to start 'tweeting'. Posts on Twitter are called 'tweets'. Tweets are limited to 140 characters. The Twitter homepage asks, "What are you doing?" and you can type your answer right into the box. Just click the 'update' button to publish your tweet.

## The ReTweet (RT)

Many tweets are prefaced with 'RT @ a username.' These are 'retweets', or someone else's tweet that you share with your network of friends. If someone had a good idea or a useful website link in their tweet, you can share it with others by "quoting" the person who sent you the idea. You would do this by using the preface 'RT@username'. For example, if CHEJ sent a tweet that said "Plastic industry finally cottons on Market for #PVC is shrinking" and you wanted to share it with others, you would take the original tweet and write "RT@CHEJ Plastic industry finally cottons on Market for #PVC is shrinking" (see box below). In the examples below, the users "MyGreenside" and "BienjBug" retweeted CHEJ. Retweeting is a way to compliment another Twitter user, spread information, and generally strengthen relationships.

### Examples of ReTweets



MyGreenSide RT @chej: **Plastics industry finally cottons on:** Market for #PVC is shrinking. <http://snurl.com/qgbaa> Sign the petition <http://bit.ly/PVCfree>  
6 days ago from bt



BienjBug RT @chej: **Plastics industry finally cottons on:** Market for #PVC is shrinking. <http://snurl.com/qgbaa> Sign petition <http://bit.ly/PVCfree>  
6 days ago from web

## The #Hashtag

With so many people tweeting, Twitter can get overwhelming. To keep conversations on track, and sort them by issue, people use 'hashtags' in their tweets. A hashtag is any word or acronym preceded by the # symbol. It gives context to a tweet. For instance, tweets about Superfund are marked with the hashtag #superfund. If you click on #superfund, Twitter will show you every tweet containing that hashtag (see top-right image). You can use as many hashtags as you like, and anyone can make one up just by using it.

### Example of #Hashtag



#Superfund Site to be transformed into UN climate change complex. That's a transformation to inspire! <http://snurl.com/pvymt>  
11:44 AM Aug 14th from web

## Getting Connected

Connect by clicking on the 'follow' button underneath a user's profile picture (see image in box). Now their tweets will show up in your Twitter 'feed' on your homepage. Remember, following someone does not mean that they will see your tweets as they still need to 'follow' you back.



Follow CHEJ on Twitter today!

Once you've started by following friends and acquaintances, the next step is to expand your network. First take a look at who your friends follow. For instance, you can find many great people in the environmental health movement by seeing who CHEJ follows at [www.twitter.com/chej/following](http://www.twitter.com/chej/following).

You can also search for tweets by keyword like "toxic waste" or "#PVCfree" to find others with similar interests. Run an advanced search at <http://search.twitter.com/advanced> where you can search for users who live near you as well as by topic.

This was just an introduction to Twitter. Get online and play around. Follow CHEJ at [www.twitter.com/chej](http://www.twitter.com/chej) to see what we're working on. For more information, check out resources like CHEJ's new Media & Messaging Tool Kit or this Twitter guide: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/>. ♦

Connect with CHEJ via Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/CHEJ>



# With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between May 1, 2009 and July 31, 2009. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated. Thank you for your support!

## GUARDIANS' CIRCLE

### Movement Builder (\$2,500-\$4,999)

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Cara Czelusniak-McCaffrey

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Wendy R. Gordon Rockefeller

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Harold & Sara O'Connell  
Alysia Solow  
Anne H. Stine

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Chen-Yu Hu  
Betty Latner  
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Nancy C. Sampson  
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### Health Defender (\$100-\$249)

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Community Action Organization of Erie County  
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ISLES, Inc.  
Omnigraphics, Inc.  
Pennsylvania Environmental Network  
Wood 'N' You

### In memory of...

Brigid Kayleigh Dingley  
Mary Beth Doyle  
Lorraine T. Franklin  
Valentin Hanno Rabe  
Tim Sampson

### In honor of...

Rollin Simmons & David Segal  
Lois Marie Gibbs  
Nyssa & Cathlyn Lubman

*GROWING RESISTANCE TO MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL, continued from page 3*

come to once again engage in civil disobedience. History proves that civil disobedience is called for and should be used when a government fails to protect citizen's rights of equal protection under the law. Placing hope on the new administration in Washington, D.C. is all well and good, but giving our new President the mandate to end mountaintop removal requires more than hope. This requires action. This year on February 3rd, for the first time ever, activists entered an operating mountaintop removal site and chained themselves to mining equipment. Five more lock down actions have occurred since, along with 3 other front gate protests, all resulting in arrests.

The protests continued this past June when 31 people were arrested blocking the very same bridge where it all began in 2005. Among the arrested this time were NASA Climatologist Dr. James Hansen, Actress Daryl Hannah, WV Congressman Ken Hechler, long time anti-mountaintop removal activist Larry Gibson, Rainforest Action Network Executive Director Michael Brune, and the same two local activists who were first arrested on the bridge in 2005, that being Goldman Prize recipient Julia Bonds and myself. Aside from the world's leading climatology scientist being arrested, one other thing marked this event as different from past actions. There was violence. The violence was perpetrated by Massey Energy employees. As we approached the bridge, the workers and their wives waited for us, screaming obscenities and

threats. A woman dressed in Massey work clothes came out of the crowd and assaulted Julia Bonds (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dP27PKnCG0>). Then on July 4th at a peaceful picnic attended by anti-mountaintop removal activists on Kayford Mountain in WV, a group of drunken Massey workers stormed the gathering and verbally assaulted several attendees. One big shirtless Massey worker yelled obscenities at a young man and his infant child, screaming that he would slit their throats (see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjc7Jg\\_gMy0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjc7Jg_gMy0)).

Our Governor has remained silent and out of sight during these acts of violence and intimidation aimed at the movement. He apparently has been active behind the scenes though, as some activists who have trespassed on Massey's mountaintop removal sites are being threatened with more serious charges and prison time.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." If he is correct, then the mission to ban mountaintop removal coal extraction is more than half way to achieving its intended goal.

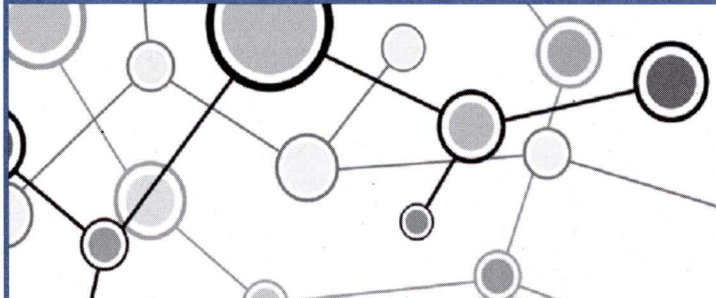
Bo Webb is a member of the grassroots community group Coal River Mountain Watch. He has organized numerous events and rallies throughout southern WV opposing mountaintop removal. He organized the first rally and educational event at Marsh Fork Elementary in 2004 and is one of the original founders and developers of the Mountain Justice Summer Campaign that began in 2005. ♦



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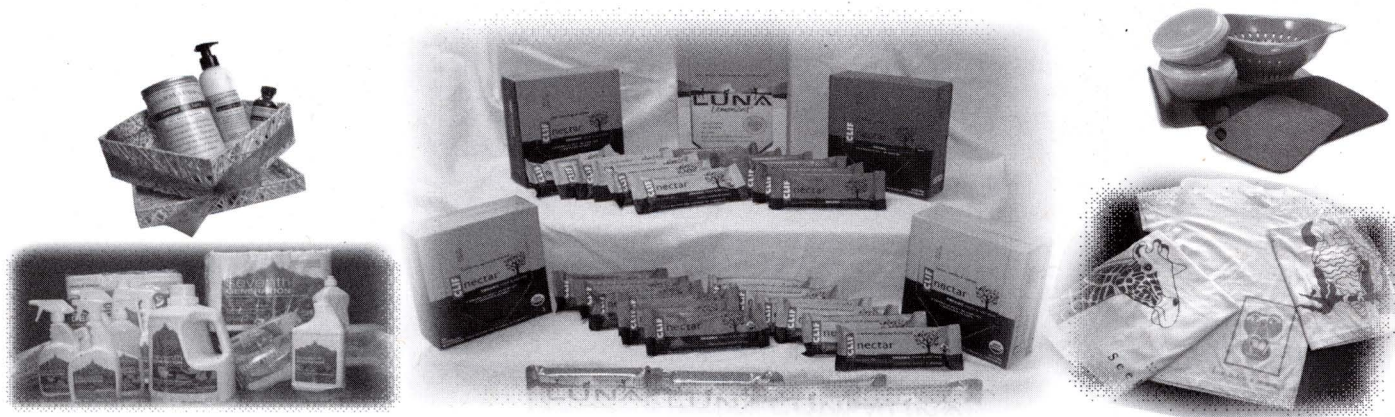


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