

CITIZEN'S CLEARINGHOUSE FOR HAZARDOUS WASTE, INC.

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Pollution Posse Pommels Polluters

by Karen Stults



Linda Burkhart's home in Brookhurst became a billboard with the group's messages for Governor Sullivan.

A few years back at a PTA meeting, Linda Burkhart needed to stand at a microphone and read a list of thank-you's. Just before "show-time," she handed back the list saying, "I can't do this. I can't talk in public in front of all these parents!" And she didn't. Today, Linda's known for her "big mouth," her gutsiness in standing up to public officials, and her energetic organizing talent.

Linda and her family moved to the Brookhurst community of Evansville, Wyoming, to live a rural life. With a creek, 2½ acres, and their own horses, "it was all perfect." She didn't know Elkhorn Creek was really "Dixon Creek" and that the entire underground water system was contaminated by petroleum refining wastes.

Who would've known? After all, her housing contract said the water was fit for human consumption and there was a letter from the Wyoming Health Department to back that up. For two months, Linda ignored

smelly water and severe headaches. One day, her neighbor asked, "Does your water smell bad?" and then described the same headaches Linda had.

Out of curiosity, the two of them spent that weekend taking an informal neighborhood poll and getting the same answers: "Well water went bad?" "We're sick." They nosed around the nearby oil refineries and found open, reeking pits, and dead birds. They went looking for an answer to their water's stench and found complete contamination.

So began Linda's fight. She and the newly-formed Brookhurst Citizen's Committee had never done this kind of thing before. They didn't have a "master plan" but took one month, one crisis, at a time. They followed their instincts, figuring they had nothing to lose. They took pictures of refinery pollution and stuck them under EPA and Health Department officials' noses. They dug up facts no official wanted to hear or admit. They made color-coded maps of the contamination and solved the puzzle, piece by piece.

"I never say me or I. It's always us," says Linda. "I'm a decisionmaker, but I say to the group, 'Here's an idea, what do you think?' "Supported by group consensus, Linda

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Recycling:

In Wisconsin, A Real WINR

Milly Zantow is an extraordinary person by anyone's standards. Vibrant and intelligent, Milly is the founder of Wisconsin Intercounty Nonprofit Recycling (WINR) in Sauk County, Wisconsin.

About eight years ago, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources announced that their "state of the art" landfill was not as "state of the art" as they had thought. Sauk County had sunk a lot of money into the landfill, and had shown the landfill off with pride, but now the DNR said that its sand liner didn't work so well and the dump had to be closed.

Milly was upset. With all the money (and controversy) that had been flying around, Milly felt that there had to be a better way to deal with all this garbage. She had to make an effort. She decided to find out what was going into the landfill, and so for two days she sat on top of the dump and watched.

After two days Milly concluded that plastic was a major part of the rubbish and she wondered why it wasn't being reused.

Milly began collecting plastic containers in the back of her pick-up truck. She hand washed the containers, took off the labels, and dried them. When she had collected enough plastic, she started to test the plastic and learned about different kinds. She learned that different plastics can be classified by "burn/ melt" tests and "float tests" in different water densities. She enlisted the help of a local university and a plastics company to help her study what to do with used plastics. Her efforts paid off. All of a sudden plastics companies wanted her plastics for recycling. Today, haulers come to her to pick up the material from WINR.



Milly Zantow told her story at CCHW's Solid Waste Action Project conference on recycling.

Milly started small, collecting plastic. Later she began to take cardboard. Today, she and her four volunteer assistants handle 1000 tons of recycled material a year. Thanks to her efforts, recycling has become a major part of Sauk County, Wisconsin's garbage solution. Recently, the county decided to fund the facility, realizing that WINR was saving the county at least \$20,000 per year in landfill fees. Milly adds with pride, "I have never drawn a penny."

Milly says she can recycle 75-80% of household trash (not including food and yard waste). She can't do it alone though. People need to separate their trash before they send it to her facility. Milly heartily agrees with the recyclers creed: "If you have a quality product, you've got a market." Not one to mince words, Milly believes that those who say that there is no market for recycled materials, "have not done their homework."

Milly's motto: "Keep the operation simple—let people know how recycling benefits them." ●

POSSE, from page 1

was able to push elusive officials for what the community needed. When EPA sampled four selected wells and found "no contamination," Linda told them, "You're lying through your teeth!" The Committee demanded a re-test and input into the selection of test sites. This time, all the test wells were contaminated.

When 100 residents used a garage. some hay bales, and an old table for a public meeting with the Governor. Linda kept him there-much against his will-until he gave not only answers, but deadlines for action. When the Governor tried to appease residents by allotting them 10 gallons of bottled water per family for drinking and bathing, Linda put a horse trough in her front yard, hung a towel over a tree limb and a sign for "Governor Sullivan's Free Bath House." She even let her home become a billboard on which she'd write letters to the Governor when he refused to acknowledge them by mail.

This fight didn't take a lot of education or money. It took good sense, guts, and the willingness to find the facts. "If you know something's wrong, it comes easily. You're driven to find out. You start reading and calling, and pretty soon you can converse with the experts." Sometimes she was scared, but anger gave her courage. When she got discouraged, she'd call a friend (or CCHW) for support or she would encourage neighbors who were even more depressed. It reminded her she could still fight for those who didn't have any fight left.

Out of self-preservation, 62% of Brookhurst families have left. Linda and her family now live 10 miles away, but haven't given up the fight. Now they are fighting for clean water for families still living there, and a fair "buy-out" plan for those who have left. Linda has even expanded her work statewide, as founder of the "Wyoming Pollution Posse," helping other communities organize to make sure the Brookhurst disaster isn't repeated. Some of these groups have already WON their own victories! "You always hear that you can't fight City Hall and win," says Linda, "but I've learned that you can." •

"It Beats Watching General Hospital"



Cindee Virostek hard at work mining for information her group can use.

Three years ago, Cindee Virostek of Apollo, PA, was a dutiful housewife; cleaning house, raising two sons, refinishing furniture, and watching General Hospital, trying to solve Luke and Laura's problems. Today she works 16-hour days investigating Babcock & Wilcox (B&W) and their predecessor, Nuclear Material and Equipment Corporation (NUMEC) for the Kiski Valley Coalition To Save Our Children. The Coalition opposes B&W's planned Nuclear Waste Volume Reduction Center (radioactive waste incinerator) two blocks from Cindee's house. B&W was the world's first and largest private producer of nuclear weapons fuel and had "lost" over 940 pounds of weapons-grade uranium between 1956 and 1976, enough for at least 85 atomic bombs.

Curiosity got her started. Why were her neighbors dying of cancer? Why did records on the plant disappear from the library? She also felt bound to protect her children.

B&W defended its plan, claiming their compliance with government regulations was good. Cindee knew that wasn't true, finding numerous violations (some criminal) of state and federal regulations. After she released this, B&W called, threatening to send a lawyer to seize the docu-

ments. Roadblocks, like toxic release reports, classified "National Security," stood in the way, but Cindee continued to push. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) came to her house to try to get her to back off. As evidence mounted, more people joined the coalition. Cindee signed up to testify at an NRC hearing, but was turned away after B&W objected, leading to the Coalition's first national media break in Jack Anderson's column. Cindee turned a negative into a positive, making NRC's "shut-out" an organizing issue. More people spoke up, and opposition grew. Six towns, Armstrong County, local school boards, and PTAs passed anti-B&W resolutions. Over 6500 signed anti-B&W petitions. Then, 80% of local voters rejected B&W's plan in a referendum!

The Coalition got Parks Township Supervisors to pass an air pollution ordinance (based on the Clean Air Act) to restrict radioactive discharges. Naturally, B&W sued, but in the meantime, its plan was stopped! If residents win the suit, it'll establish communities' right to restrict radioactive emissions and shut down noncomplying facilities.

The Coalition is also pushing the state to kill B&W's plan, turning out more than 400 people at hearings. Her years as an anonymous "housewife" are over as Cindee's courage and bulldogedness wins recognition. Cindee recently received Indiana (PA) University's first Woman's Excellence Award for Community Service and Advocacy. Coalition leader Marion Wigle says, "If Cindee didn't do the research, we'd have been out of existence long ago."

Her dedication cuts into family time, though they support what she's doing. Her husband Chris jokes, "These floors used to be so clean you could eat off them. Now, I will never complain about her cleaning too much." Cindee says her "kids (Chris, 11 and Chad, 9) understand why I'm doing it. I feel guilty when I think of other mothers off with their children and having time to play games with them and I don't. These plants affect the kids and the kind of future they'll have. I'm sure what I've been exposed to has affected my future, but I want to know if it will affect my children's future and even my grandchildren's future. I could never quit. I can't stop now." •



B&W's Apollo plant, taken from the corner of Cindee's street.

Organizing Toolbox: User's Guide to Politicians

by Will Collette

*This article is an update of a "Toolbox" that originally ran in the Winter, 1984 issue.

It's primary and election season again. As sure as flies on manure, you'll soon have to deal with swarms of candidates looking for your vote and willing to make you almost any promise to get it. This is an opportunity, as well as a problem. It's an opportunity because politicians are rarely as accountable as they are when they're up for election. It's also a problem because you may find yourself pressured to do for them, instead of forcing them to do work for you.

Politicians are a tool and a tool serves best when you know how to use it. So I offer you this "set of instructions" I wrote for this column almost four years ago.

Dealing with politicians, you need to decide what kind of relationship you should have to get what you want. In the long run, it's better to have them respect or even fear you than *like* you.

Some groups (and in every group, some members) think it's good to get chummy. I don't. Sooner or later, you pay a very heavy price for that friendship. Some examples:

- Rep. Bullflop came around to your very first meeting, said he was with you 100% and would go right to work to solve your problems. You never see him again.
 Plus, you never see half your members again, since they figure
 Bullflop will keep his word.
- Councilman Lipflap regularly attends membership meetings.
 People respect Lipflap. But every time the group thinks about taking action, Lipflap says, "No, that's too emotional; no, that's not how you get things done—do it this way," and prescribes a dull, boring, and basically futile plan for getting some meaningless ordinance passed. Folks buy it, because Lipflap's nice.
- Every time Sen. Boondoggle comes to your meeting, he uses it as a political grandstand. Boondoggle looks nice, talks grand,



A "solidarity action" (done here by New England groups) is one way to send politicians the message.

- and has gotten many key group members working on his campaign. People turn away from your group saying, "They're nothing but Boondoggle's election committee!"
- Your friend, Mayor Smoothie, asks for the group's endorsement.
 You give it. Kiss any chance of getting tax-exempt status for your group good-bye.
- Even worse, Mayor Smoothie gets re-elected. But now, Smoothie says, "Gee, this issue is a lot more complicated than I thought. We'll have to study it some more." How do you beat up on a friend?

Politicians are a tool that groups can use to win their goals. You don't make friends with a screwdriver—you use it—and besides, you yourself don't want to get screwed.

Rules for Using a Politician- Screwdriver

- Use the right size for the job. Too small (too weak or low ranking) and there's not enough power to do the work. Too big (too powerful or high-ranking) and you won't be strong enough to turn it.
- Stick it in the right slot. If you need a state law, for example, don't use a city council member.
- Apply the right amount of pressure while turning in the proper direction. Tools, even power tools,

- don't work themselves. They have to be guided, aimed, and forcefully held in place.
- Don't let it slip out of the groove. Watch what you're doing. Don't get sloppy.
- Keep at it till the job's done. The finished product will fall apart later if you drive the screw only halfway through the Board.
- 6. If it doesn't work, get a better tool, and
- 7. Don't ever go to work with only one tool in your toolbox.
- Keep it clean, well-oiled, and properly stored—in your toolbox not in a velvet case.

Reward politicians who help you by publishing their records and publicly thanking them. But don't get too grateful—they're helping you because you showed them it was in their selfinterest to do so.

Use your politician/tool by regularly holding "Accountability Sessions" calling for specific concrete answers on important group concerns from the politicians. CCHW Leadership Handbook (\$7.50 postpaid) has detailed advice on how to conduct an "Accountability Session."

In closing the wisest advice I ever got about tools came from my sainted grandmother: "Grab the right end, boy, and hold on tight!"

LEGAL CORNER

- Q. I have read in the newspaper that some people from a community group in Florida were evacuated from a neighborhood near a hazardous waste dump. How was this accomplished?
- A Six families were recently moved from the area surrounding the Hipps Road Landfill in Jackson-ville, Florida. Having represented those people for a number of years, I can tell you something about how they accomplished their objectives.

People living near a landfill have to deal with their situation on a number of fronts. The primary front is the on-going operation of the landfill and the problem this creates. Even when the landfill is closed, the citizens must still deal with its existence in terms of the continuing threats posed.

When the citizens in Jacksonville became aware that their drinking water wells were contaminated, their first objective was to get a new supply of clean water. Residents of Hipps Road realized that the way to get clean water was through the political process. They worked through their senators and representatives in Washington, as well as putting pressure on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Florida Department of Environmental Resources. The residents were present in large numbers, were very knowledgeable, and were extremely vocal in

community meetings. Because the hazardous chemicals came from nearby Navy bases, the residents got to testify in Congress about their problems.

This political pressure got the residents a public water supply. Continuing pressure on the local, state, and federal government resulted in the Hipps Road landfill becoming a Superfund Site; the citizens of Jacksonville gathered information, attended meetings and repeatedly made EPA officials aware of their concerns. When EPA wasn't responding adequately, the community was not at all hesitant to remind them of their concerns.

The plan to evacuate six families grew out of the process by which EPA determined what to do with a Superfund site. The process begins with a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) and proceeds to a final plan. While EPA is proposing solutions for the site, it is simultaneously identifying Potential Responsible Parties (PRPs) and trying to get them to be responsible for a solution to the problem.

Too often the solution that results from the negotiations between EPA and the PRPs does not include substantial citizen participation. Under the old Superfund, citizen participation was generally too little and too late. The new Superfund amendments of 1986 guaranteed more citizen participation, but these

By Ron Simon

legal avenues are still limited.
Once EPA has made its agreement with the polluters, there is little room for successful input by citizens. It is essential that citizens have active involvement in the early stages. Once the process has proceeded to court, the legal right to intervene offers too little a chance to influence the result.

The lessons of the Jacksonville citizens are clear. Their early and

The lessons of the Jacksonville citizens are clear. Their early and active participation was what got them a good shot at pushing the end result in the direction they wanted—in fact, it's the *only* way.

Evacuations are always painful and divisive. Families find it hard to give up their homes, communities, and neighbors. Those who are not moved are often confused, angry, and disappointed.

The Hipps Road buy-out only included a few families and a small part of the claims of these families. The litigation in Jacksonville to get compensation for personal injuries, economic loss, and property damage to people in the community continues. But, as in all environmental battles, the most important results occurred outside the courtroom.

Ron Simon represents community groups, unions, communities and citizens exposed to chemicals and hazardous substances in the environment and in the workplace, In addition to being counsel to CCHW, he represents the American Legion, White Lung Association and the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics.

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BAFFLED BY THE TERMS

Water Filters — What Are Most Common Types

Activated Carbon filters are the most widely used water filters. Carbon particles contain hundreds of tiny pores and channels which trap contaminants as water passes through process removes minerals such as the filter. They work best on dissolved organic chemicals such as trihalomethanes, pesticides and solvents like trichloroehtylene and carbon tetrachloride. They can also remove rust particles and general taste and odor problems. They are not effective in removing heavy metals, bacteria, nitrates, or dissolved minerals.

Reverse Osmosis filters work by forcing contaminated water through a membrane that permits water, but not water by using heat. Water is heated

dissolved chemicals, to pass. Typically, there are three different membranes which rely on water pressure to help remove contaminants. This calcium, magnesium, and sodium, some organics, most pesticides, metals, dirt particles, bacteria, and viruses. These filters are expensive and clog, often needing frequent replacement. They also use large amounts of water, cleaning only about 50-75% of the water that passes through the filter. This "dirty" water is released directly into the drain.

Distillers separate pollutants from

until it turns to steam. The steam is cooled, condensed back into water, and collected for use. Certain contaminants either remain in the heating vessel or are lost to the air as gases. These gases can condense with the treated water and end up in the "clean" water, resulting in higher levels of contaminants than before treatment. Volatile organics such as benzene, toluene, xylene, or chloroform are likely to do this. Most units have small capacities and only produce a small amount of treated water. Distillers are capable of separating dissolved metals, nitrates, and some organics.

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your water tested first, so that you know what contaminants are there and can pick the right filter for the job you want done.

The greatest single limitation of all filters is knowing when to change it. To change the filter core at the right time, you first need to know how contaminated your water is and, second, you have to know how much water you're using (i.e. how much water is channeled through the filter). The more chemicals present and the more water used, the quicker the filter needs to be replaced. While you can monitor water use, the only way to monitor contaminant levels is to test the water. Not only is this time-consuming and costly, it's also highly impractical.

Another deficiency in water filters is consistency. A filter is most efficient when it's new. But with use, filters collect more material and eventually clog. Then contaminants pass through.

Cost is another problem. Though some filters are cheap (both in price and in quality), a system can run from \$30-800; add to this the cost of filter replacement. Some manufacturers suggest you replace filters every four to six months, but this is based on "typical" water usage, perhaps not right for your situation. More importantly, the manufacturers may not consider the level of contaminants present in the water and the need for more frequent replacement.

In what situation would a water filter help? Despite their limitations, filters can serve a purpose. Their most practical use is as a temporary measure while the source of contamination is being cleaned up. No matter how well organized your community is in fighting for a cleanup, it takes time to clean up a contaminated site.

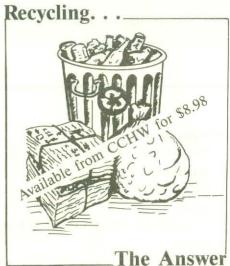
Traditionally, water filters were designed to eliminate odor and taste problems and they are effective in doing this. They can also provide an extra measure of safety when used on systems that are already treated, such as municipal water systems.

Are there any certification or evaluation programs for water filters? No. Aside from truth-in-advertising laws, manufacturers aren't subject to any rules and regulations, aside from California's new law. Each advertising claim needs to be carefully evaluated against your own circumstances before you can decide whether a filter will work for you.

In conclusion, water filters are at best only a temporary and less-thanperfect remedy. Don't let a filter give you a false sense of security, or divert your energy from fighting for a real solution.

You'll need a water filter forever, so long as the source of the contamination is left unstopped. The real answer to water contamination is an organized community that's fighting for cleanup, not some expensive, fancy gadget attached to your water line.

A more detailed discussion and evaluation of water filters is available from CCHW for \$4.95: Drinking Water Filters: Will They Help?



to Our Garbage Problems

McVironme the **McTrashing**

Golden Arches Under Fire

Demonstrators Protest McGarbage

The McFacts!

Congratulations! Your response to the McToxics Campaign was outstanding! The letters and calls full of action information are still pouring in, but here's what we know so far. The two days of McProtest brought:

- Over 100 McActions in at least 25 states
- Heavy media coverage around the country
- Tens of thousands of educational flyers distributed
- 1000s of petition signatures
- Political support

McDemonstration' targets

 Model legislation banning styrofoam use.

So how has McDonalds responded? Weakly and deceptively. In their defense, McDonalds has come out with some weak, almost humerous, quotes:

- "Styrofoam is basically air.
 [It is good because] when it
 breaks down it aerates the
 soil." (Terri Capatosto,
 McDonalds' spokesperson)
- "There's only one way to get paper, and that's from a tree," according to Lana Ehrsam, McDonalds' spokesperson. When reminded of

recycled paper, she replied, "Oh, that!"

- McDonalds experts say dumping styrofoam is O.K. because, "at one time, many landfills lined their dumps with styrofoam." (Capatosto)
- Styrofoam is O.K. to incinerate because, "when you burn it, all you get is water and carbon dioxide."
 (Reported to us McToxics participant.)
- Referring to the packaging, Ehrsam said: "That's the way our customers have told us they want their food." (Have you ever been asked?)

Don't be fooled by Mc-Donalds' plastic "P.R." packaging, either. For weeks people have been calling us to see if the reports they hear of Mc-Donalds banning styrofoam are true. When we called corporate headquarters to find out, here's what we heard:

CCHW: Has McDonalds decided to stop using styrofoam?

McDonalds: Yes. We will phase it out in 18 months.

CCHW: I know you are phasing out CFC's, but are you

going to stop using styrofoam?

McDonalds: "NO."

No wonder there's been confusion! To this, McDonalds must plead guilty either to deceptive P.R. or to ignorance.

What next? McAction efforts are continuing around the country with petition mailings, continued letter campaigns and educational leafletting. Some groups are still planning actions in their area. Others are using McToxics momentum to propose anti-styrofoam legislation, ban styrofoam in local schools and churches, and to start local recycling programs.

CCHW is requesting a meeting with McDonalds to negotiate the removal of styrofoam. Any interested community leaders are invited to join us when and if McDonalds agrees to meet.

If you did an action and haven't told us about it yet, please send us your own McFacts: newsclips, flyers, petitions, etc. If you have something up your sleeve for follow-up actions, let us know.

use of foam plastic packaging

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\$50 for sustaining members* \$500 for lifetime members*	mproper disposal of toxic wastes and help suffering families, mber of CCHW. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation. \$25 for citizens' groups or sponsoring individuals \$100 for corporations/institutions or individual patrons' \$25 for the newsletter only (non-member) CCHW T-shirt (circle one: S, M. L, XL)
*Individual donors: of \$50 or more receive a free, autographed copy of Love Canal: My Story by Lois Marie Gibbs. All members receive CCHW's quarterly newsletter, Everyone's Backyard. Name	
AddressCharge my VISA/Mastercard (circle one)	#Expiration Date

Drinking Water Filters: Do They Really Work? by Stephen U. Lester

Is your water contaminated? Are you worried about chemicals in your water? Are you upset by stories in the news about your nearby, leaking landfill? Are there stories about local gas stations with leaking underground storage tanks?

Groundwater contamination is a serious threat to drinking water, especially in rural areas. Some of you may be thinking about a water filter system as a good way to protect your family. So many people have, over the past five years, that annual sales have more than doubled to \$800 million a year.

But with this growth comes a wave of trouble: inferior products, overblown advertising claims, and lack of information about filters' limitations and the importance of maintenance requirements. Unscrupulous salespeople prey on fears generated by news stories about toxic spills and leaks. In California, complaints about water filters are second only to travel complaints, according to the Attorney General's Office. Thus, California has a new law taking effect in Spring, 1988, which requires all water filters to pass a test certifying their performance before they can be sold in the state. But if you don't live in California, there's no good way to know



The "Class Picture" of the largest yet Leadership Development Conference, held by PAHLS of Indiana and co-sponsored by CCHW, August 28-30, 1987.

what works, what's important, and what's hype.

But let's take a more basic look at water filters. Do they really protect your family? Do they solve contaminated water problems? Most filters can reduce, not eliminate, some toxic chemicals in your water. But, this is not the answer to contaminated drinking water. Filters are only a temporary remedy. What are the limitations of water filters? No filter can handle all water quality problems. Most only remove a percentage of contaminants. It's important to match a filter system to the specific contaminants you want to remove. Don't expect the manufacturer to tell you everything you need to know about what the filter will (or won't) do. You should probably have See FILTERS, page 6



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Sending you our newsletters is expensive. If you're not a member, haven't set up an information exchange with us, or haven't been actively working with us, this could be your last issue! Over 2000 inactive listings were dropped in 1987. Write us—we'd hate to lose you!



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