



Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter - November 2010



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Community organizing: Catalyzing sustainability from the ground up

Many colleagues I know and respect would argue that working on the community level is really the only way to catalyze sustained social change. Again and again, I have seen this to be true. One of my local heroes here on Whidbey Island, north of Seattle, is a master gardener. She has put enormous creative energy into developing a thriving organic garden for the community food bank. This means the ever growing number of families now living on food stamps get to enjoy fresh, healthy vegetables in addition to other staples. She also raises money to allow youth in juvenile detention to work in the garden, giving those teens an experience that for some changes the trajectory of their lives. Then there are other local heroes described poignantly in Steve Lerner's new book, "Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States" -- many who didn't intend to become community or environmental activists, but simply couldn't stand by and watch their families and neighbors succumb to various illnesses linked to exposures from nearby industrial sources. (Please join us for our [CHE Cafe call on Monday, November 15 featuring Steve Lerner](#)).

Of course, a number of local heroes have become nationally and internationally recognized, such as Lois Gibbs who, in the 1970s, helped launch myriad environmental health and justice efforts when she stood up to a chemical company dumping toxic waste in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, NY. Wilma Subra, a chemist who works with local communities in Louisiana to provide citizens with the evidence-based science they need to oppose polluting industries, is another remarkable example. (Listen to the [CHE Science Cafe call held in August 2010 featuring Wilma Subra](#)).

Yet we know that given the global nature of our trade and communication networks, we also need academics in an array of fields, health professionals, policy wonks, writers, artists and many others who work at different levels-local, state, national and international-to press for systemic change for a healthier future. One clear example of that was reflected on the CHE partner call on November 9 regarding fracking, a relatively new drilling technique that fractures rock with high-pressure fluid is opening up vast shale-natural gas deposits with many unknown long-term consequences for human health and the environment (see [Fracking: Implications for Human and Environmental Health](#)).

The presenters discussed not only the science, but the importance for federal agencies to provide stronger oversight, the need for companies to be fully transparent and implement best practices, the actions some local communities are already taking, and the emerging networks between different municipalities to determine what steps they can take next.

In short, all of us need to figure out where we can be most effective in leveraging social change based on our particular talents and proclivities. I think of someone like Donella Meadows, whom a number of us called "an academic earth mother" because she worked internationally on sustainable indicators, taught college students about computational environmental science, wrote for the local newspaper on community concerns, raised organic vegetables, and spun wool from her own sheep. Very few of us have the capacity to work at all those levels, certainly not all at once, because of familial demands at different times in our lives, socioeconomic circumstances and many other factors. But most important is to act where you feel most motivated and energized--whether in your own neighborhood or in the halls of the U.N. If we could all find the leverage points that allow our unique and often complementary gifts to blossom in support of the commons, then we will become the heroes, not necessarily recognized or acknowledged beyond our neighbors, but heroes nonetheless, who generations to come will thank for our vision, persistence, compassion and unwavering commitment to a healthy, sustainable future.

Elise Miller, MEd
Director
Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)

This essay is available on [CHE's blog](#) for comment and further discussion.

CHE Partnership Calls

CHE Cafe call:

Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States: a conversation with author, Steve Lerner
Monday, November 15, 2010 at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern

[RSVP for this call](#)

Low-income Americans and people of color who live immediately adjacent to heavy industry and military bases are subjected to higher levels of pollution than more affluent citizens and suffer disproportionately severe health effects. Through studies of twelve communities across the U.S., *Sacrifice Zones* (MIT Press / September 2010) a new book by Steve Lerner, describes the plague of environmentally induced diseases that people who live nearby heavy industry endure, and shows how these communities are rising up to take action against the polluters.

The book is based on hundreds of interviews of residents of communities on the fenceline with heavy industry. Lerner lets the victims of environmental injustice speak in their own words, and describe in detail what they experience and how they are organizing to improve their quality of life and protect themselves.

Join CHE for a discussion with Steve Lerner. Elise Miller, CHE Director, will moderate this call.

Resources from recent CHE calls:

Update from the CHE Cafe call on October 12, 2010: Living Downstream: A Conversation with Sandra Steingraber and Chanda Chevannes

Last month, CHE Science Café featured a conversation about the new documentary film, [Living Downstream](#) with Sandra Steingraber and filmmaker Chanda Chevannes. Now, as a special offer, the film's producers are offering all CHE full members free online access to screen this important film.

Based on the acclaimed book by ecologist and cancer survivor [Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D.](#), *Living Downstream* is an eloquent and cinematic documentary following Sandra during one pivotal year as she works to break the silence about cancer and its environmental links. This award-winning film has been screening to full houses and receiving standing ovations across North America. The *Living Downstream* Educational DVD, set to be released later this month, is designed for use by educators, organizations, professionals, and community groups. Purchasing this DVD gives your group the right to screen the film publicly for educational or nonprofit purposes. Learn more about pre-ordering a copy of the DVD:

http://www.livingdownstream.com/order_the_dvd.php

Screen *Living Downstream* online to see whether it might be useful to you in your work, or to simply learn more about the issue of cancer and the environment.

Here's how:

- Go to: <http://www.livingdownstream.com/screener>
- For the Username, type or "copy" and "paste" the following: orgs7
- For the Password, type or "copy" and "paste" the following: ,(vPO(BIQVx
- Depending on your web browser, you may be asked to enter the Username and Password more than once
- The film should start automatically

Please note the following:

- This online copy is strictly intended for private professional review. The access information should not be shared with anyone for any purposes beyond organizational review.
- To allow for quick download speeds, this online copy is highly compressed, which results in a degradation of picture and sound quality. The DVD picture and sound quality is much higher.
- The Username and Password will only be valid until December 31, after which they will be modified for the sake of piracy prevention. If anyone requires the Username and Password after this time, please contact chanda@theppcinc.com.

If you require any assistance, contact chanda@theppcinc.com.

Recent CHE calls available as MP3 downloads:

If you missed any of the following CHE calls, you may listen to MP3 recordings and find supporting materials at the following links:

- November 9, 2010 - [Fracking: Implications for Human and Environmental Health](#)
- October 28, 2010 - [State of the Evidence: The Connection Between Breast Cancer and the Environment](#)
- October 12, 2010 - [Living Downstream: A Conversation with Sandra Steingraber and Chanda Chevannes](#)
- September 21, 2010 - [Pediatric Integrative Health: Approaches to Optimizing "Whole Child" Wellness](#)
- August 12, 2010 - [On the Ground in the Gulf Coast: A Conversation with Wilma Subra and Michael Lerner](#)

Podcasts: CHE also podcasts Partnership and working group call recordings. Subscribe to the podcast at: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/Calls.xml>

And of course, you can always explore our [archived resources](#)

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

Stay in touch with CHE via Facebook and the CHE blog:

Visit CHE's blog at <http://ourhealthandenvironment.wordpress.com/>

Visit CHE's [Facebook page](#)

CHE Fertility

~ coordinated by Karin Russ, National Coordinator, karin@healthandenvironment.org

~ **New CHE Fertility call: Environmental Exposures and Early Onset of Puberty**

Over the last several decades, the age of puberty in industrial countries has fallen, particularly in female children. A variety of reasons have been proposed to explain this trend. Recent research supports the idea that environmental exposures may be linked to an earlier onset of puberty.

Join CHE-Fertility on **Tuesday November 16, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern** for a conversation with researchers in early puberty to learn more, and discuss the issues. We are honored to welcome Dr. Mari Golub from the California EPA, Dr. Michele Marcus from Emory University, and Dr. Heather Patisaul from North Carolina State University on this call.

The call will be moderated by Karin Russ, CHE Fertility National Coordinator. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

[RSVP for this call](#)

CHE Healthy Aging Initiative

~ coordinated by Maria Valenti, mvalenti@igc.org

~ **CHE's Healthy Aging and the Environment initiative supported a recent series of webinars on aging, environmental health, and disability** offered by CHE partners the Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ([AAIDD](#)) and Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility ([GBPSR](#)). The series included 5 one-hour sessions that ran each Tuesday from October 12 through November 9. The webinars were conducted by leading environmental health experts including CHE science director Ted Schettler MD MPH, as well as renowned aging researchers Peter Whitehouse MD PhD and Daniel George PhD, public policy experts from AARP, EPA's Aging Initiative, and HUD, and experienced health professionals and public health advocates from PSR and Health Care Without Harm. Featured topics included an ecological approach to healthy aging, as well as sessions on the built, food, psychosocial and chemical environments. The webinars received very positive feedback and were well-attended by a wide range of people, from educators to scientists to service providers for people living with disabilities. To access archived presentations including audio and other materials from the webinars, please go to [this page](#) of the AAIDD website.

The series mirrors the contents of an issue on healthy aging and the environment of the *Public Policy & Aging Report* of the [National Academy on an Aging Society's](#) summer 2010 issue (Vol 20, No. 3). The National Academy on an Aging Society is the policy institute of [The Gerontological Society of America](#). Edited by Boston University policy expert Robert B. Hudson, PhD, each thematic issue of the quarterly *Public Policy & Aging Report* explores policy issues generated by the aging of American society and is designed to stimulate debate, highlight emerging concerns, and propose alternative policy options. To review the Table of Contents and/or order online, go to the [National Academy on an Aging Society's](#) publications page.

~ Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, spoke on environmental health issues at the opening plenary session of a medical conference on aging organized by Harvard Medical School and the

Psychiatry Department of the Cambridge Health Alliance. The November 5 Boston event was attended by several hundred health professionals. A few days later, Dr. Schettler addressed attendees at a sold-out plenary session at the November 9 [San Francisco Healthy Aging Summit](#), where he also held a workshop. [San Francisco Bay Area PSR](#) conducted outreach on environment and health including healthy aging at an exhibit table at the Summit, held at San Francisco City Hall.

CHE-LDDI

~ coordinated by Erika Hagensen, ehagensen@healthandenvironment.org and Elise Miller, CHE Director, elise@healthandenvironment.org

~ The next meeting of the **Mental Health Working Group** will take place on **Friday, December 3, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern**. If you are not a participant in the working group, but would like to participate in this conversation, please contact info@healthandenvironment.org.

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE Alaska

~ coordinated by Pam Miller, Alaska Community Action, pkmiller@akaction.net

~ New CHE-AK call announced: Climate Change and Contaminants: Implications and Potential Impacts

Wednesday, November 24, 2010 at 9:00 AM Alaska / 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

Research shows that global climate change may be exacerbating contamination from persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in the Arctic. Temperatures in the Arctic are warming 5-10 times faster than elsewhere in the world. Scientists forecast that the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free by 2040, with profound effects on ice-dependent species. Increasing storm surges, melting permafrost, and sea ice disappearance are among the most dramatic effects of climate warming. As the climate warms, contaminants contained in permafrost, glaciers, and sea ice release into the surrounding environment. Climate change causes more rapid dispersal of contaminants into freshwater and marine environments, thus more directly affecting the health of fish and marine mammals that serve as the primary traditional foods for northern Indigenous peoples.

Presenters:

Dr. Andrew P. Gilman, BSc, MSc, PhD, Research Fellow at the University of Ottawa Population Health Institute. Dr. Gilman is an international expert in risk assessment and developing regional and global initiatives to control the long-range transport of environmental contaminants.

Dr. Bjorn Munro Jensen, PhD, professor of ecotoxicology and head of the department of biology at Norwegian University of Science and Technology - Trondheim (NTNU). Dr. Jensen's research focuses on the effects of environmental pollutants on the physiology and behaviour of animals, particularly the effects of environmental pollutants on the endocrine system.

Dr. Gilman and Dr. Jensen are part of a writing team of international experts currently preparing a document for the Conference of Parties to the Stockholm Convention on recent findings related to the potential combined effects of climate change and persistent organic pollutants on wildlife and human populations. They will discuss how climate change will alter releases, transport, and degradation and deposition of pollutants and how this may affect exposures, human health, and environmental health.

To join this free call and receive the dial-up instructions, please RSVP to Alaska Community Action on Toxics at - diana@akaction.org or (907) 222-7714

CHE-HEAL

~ coordinated by Gill Erskine, gill@env-health.org

~ **Four-language push to link pesticide use and cancer prevention**

In October, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) launched a multi-country, multi-language website <<http://www.pesticidescancer.eu/>> to strengthen the impact of our Sick of Pesticides campaign. The campaign now covers Belgium, the Netherlands, France, the UK and Hungary, and will be coordinated by HEAL members and partners at national level. The Sick of Pesticides campaign, launched in 2008, aims to raise public awareness that reducing pesticide use could help reduce cancer rates in Europe, encourage pesticide-free public spaces, and support countries in the setting up of national action plans for pesticide use reduction by 2012 in accordance with EU regulations. The country partners will hold workshops at national level with other NGOs, health groups and local authorities to devise strategies. These will then be followed by a European network meeting in Brussels at the HEAL office on Tuesday 30th November 2010.

[Read more](#)

CHE Washington

~ coordinated by Steve Gilbert, sgilbert@innd.org and Aimee Boulanger, aboulanger@whidbey.com

~ *****NOTICE: Postponement of November 18, 2010 CHE-WA Meeting*****

CHE-WA regrets the postponement of the November 18th public meeting on Environmental Health in the Media. The University of Washington's scheduled football game on the same day creates great concern about traffic in the afternoon and, as a result, many participants may be wary to travel to the meeting. We very much want this important topic to be available to as many CHE-WA and public members as possible. A notice of the new meeting date, to be held in January, will be sent when the new date and time are confirmed.

We hope to see many of you there.

Steve Gilbert
Aimee Boulanger

Announcements and News Highlights

November 2010 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online

[Read more](#)

November 2010 issue of Environmental Factor available online

[Read more](#)

CHE maintains a [newsfeed](#) of environmental health related news announcements and events collected from a multitude of sources on CHE's website.

Reports, Resources and Other Updates

TEDX Critical Windows of Development tool updated

Critical Windows of Development is an interactive website tool that pairs human development in the womb with laboratory research showing where and when low-dose exposure to endocrine disrupting chemicals results in altered health outcomes. Chlorpyrifos now joins bisphenol A, phthalates, and dioxin in the timeline, which reveals effects of chlorpyrifos on the central nervous system, thyroid, heart, liver and more, in laboratory animals experiencing prenatal and early postnatal exposure.

[Visit the TEDX website](#)

International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health (IJOEH) publishes special issue on nanomaterials

The latest IJOEH issue is titled "Human and Environmental Exposure Assessment for Nanomaterials" and was guest edited by Dr. Vladimir Murashov, Special Assistant on Nanotechnology to the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and health in the US Department of Health and Human Services.

[Read the special edition](#)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) posts new interactive, Web-based resource

NIOSH's new interactive webpage will help users identify, monitor, and address harmful overexposures to lead. The webpage provides data on cases of elevated levels of lead in the blood of adults, and trends in those cases over time. It also allows users - particularly occupational and environmental health professionals and researchers - to create customized data products from those data.

[Visit the webpage](#)

CHE lists hundred of reports, books, videos, databases and other resources in a searchable [Portal to Science](#) on CHE's website.

Thank you for taking the time to read the latest about CHE. As always, we welcome your questions and suggestions. Please direct comments to Elise Miller, Director of CHE, at elise@healthandenvironment.org.

Best wishes,

Elise Miller, MEd, Director

Steve Heilig, Director of Public Health and Education at San Francisco Medical Society and CHE

Erika Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, info@healthandenvironment.org

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