Responding to Community Concerns about Vapor Intrusion in Winston-Salem, NC

Leveraging the NIEHS-supported Superfund Research Program Network

Kathleen Gray, MSPH
Research Translation Core Leader
UNC Superfund Research Program
10-20-15
Biomedical projects
- Toxicity caused by oxidative stress (PCBs, formaldehyde)
- Metabolism of TCE
- Prenatal exposures to toxic metals

Environmental science projects
- Bioremediation of PAH-contaminated soil
- Passive sampling devices to monitor chemicals in water & sediment
It’s a small world after all...
Hanes-Lowrance Parents & Students Fired Up After Being Kept in the Dark About Toxic Waste Under Their School

Young Rehan stood straight and confident as he asked the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Beverly Emory, a simple question. A question so straightforward and blunt that only a child could have asked it. “Would you play with fire?” Rehan never got an answer from the adults, but there is no doubt that the W.S.F.C. School Administration and School Board have been playing with fire for some time by staying quiet as student after student passed through the doors of Hanes Magnet and Lowrance Middle School - a facility that the entire community now knows is built on top of one of the most toxic sites in Winston-Salem.

“Where you threaten me with an attorney, I can say ‘no’,” W.S.F.C. County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Beverly Emory.

“It is not prudent to play with people’s health.” - Rohan Kapileshwar, current student, Hanes Magnet Middle
Data show plume migrating beneath school property

-groundwater treatment system
-DEEP MONITORING WELL*
  -PCE concentration: 14,400
  -TCE concentration: 121

-SHALLOW MONITORING WELL*
  -PCE concentration: 8,050
  -TCE concentration: 50.2

*Measurements taken in March 2014
Source: Piedmont Geologic
Let’s take a closer look at the Hanes-Lowrance schools

**Lowrance Middle**
- 125 students
- Profound disabilities
- ~58% subsidized lunches

**Hanes Middle**
- 1,049 students
- STEM magnet
- Highly academically gifted & “multiple abilities”
- ~28% subsidized lunches

Credit: Cassandra Sherrill, Winston-Salem Journal
I get by with a little help from my friends...
All in a day’s work...

12pm: meet w-school sampling consultant
1pm: radio interview
2pm: media session
3pm: school site visit
4pm: school board briefing
6:30pm: community meeting
Toxic Legacy

School board votes to close Lowrance, Hanes middle schools by March 2

Journal staff report

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education voted 7-2 Tuesday night to close Hanes and Lowrance middle schools by March 2 and move the students to other schools.

Under the plan, Hanes sixth-graders will go to Smith Farm Elementary School and Hanes seventh- and eighth-graders will go to the former Hill Middle School.

Lowrance students will go to Atkins High School.

What do you think about the board’s decision to close the schools?
Additional sampling, risk analysis, engaging impacted community
Thanks to Kelly Pennell, UK SRP and Lenny Siegel, CPEO for their technical expertise and leadership and to NIEHS and USEPA for their support.

Questions?
kgray@unc.edu