

2005 Year in Review

Ohio Citizen Action and Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund celebrated their 30th anniversaries this year in a big way, with the following major victories:

- Sunoco committed to investing over \$100 million to prevent pollution at its Toledo refinery**, aiming to reduce its emissions of sulfur dioxide by at least 75 percent, and implementing a new leak detection program for toxic chemicals. Sunoco also withdrew its legal claims demanding neighbors turn over their personal medical data to the company.
- Lanxess Corporation in Addyston overhauled its plant management, invested over \$2 million in new systems to reduce flaring and accidents, and purchased real-time air monitors to use to track and reduce emissions.** The school board closed the elementary school across the street, to avoid exposure to toxic chemicals.
- DuPont agreed in January 2006 to phase out the use of the Teflon chemical C8 in food packaging, and major food companies agreed to switch to safer alternatives.** We are now urging major retailers, particularly Kroger and Wal-Mart, to make sure that these chemicals are removed from food packaging, like microwave popcorn, immediately.
- International Steel Group in Cleveland rerouted trucks carrying hot coke so they would no longer go down residential streets.** Neighbors of the giant steel mill also began a community-based air pollution testing program to document dangerous emissions from the plant, including sulfur and fine particles which contribute to asthma and lung disease.

Below is a more detailed description of our work on all of our good neighbor campaigns, campaign finance issues, and organizational developments.

I. Good neighbor campaigns

Sunoco

The Sunoco refinery, which has been operating in Toledo since 1945, is in the middle of a low-income residential area and is a neighbor to 72,000 residents within a three-mile radius. This community has over 40 schools and daycare facilities for children, including an elementary school directly across the street from the tank farm.

We began a good neighbor campaign focused on pollution prevention at the Sunoco Oil Refinery in East Toledo in January 2003. Some of the important campaign achievements which led to Sunoco's willingness to make major steps to reduce its emissions included the following:

- We helped neighbors form the East Side-Oregon Environmental Group, which has been holding community meetings and collecting "pollution logs" from residents who chronicle their experiences with foul odors, flaring, smoke, oily residues and soot that engulfs their property.
- Over 18,000 Ohio Citizen Action members wrote personal letters and petitions to Sunoco management urging them to modernize their operations and prevent pollution at the refinery.
- When Sunoco subpoenaed Ohio Citizen Action and attempted to force us to turn over private medical information of the refinery neighbors, we mobilized opposition to their demand from environmental, medical, and civic organizations from throughout the region and throughout the country. Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund board president Bruce French did a superb legal job on the case while the pressure on Sunoco mounted, and Sunoco withdrew its demand for the information in March 2005.
- We produced a DVD featuring interviews with neighbors who have suffered health problems and property damage from the refinery, and distributed it to company leaders, public officials, and members of an international corporate accountability organization called CERES, of which Sunoco is a member.

Lanxess Plastics

The Lanxess Plastics plant, formerly owned by Bayer and Monsanto, sits on the Ohio River, directly across the street from Meredith Hitchens Elementary School, and has been an ongoing source of toxic chemical pollution in the community. The plant reported 107 accidents in 2004, and had major accidental releases of toxic chemicals in October 2004, December 2004, and February 2005.

Ohio Citizen Action and neighbors of the Lanxess Plastics plant in Addyston, Ohio launched a "good neighbor campaign" in July 2004 to get the plant to reduce its pollution. Major accomplishments included the following:

- With our help, neighbors of the plant from the communities of Addyston, Cleves, North Bend, Sayler Park and Green Township formed the Westside Action Group and held several meetings with the company management. The neighbors developed "community standards" for safety and protection of public health which they presented to the plant.
- Neighbors took their own air pollution samples, and proved the connection between releases of dangerous chemicals (including styrene and butadiene) and the sickening odors which blanket the community. Ohio Citizen Action sponsored a demonstration of cutting-edge "real-time air monitoring" equipment outside the plant, and captured strong emissions of butadiene outside the facility. Neighbors filled in odor calendars, documented health problems, filed complaints with county agencies, and were featured in newspaper stories and on WCPO - TV's "I-Team" investigation.
- Over 25,900 Ohio Citizen Action members sent personal letters and petitions to Lanxess urging the plant to become a good neighbor. Fed up with the frequent accidents and toxic chemical releases, a majority of residents of Addyston sent a petition to the Lanxess CEO in Germany this June, urging him to replace the local management and provide a new manager with the necessary resources to solve problems at the plant. *On July 14, 2005, Lanxess responded to the community by announcing an overhaul of its plant management and promising to make changes in its operations.*
- On September 25, 2005, the new Lanxess plant manager announced the company would invest \$1 million to reduce butadiene emissions that go into the air. *The plant will also make a series of changes designed to reduce the number of accidents, pledged to call on external experts to evaluate its performance, and purchased Cerex real-time air monitors to detect leaks and emissions.*
- Finally, the school board announced in early December that it is closing the Meredith Hitchens elementary school for the rest of the school year due to the risk of cancer from Lanxess' air emissions. In January 2006, they closed the school permanently.

DuPont Teflon products

Although DuPont has known since as early as the 1960s that the chemicals used to make Teflon and non-stick coatings can cause serious health hazards to workers and consumers, they hid the information from the public. The chemicals used to make Teflon, which can cause cancer and birth defects, have been found in the blood of 95% of

Americans. The actions of courageous whistleblowers and strong research and legal action by Southeast Ohio water suppliers enabled the Environmental Working Group, a national research organization with whom we are affiliated, to bring the information to light.

Last summer, we launched our campaign aimed at protecting public health by getting the Teflon chemicals out of food packaging. Before we began our campaign, most members of the public and retailers were unaware that these chemicals are used in everything from microwave popcorn bags to french fry boxes. Here are the steps we took:

- Direct contact with thousands of Ohioans about the dangers of the Teflon chemicals, particularly C8:* The first step in the campaign was to put direct pressure on DuPont from consumers. Approximately 12,950 Ohio Citizen Action members wrote letters to DuPont CEO Charles Holliday urging him to discontinue the use of Teflon chemicals in food packaging products.
- Identifying major products which use C8 in their packaging:* Because food packagers are not required to label their products with information about C8, we had to figure out which products are the culprits. We took a direct approach, compiling lists of major food packing companies and fast food restaurants, sending letters to their decision-makers, and following up with phone calls. We asked these companies to tell us whether or not their packaging uses the Teflon chemicals, and gave them a deadline for reply. We posted a chart of the companies, along with their replies and deadlines, on the DuPont page of our website, www.ohiocitizen.org.
- Getting consumers involved:* From our research, we learned that food giant ConAgra, manufacturer of popular microwave popcorn brands like Orville Redenbacher, defended the use of C8 in their packaging. We launched a campaign in November aimed at telling supermarkets that consumers don't want C8 in their popcorn, focusing on the Orville Redenbacher brand. As of February 5, 2006, 13,437 neighbors have sent handwritten letters and petitions to local grocery stores urging them not to carry products with Teflon chemicals in the packaging. Our campaign started just as the Environmental Working Group organized major media appearances featuring DuPont whistleblower Glen Evers, a former top DuPont scientist, who revealed important information about the dangers of C8 in food packaging.
- Developing relationships with the PACE/United Steelworkers Union:* This union, which represents many DuPont workers, was a key ally in the campaign, and

played an important role in educating their own members, contacting manufacturers, and partnering with us.

- *Working with the media:* We worked closely with reporters for Ohio newspapers, radio, and TV to bring the Teflon issues to the forefront, and we worked with Columbus' biggest TV station on a major C8 story for "sweeps week" in November. That story featured the irresponsible behavior of Ohio's top regulatory agencies that are supposed to serve and protect the public, particularly in regard to the drinking water contamination in SE Ohio.

- *Making our website a "source of record" for information on DuPont and C8:* We have compiled many resources on the health effects of Teflon chemicals, including our chart of food products, background information, research, and news stories, on received visitors from 41 countries, and was the top response to the words "DuPont C8" in Google's search engine.

- Following DuPont's announcement in February that they will phase out the use of the chemicals by 2015, we are urging major retailers, including Wal-Mart and Kroger, to act now and use their considerable clout to ensure that the first order of business in the phase-out is to remove these chemicals from food packaging, such as microwave popcorn, candy wrappers, and frozen foods.

- *Working with residents affected by C8 contamination of their drinking water:* Over 100,000 people in SE Ohio and West Virginia get their drinking water from supplies that were contaminated with C8 coming from the DuPont Washington Works in Parkersburg, WV. This year, the USW also uncovered information about C8 leaks at the DuPont plant in Circleville, 30 minutes south of Columbus. We are working closely with several key leaders in SE Ohio, who pushed successfully for DuPont to provide bottled water to the residents and who are keeping the heat on officials conducting a health study. We are also in close contact with key scientists and doctors, including hydrogeologists, who are working to bring the public accurate information about the C8 contamination.

Mittal Steel

Mittal Steel is the latest in a parade of eight different owners of the Cleveland Works since the mill was built 90 years ago. Lakshmi Mittal, the third richest man in the world, bought the company from International Steel Group in April 2005. The mill is the largest single polluter of the air and water in Cuyahoga County. Pollution from the Cleveland Works that can trigger asthma and cause cancer (including soot and sulfur dioxide) increased 38% from 2003 to 2004. The Cleveland mill has more neighbors than any

steel mill in the country: 390,000 residents and half of Cleveland's public schools are located within five miles of the facility.

In addition to convincing International Steel Group to re-route the trucks carrying hot coke, our accomplishments this year included:

- We worked with neighbors of the steel mill to document their everyday experiences with the pollution, conducted "walk-and-talks" in the community, sponsored a public meeting on the relationship between asthma and pollution from the steel mill, and participated in the Tremont Arts Fest -- complete with a "table-top steel mill" we built for the occasion.
- Over 25,000 Ohio Citizen Action members wrote personal letters and petitions to the management at the steel mill, urging them to modernize the facility to prevent pollution. As Mittal went through its corporate transition, we have sent letters to all levels of management. We also delivered 458 messages attached to drinking straws to Lakshmi Mittal's office in London, with the message explaining that breathing through the straw for 60 seconds simulates the feeling of asthma.
- Because neighbors frequently complain about the particles raining down on their homes from the steel mills, we conducted "swipe" samples of particles on their houses this May. Our testing found that the closer people live to the steel mill, the more heavy metals we found in the particle dust. The metals matched up with those being emitted from the mill.
- We launched a community-based air testing program in November, training neighbors in how to take air samples using a homemade "bucket" device. We also brought a state-of-the-art air monitor to Cleveland, and exposed the lack of air monitoring being done by the city government. We used the bucket to take the first air sample at the gates of General Environmental Management, a neighboring company in the Flats, which has been blanketing Cleveland with a terrible odor for the past year, and gave the sample results to the company and the media.

FirstEnergy and AEP

- The sordid story of FirstEnergy's Davis-Besse nuclear power plant continued to unfold in 2005, with the decisions by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice to lay the blame for the near-nuclear disaster on whistleblower Andrew Siemaszko. Ohio Citizen Action joined with the Union of Concerned Scientists to intervene on Siemaszko's behalf in the NRC proceedings,

which are pending. Over 1800 Ohio Citizen Action members have signed letters in support of Siemaszko to the NRC.

- Ohio Citizen Action continued to be involved in litigation against American Electric Power (AEP), citing its failure to upgrade pollution prevention equipment at major coal-fired power plants. The case, which involves a large coalition of environmental organizations and state agencies, has been in federal court since 1999.

Good neighbor campaigns networking and training

- During the course of the year, we worked with Global Community Monitor, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, Community In-Power and Development of Port Arthur, Texas, WildLaw, and other organizations to share information and strategy on good neighbor campaigns. We hosted the national Bucket Brigade Conference in Cincinnati in October, after original plans to hold it in New Orleans were canceled due to Hurricane Katrina. The conference brought together neighbors of polluting facilities from around the country.

- We provided technical assistance and training for the formation of a new grassroots organization in Denver, the Colorado Citizens Campaign. The new group was formed when Clean Water Action announced it would close its Denver canvass office and the leaders there decided to re-open as a new organization that will conduct good neighbor campaigns. We worked with our canvassing partners at the Hudson Bay Company to develop the program and structure needed to launch the new organization in October 2005.

- Where possible, we lent our support to community organizations throughout the state working on local pollution prevention campaigns, including at Eramet in Marietta. Within Ohio Citizen Action, our canvass offices assisted each other in the campaigns, with the Columbus office joining in the Sunoco campaign for several months, and all the offices working on the DuPont campaign at the end of the year.

- We trained dozens of canvassers from Ohio and other states in basic good neighbor campaign techniques at the National Canvassers Conference in Paducah, Kentucky, in February, and provided support for a regional canvass gathering in Ohio in October.

II. Money in politics

- We played a key role in unveiling corruption in Ohio, helping reporters to investigate the Bureau of Workers' Compensation and politically connected coin

dealer and investor Thomas Noe - an investigation which led to an indictment in October. We also provided research findings on the contributions from special counsels to the Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro.

- Following Governor Taft's conviction for failing to disclose golf outings and other events paid for by lobbyists and business leaders in Ohio, we joined with the Ohio Roundtable to call on the Governor to resign, and unveiled a website called "moveontaft.org."

- We called on five of the seven Ohio Supreme Court justices to recuse themselves from a challenge to the FirstEnergy rate hike in a case filed by the Ohio Consumers Counsel. The justices taken a total of \$135,000 in campaign contributions from FirstEnergy, and at least two of them attended a fundraiser at the home of CEO Tony Alexander after it was clear that the case would come before them. The judges did not recuse themselves; the case is pending.

- We endorsed and campaigned for the four Reform Ohio Now ballot initiatives, which included proposed changes in election administration, redistricting or reapportionment reform and changes to the campaign finance system. The initiatives were soundly defeated at the polls.

- We opposed the proposed Ohio Patriot Act and changes to Ohio's election law requiring all voters to produce identification at the polls, both of which were enacted by the legislature. We also testified about the need for a voter verified paper audit trail on the computerized voting systems.

- In April, we hosted a public forum at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law about the new campaign finance law passed in December 2004. The forum laid the foundation for many reporters, editorial writers, and policy makers as they considered the current system and the need for reform.

III. Organizational developments

- The 30th anniversary celebrations in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland were all wonderful events, bringing together Ohio Citizen Action alumni, friends, and supporters to celebrate our work. At each event, awards were presented to local and statewide leaders. The Cleveland event featured the presentation of our highest annual award, the Howard M. Metzenbaum Ohio Citizen Action award, to Stuart Greenberg, executive director of Environmental Health Watch. The following individuals and organizations also received recognition at the 30th anniversary events: Westerville Citizens for Clean Air, Pari Sabety, Carrie Garnes, Larry Hansen (Joyce Foundation), Eula Bingham, Roxanne Qualls, WCPO I-

Team, Cincinnati Hip Hop Youth Center, Jon Jensen (George Gund Foundation); Brush Wellman, and Citizens Against American Landfill Expansion.

- Ohio Citizen Action's website, www.ohiocitizen.org, continued to be a lively source of information about our campaigns, and was visited by over 6,000 people a month. We also launched a new email alert system to our members, and increased our number of on-line donations.

- In memoriam:* Long-time Ohio Citizen Action board member and East Akron community leader Art Minson died in December 2005 at the age of 91. Art inspired all of us with his grace, wisdom, good humor, and unwavering life-long commitment to social justice.

- Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund was grateful to receive support from the following foundations in 2005: Joyce Foundation, George Gund Foundation, Beldon Fund, Murray and Agnes Seasongood Good Government Foundation, Ostara Foundation, Lotus Foundation, Ottinger Foundation, Patagonia, and Environmental Support Center.