

# Non-Toxic News

Newsletter of the **Center for Environmental Health**

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The mission of the Center for Environmental Health is to protect the public from environmental and consumer health hazards. We are committed to environmental justice, reducing the use of toxic chemicals, supporting communities in their quest for a safer environment and corporate accountability. We change corporate behavior through education, litigation, and advocacy.

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Photo by Herman Bustamante Jr., reprinted permission of Contra Costa Times

Carl Stott, 3, plays at Cedar Rose Park in Berkeley, while CEH's Michael Green speaks about the dangers of arsenic-treated wood used in play structures.

## CEH Forces Manufacturers to Eliminate Arsenic from Children's Playgrounds

Several major manufacturers of children's play equipment have recently agreed to stop using arsenic-based wood preservatives. As a result of negotiations with the Center for Environmental Health, Childlife, Inc., Ultra Play Systems, and others will stop using arsenic to pressure-treat their wood playground equipment. Arsenic-treated playground equipment exposes children to dangerous levels of toxic chemicals, even after only a few days of use. Arsenic is known to cause cancer and birth defects.

"Arsenic is known for its toxic effects on human health, and these companies are taking the right steps in phasing out arsenic-based preservatives," said Alise Cappel, CEH's Director of Toxics Research. The companies will use alternatives that are

similar to the arsenic-based preservative, in that they prevent rot and damage from the elements. The newly manufactured equipment will be available in early 2002.

These changes in corporate behavior were spurred by CEH's filing of a notice of intent to sue against several manufacturers of children's playground equipment under California's toxics act (Proposition 65). CEH has filed suit against over 20 manufacturers who have not switched away from arsenic-based preservatives.

"Our goal is to get the toxic chemicals out of the product, to protect children's health," said Michael Green, Executive Director of CEH. "There are safer alternatives available, and there is no reason companies should continue to use arsenic-treated wood."

For more information, contact Alise Cappel at [acappel@cehca.org](mailto:acappel@cehca.org) or call CEH.

## Center for Environmental Health Welcomes Public Policy Advocate

CEH's Public Policy Advocate, Katie Silberman, begins her new position with ideal preparation for the job: a year of experience working at CEH. Katie joined CEH in September, 2000, as Ralph S. Abascal Fellow, a position made possible by a grant from her alma mater, the University of California - Hastings College of the Law. After a successful year as the Abascal Fellow, the end of Katie's fellowship year marks her transition to permanent CEH staff member as Public Policy Advocate.

"I think Public Policy Advocate is a really great match between my training in law and government, and CEH's role influencing corporations and local government policies on toxics reduction," said Katie.

The Abascal Fellowship was created to honor the life and work of Ralph Abascal, a pioneering public interest lawyer who devoted his career to helping the disadvantaged. Abascal graduated from Hastings in 1969, and was one of the original founders of California Rural Legal Assistance, an or-

ganization that pioneered the national laws protecting farmworkers' health.

Katie was the first ever recipient of the Fellowship, and came to CEH with broad experience in environmental justice law and policy. Her transition from Abascal Fellow to Public Policy Advocate comes as CEH was selected to advise the City of San Francisco on toxics reduction policies for the next two years. Katie serves as project coordinator, utilizing her legal expertise and experience working with local governments.

Katie as legal observer during a protest at a polluting medical waste incinerator.



## 3 GREAT REASONS TO GIVE TO CEH:

1. We make neighborhoods healthier!
2. We promote pollution prevention, so toxic chemicals aren't used in the first place.
3. CEH transforms and educates whole industries so they are safer and healthier for us and the environment.

CEH has a small staff, so **your donation goes a long way!** You can donate online, at [www.cehca.org](http://www.cehca.org), or mail us at 528 61st St., Suite A, Oakland CA 94609.

### CEH WISH LIST

1. Laptop computers
2. Laser printers
3. High-quality PC computer monitors

**Arsenic-Wood Ban Written by CEH Passes in San Francisco**

The City of San Francisco recently hired CEH to advise the City on toxics reduction policies for the next two years. As the first step in this work, CEH developed a resolution for San Francisco banning the use of arsenic-treated wood in City-owned playgrounds, parks, and other places people are exposed to the chemical. The San Francisco Commission on the Environment passed the resolution on November 20.

“It’s a great step forward,” said Katie Silberman, CEH Public Policy Advocate and co-author of the resolution. “San Francisco is now a national leader in protecting children from arsenic, and is also using its purchasing power as a city to promote alternatives to arsenic in wood.”

The resolution complements CEH’s lawsuits against playground manufacturers (see page 1). Using this multi-pronged approach, CEH hopes to shift the entire national market away from the use of arsenic-treated wood, which can cause cancer and other negative health effects. After arsenic, CEH will draft policies for the city of San Francisco to protect the public from exposures to mercury and dioxin.

**BREAKING NEWS!**

On November 29th, the United States Environmental Protection Agency presented Environmental Achievement Awards to Mamta Sahgal and Michael Green recognizing CEH’s work for Pollution Prevention in the Healthcare Industry!



Michael Green  
 c/o Center for Environmental Health  
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CEH’s Dayna Yocum (right), marches in the Cancer Industry Tour of San Francisco, co-organized by CEH. Marchers visited corporate headquarters of some of the worst polluters in the world.



**CEH Surveys Hospitals to Promote Pollution Prevention**

The Center for Environmental Health is currently conducting the Bay Area Hospital Survey. The survey will collect information on the policies and practices of local hospitals regarding mercury-containing products, PVC plastics, and disposal of waste.

With support from the San Francisco Foundation, CEH is interviewing up to 50 hospitals in the Bay Area. The interviews are conducted in collaboration with Susan Forsyth, RN, who has many years of experience working within hospital systems promoting pollution prevention programs. She is currently a labor and delivery nurse at Kaiser Hospital and is a member of the California Nurses Association.

“This study will serve as a valuable resource nationally, as it will identify current best practices and environmental leaders in the industry,” said Mamta Sahgal, CEH’s Healthcare Without Harm Program Manager. “The survey is the beginning of a process to encourage hospitals to use fewer toxic materials and implement pollution prevention practices.”

**Thank You Interns!**

Jessie Shelhamer, Aurelia Donnelly, Koji Tessien, and Micaela Davis interned for CEH during the fall semester. Jessie and Aurelia study at Mills College Institute for Civic Leadership, a special program that advances women’s roles in promoting civic and democratic efforts. Koji joins us from U.C. Davis, and will be staying with us for the coming months. A U.C. Berkeley student, Micaela is working at CEH as a workstudy employee. All four have made a real difference through their work at CEH. Thank you all!



Top: Koji and Micaela  
 Bottom: Aurelia and Jessie

*Inside the CEH Newsletter:*

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