

# A VOICE IN WASHINGTON FOR CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



Children's  
Environmental  
Health Network

# Annual Report 2005

## From the Executive Director



The vital mission of the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) continues to be an urgent one; environmental threats, like air pollution, exposure to lead, mercury, and toxic substances in products, unsafe food, and risks of global warming continue to threaten the health of children and their families. Rates of asthma, developmental disabilities and childhood cancer among our children are too high.

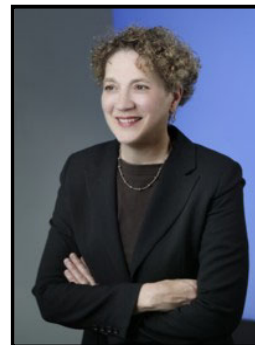
I am proud to present CEHN's 2005 Annual Report, which highlights our continued mission, vision, and priority program areas as we advance our important charge. Despite the progress on children's environmental health during our existence over the last 15 years, children around the world are still very vulnerable to harm through environmental hazards. Every day, existing policies to advance children's environmental health are challenged even while new opportunities arise to make further progress. To continue making progress new approaches will be needed in the next decade, and we recognize that CEHN will need to change, in order to be successful in the future. 2005 was a year where we needed to take drastic action to examine our historical role in children's environmental health. We worked to refocus our programs in fewer areas of concentration, building upon our strengths. We decided to focus on just a few areas: making child care environments safer, child safe chemicals, and our California activities.

We remain grateful for the support of our programs by the San Francisco Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency (toxics and Region III offices), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Beldon Fund, the Heinz Foundation, and the UC Berkeley Superfund Basic Research Program.

- Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
- July 1, 2005

## A Message From the Board Chair

Since the founding of CEHN in 1989, dozens of advocacy groups have either taken up children's environmental health or have been created to address this issue. The work of CEHN and its partners has completely changed the landscape for children's environmental health. Yet, CEHN is the *only* Washington, DC organization solely dedicated to children's environmental health and strong voice for children's environmental health on national science-based policies.



This has not been an easy time for the survival of not-for-profit organizations and CEHN, like many others, has been through some hard times. In 2004 and 2005 we did a series of intensive reexaminations of our mission and our core values, both internally and with various stakeholder groups. We examined the roles and missions that are played by other organizations who work to promote the health of children and the environment and that helped us to further sharpen our focus. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints we needed to wind down our California operations and consolidate our staff in Washington, DC. With a sharper focus on our core mission and on building support, we were able to survive a very tough year in 2005 and have reemerged as a much stronger organization.

CEHN plans to continue playing a key role in the national capital, where it is an important voice for children's health and environmental that can counter other voices who are attempting to reverse the progress of the last 15 years. In addition, because of CEHN's work in California, it will continue to press for state-based model legislation as well as other projects that can be replicated elsewhere, even though we will no longer have an office in California. We acknowledge the progress made to date but still have a great amount of work to do to assure the protection of children's health in all environments.

I give special thanks to all of those who supported us in 2005, and to the members of our board. All of you showed extraordinary commitment to our mission and were willing to take a leap of faith that with your support, as well as commitment and very hard work, we would not only survive but would come back to be a better and more effective force for the health of children and the environment. Members of the Board contributed in so many ways to make this work a possibility that I cannot possibly enumerate them here; thanks to each one of you. Most special thanks go to the Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, Renee Robin, Tausi Suedi, Sherita Cobbs, Jerry Paulson, and Carol Stroebel for their determination to continue moving forward. Last but not least I must thank our bookkeeper, Laura Frene, who rescued us, Lucy Lowenthal, for contributing valuable consulting for our Board members, as well as the law firm of Patton Boggs and particularly attorneys Peter Robertson, George Schutzer, and Douglas Mishkin who did so much to get us back on our feet.

- Lynn R. Goldman, MD, MPH
- July 1, 2005

# California Activities

In 2005, we designed a training program and a set of tools for child care programs in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties in California. The training program that we developed educates child care providers and administrators on creating healthier and safe environments by identifying environmental hazards; removing/alleviating such hazards; and identifying useful resources and contacts for child care centers. In 2005, CEHN drafted fact sheets on key topics, like, safe cleaning alternatives, integrated pest management, lead poisoning, and indoor mold. This project was developed through support from the San Francisco Foundation and California Wellness Foundation as well as support of the NIEHS Superfund Basic Research Program at the University of California at Berkeley.

For five years CEHN has received support from the NIEHS Superfund Basic Research Program (SBRP) at the University of California at Berkeley to serve as the “Outreach Core” for children’s environmental health. In 2005, CEHN received an extension of funding into years 2006 and 2007. CEHN’s work programs for this support has concentrated on California Office outreach activities. In addition to the child care project, emphasis has been placed on developing a California Resource Guide to parallel CEHN’s existing national resource Guide. A database of over 1000 California resources for this guide was developed along with an online survey for new and updated entries. CEHN is also appreciative to the California Wellness Foundation for support of the California Resource Guide.

CEHN continued its work to moderate the Environmental Health Legislative Working Group (EHLWG), a coalition of groups working collaboratively on policy and advocacy issues effecting environmental health. CEHN co-founded this coalition that reached 97 members in 2005. Support for these activities was provided by a San Francisco Foundation grant for statewide activities and by a San Francisco Foundation capacity building grant.

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TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

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# Protecting Children's Health: Providing Leadership on Federal Policy

## Making Chemicals Child Safe

There are tens of thousands of chemicals in commerce in the U.S.; few have been assessed for safety to children. Over the years the CEHN has been concerned that safety assessments consider unique risks to children – the vulnerabilities to exposure during critical windows of development and the unique exposures that children have to many substances. Our efforts to educate on this have borne fruit; today, laws regulating pesticides, drinking water and pharmaceuticals, now explicitly require safety assessments for children. However, there are no such requirements for toxic chemicals. The European REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Assessment of Chemicals) Initiative provided an opportunity to educate policy makers and thought leaders on how chemicals can be made child safe.

CEHN produced a background paper on U.S. chemicals policy analyzing the effectiveness of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) in protecting children's health. The paper had input from key partner groups and was distributed to medical, public health and public interest, groups. It provides background on the history of U.S. chemicals policy, describes serious gaps and shortcomings in children's health protection, and recommends policies that would assure that children's health is adequately protected.

Using CEHN's white paper as a foundation of discussion, CEHN held a successful one-day policy workshop, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005 on Capitol Hill to focus on U.S. chemicals policy and mobilize diverse public interest groups, most of whom told us they previously were not aware of this critical policy opportunity.

With input from a diverse group of stakeholders from the medical, public health and public interest community we developed a Statement of Principles for Child Safe Chemicals. These principles now have been endorsed by a number of national groups including the American Public Health Association, Association of Women's Health Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, and the Learning Disabilities Association of America. They have been widely distributed and have been communicated to congressional staff through briefings on Capital Hill. As Congressional interest in a much-needed review of these laws has increased, CEHN's wide distribution of its analysis and principles assured that Congress had the necessary information to consider children's unique vulnerabilities and susceptibilities to environmental exposures.

We are grateful to the Beldon Fund and the Heinz Foundation for their support of this work on chemicals policy, as well as support of the NIEHS Superfund Basic Research Program at the University of California at Berkeley which helped us to prepare for this work.

## Sending Scientists to Policy School

Too frequently, the voice of science is not heard in the public policy arena until it is too late. To enable pediatric scientists and clinicians to participate more fully in the process we developed a training course on how to effectively engage in the policy arena. This course was delivered on the morning of March 23, 2005 to 11 physician/scientists. The physician/scientist trainees then had an opportunity to participate in a policy workshop convened by CEHN and including a number of our public health, science and public interest stakeholders. The workshop served to identify key policy issues that need to be addressed by the children's environmental health community, particularly in the area of assessment of hazards and risks from toxic chemicals. Trainees had an opportunity to apply their newly learned skills to a real world situation. Following the workshop we surveyed physicians and scientists to identify the real and perceived barriers that they encounter that may limit their involvement in public policy making. Individual comments from participants indicated they found the pilot program useful and at least some were planning to use the knowledge gained to continue an active role in education and advocacy of policy-makers regarding chemical policy and children's environmental health.

The CEHN is grateful to the US Environmental Protection Agency for its support for this policy training and workshop.

## Collaborating With Partners

Healthy Schools: The Network uses a variety of venues to raise awareness and educate around these issues. CEHN assisted the Coalition for Healthier Schools in incorporating chemical safety legislation, CEHN bill analyses, and chemical policy background papers into its annual meeting, and CEHN has raised the need to address the inadequacies of current chemical policies at a Healthy Homes meeting sponsored by the CDC.

National Children's Study: A vital longitudinal cohort study to help pinpoint the root causes of many major diseases and disorders, the National Children's Study has been strongly supported by CEHN. By educating Congressional offices about the critical need for the study, coordinating partner group efforts, creating and circulating a fact sheet for use by pediatric environmental health professionals to educate Federal decision-makers, CEHN has provided critical support for this important project.

Right to Know: CEHN has been a strong supporter of Right to Know and especially the U.S. Toxic Release Inventory (TRI). Though EPA has proposed to institute major reductions in the amount of information on toxic pollution that the agency would collect and make available to the public under the **TRI**, CEHN has worked to help inform pediatric environmental health professionals about the value of right to know and TRI in particular as well as to provide feedback to the EPA on the value of TRI in helping promote healthier environments for children.

We are grateful to our contributors who provide general support to the CEHN that allows us to be able to work with our partners on issues of importance to children's health and the environment.

## Developing New Environmental Stewards

How we can educate the next generation of young environmental stewards? Our location in Washington DC provides an excellent opportunity to reach promising young students for whom a single experience could make a difference over an entire lifetime. The summer of 2005 was CEHN's fourth year to cosponsor the Annual DC Student Environmental Development Program (SEDP) at The George Washington University. This environmental leadership development program educates entering 8<sup>th</sup> graders to become environmental stewards, empowers them to make a difference in their neighborhoods, and inspires them to future careers in science, and environmental science in particular. Middle school science teachers recommend inner city students, most of whom are minorities; for the first time in 2005, all participant students were female. The seven- week program explored environmental sciences topics ranging from air pollution and pesticides to water protection and endangered species. Experiential learning involved a canoeing trip, water testing, and a visit to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center. The successful program concluded with a graduation ceremony in which the students gave group presentations on topics and lessons learned throughout the summer. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Region III of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the in-kind support of our DC SEDP partner organizations, and those who contributed to our operating expenses, which are needed so that we can cosponsor this program.





## Promoting Ethics In Children's Environmental Research

In 2004, CEHN held a groundbreaking workshop "Ethical Issues in Children's Environmental Health Research" that covered major topics including ethical issues unique to children's environmental health research, community involvement, industry funding and privacy and confidentiality. This work was continued forward in 2005 through production of a series of manuscripts that were developed for publication as a mini monograph in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, with the guidance of Cynthia Bearer, MD, PhD, a noted scientist in the field and member of the CEHN Board of Directors.

We gratefully acknowledge the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for supporting the workshop as well as the NIEHS Superfund Basic Research Program at the University of California at Berkeley whose general support assisted us with this work.

# Thank You to Our Individual Donors!!

## 2005 Honor Roll List

<b>Dick Batchelor</b>	<b>Carolyn McIntosh</b>
<b>John Balbus</b>	<b>Elise Miller</b>
<b>Cynthia Bearer</b>	<b>Network for Good Corp</b>
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<b>Joan Cranmer</b>	<b>Jeanne Rabovsky</b>
<b>Mary Gant</b>	<b>J. Routt Reigart</b>
<b>Benjamin Gitterman</b>	<b>River Park Friends</b>
<b>Lynn Goldman</b>	<b>Johnny River</b>
<b>E. Haddock</b>	<b>Jennifer Rubenstein</b>
<b>Birt Harvey</b>	<b>Oswalda Saaverdra</b>
<b>Susan Hester</b>	<b>Peggy Shepard</b>
<b>Audrey Hill</b>	<b>Ramona Trovato</b>
<b>Malcom Kirschenbaum</b>	<b>West Harlem Environmental Action</b>
<b>Glazier Loss</b>	<b>Max Wientraub</b>
<b>Rachel McDuffie</b>	<b>Jennifer Wimberley</b>

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## Staff and Consultants

<p><b><u>Staff</u></b> Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, M.P.H. Executive Director</p> <p>Renee Robin, JD Director, California Office</p> <p>Tausi Suedi Graduate Student Assistant</p> <p>Sherrita Cobbs VISTA Americorps Volunteer</p> <p><b><u>Consultant</u></b> Carol Stroebel Health Policy Specialist</p>
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# Linking Science and Advocacy

Through the maintenance of two professional listserves, the CEHN Science List holds discussion around the current research and science within the field of children's environmental health while the CEHN Community List provides discussion for general advocacy within the field of children's environmental health. To subscribe, send a blank message to:

[Cehnsience-on@cehn.org](mailto:Cehnsience-on@cehn.org)

[Cehncommunity-on@cehn.org](mailto:Cehncommunity-on@cehn.org)



## About the Children's Environmental Health Network...

The Children's Environmental Health Network is a 501 ( c )3 national organization with a multidisciplinary mission that involves protecting the fetus and children from environmental health hazards and promoting a healthy environment. To achieve this mission, CEHN's goals are to:

- Promote the development of a sound public health and child-focused national policy; with an emphasis on children most at risk;
- Elevate public awareness of environmental hazards to children;
- Educate health professionals, policy makers, and community members in preventive strategies; and
- Stimulate prevention-oriented research;

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