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**HEADLINE:** CANCER FINDINGS SPUR DEMAND FOR STUDY

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**BODY:**

The incidence of some cancers in women in the **Lewiston** area is almost 50 percent above what would be expected, and grass-roots organizations are mounting a campaign to determine whether there is a link to a former Army research facility that still contains **radioactive** waste.

"These cancer findings confirm a lot of our fears," said Timothy Henderson, president of Residents Organized for **Lewiston-Porter** Environment. "There's stuff **buried** in **Lewiston** that would make Love Canal look like a health resort."

The findings -- released recently by the state Department of Health and based on research during 1993 and 1997 -- show the incidence of breast and colorectal cancers among women in **Lewiston** was between 15 and 49 percent higher than elsewhere in the state. Colorectal cancer among men in **Lewiston** was found to be within the 15 percent expected rate. "This is higher than what we would expect to see compared to the rest of the state," state Health Department spokeswoman Claire Pospisil said of the breast and colorectal rates among women. "But it's difficult to link these figures to environmental causes. There are other factors that have to be considered, such as genetics, lifestyles and people's ages."

For years, residents' concerns have been centered on the **Lake Ontario Ordnance Works**, a secret research and dumping ground during World War II's Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb. The site continued to be used for Cold War-era research and production of nuclear materials, ranging from commercial reactor components to military weaponry, according to Department of Energy records.

**Contaminated** nuclear waste from the wartime projects was **buried** and consolidated in the **Niagara Falls Storage Site**, a 191-acre section spawned by the sprawling 7,500-acre ordnance works site.

"The days of the need for secrecy are over," said Louis H. **Ricciuti**, a director of Citizens Campaign Against Nuclear Exposure. "We need to remove ourselves from the Cold War mind-set. We as citizens need to be a partner in the resolution of this devastating legacy that is already a half-century old."

The area is also home to Chemical Waste Management, the only hazardous-waste landfill in the Northeast, and Modern Disposal Services, a garbage company.

The so-called "toxic triangle" -- the storage site, CWM and Modern Disposal -- is about a mile from **Lewiston-Porter** schools.

Unexplained illnesses and cancer deaths among students and teachers in the Lew-Port school system over the years have raised questions about a possible connection with the hazardous dump sites.

Citizens Campaign is circulating a petition calling for full disclosure from the U.S. government, including health studies and follow-ups. The petition, with 150 signatures so far, will be submitted to President Bush, Congress and local representatives.

"There isn't much help out there for people like us," said Brenda Smith, whose 15-year-old son has Hodgkin's lymphoma. The Lew-Port student and former weight lifter was diagnosed with the disease last July and is undergoing treatment in Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Buffalo.

"He never had any medical problems, and the doctors have no explanation for his illness," said Smith.

But both the state and Niagara County health departments balked at conducting such a study.

"Statistics cannot by themselves tell you what causes cancer," said Paul Dicky, supervisory public health **engineer** for Niagara County. "These latest statistics are a tool for the state to identify areas for further research."

Even if a study were conducted in the **Lewiston** area, cancer risk factors are too varied to draw any specific conclusions, Dicky said.

Dicky suggests that worried residents consult their health care providers. Dicky is the county Health Department's representative on the Restoration Advisory Board of the U.S. **Army Corps of Engineers**, whose job it is to clean up the toxic areas.

The Army set aside a portion of the **Niagara Falls Storage Site as the Rochester** Burial Grounds to contain the remains of dogs, cats, rabbits and other test **animals** injected with plutonium at the University of **Rochester** during in the 1940s and 1950s.

The **radioactive animal** carcasses were **buried** in the **Lewiston** site 50 years ago, but it was only in the last three months that the corps began to address the matter.

The corps began removing TNT from the ordnance works site last year but said two more years of studies are needed before a decision can be made on whether the uranium residue can be safely removed.

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