

# Local

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## Group calls for testing

### Chemists say Lew-Port school borders on questionable site

By Susan Mikula Campbell  
Niagara Gazette

**YOUNGSTOWN** — The need for more testing for hazardous waste at the Lewiston-Porter campus will be discussed at an open public forum at 2 p.m. Saturday at the Village Hall, 240 Lockport St.

"A lot of people still are uninformed when it comes to the history of the LOOW (Lake Ontario Ordnance Works) site and how it affected Lewiston-Porter," said Ann Roberts.

"Anybody who has children at the school or grandchildren should come." She and her husband, Gerald, local chemists working with Residents for Responsible Government, will present a thorough review of the history,

geography and chemistry of the former LOOW site. Lew-Port schools are built on part of the LOOW buffer zone.

Dr. Joseph A. Gardella, professor of chemistry and associate dean of external affairs at the University at Buffalo, will present an outline for evaluating potential chemical contamination on the campus and explain how the Environmental Science Institute at UB can help.

One goal of the forum, he said, is to listen to what the community has to say both about their concerns and any information they might have about the site that would help determine where soil samples should be taken.

Roberts said most of the information to be presented at Saturday's meeting already has been given to the

Lewiston-Porter Board of Education, which recently voted to explore environmental and health issues around the school. Board of Education meetings do not allow for public input or questions on the LOOW material Saturday will provide that opportunity, she said.

The LOOW site was closed by the federal government during World War II for Department of Defense activities. The traditional opinion has been that the buffer zone never was involved in operations. However, Roberts said, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has found areas associated with the large open disposal of hazardous waste within the buffer zone. One is 200 feet behind the Lew-Port School property line and has

Aerial photos also have indicated several areas in the buffer zone where soil

disturbances indicate burning or burial. The Corps is expected to release a report this fall, Roberts said.

Roberts believes this indicates a potential risk that needs to be addressed.

"In this day and age, there is no excuse for ignoring a potential problem," she said about the need for testing. "If there is a problem, deal with it. If there isn't a problem, then we've given the community the reassurance it's been asking for the last 20 years."

For more information, check the Residents for Responsible Government Web site at [www.rrg.org](http://www.rrg.org).

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questionable lower court cases, and he encouraged RRG to consider filing an appeal. With an appeal, RRG expects further maneuvers from a large deep-pockets corporation like CWM. So, RRG will need more funds and continued support from the residents of the area. **WE THANK YOU IN ADVANCE!**

## School Health Topics

Over the past few months, the RRG Health & School Environment Committee has examined areas around the Lewport Campus to identify areas of known and suspected contamination. RRG members have been in contact with the Army Corps of Engineers (CoE) and Chemical Waste Management (CWM) to discuss these concerns.

CWM has 400 acres of land, previously zoned heavy industrial, which could be used as a toxic landfill. Unfortunately much of this land is already heavily contaminated and would have to be cleaned up before using it for hazardous waste disposal. The contamination is well documented. CWM's offices sit right next door to two of NY state's registered inactive hazardous waste sites, but no clean-up was ever carried out. The CoE argues that although clean-up of these sites is their responsibility, they get low priority due to restricted access, by virtue of CWM's presence; CWM waits for CoE clean-up. Nothing gets done. Numerous other "hot spots" are on CWM property where materials from the Manhattan Project and subsequent DOD/DOE operations have been haphazardly buried; neither CWM nor CoE has clean-up incentive.

The extent of toxic waste disposal around LOOW (Lake Ontario Ordnance Works) is only now being revealed. Contrary to earlier statements, the CoE now acknowledges that the LOOW buffer zone may have been used for the burial and burning of hazardous waste. Recent CoE analysis of historical aerial photographs will produce a report that is likely to recommend investigation of several new areas on the buffer zone. The fact that Lewport is built on the LOOW buffer zone, adds weight to RRG arguments for environmental testing at Lewport.

Recently RRG member & chartered chemist, Geraint Roberts, gave presentations to the Lewport School Board and members of Lewiston and Porter Town Boards, outlining the potential environmental problems faced by Lewport. He objectively reviewed the history, geography and chemistry of the LOOW site and explained details of the known pathways by which LOOW contaminants could reach the school. Pathways include the South West Drainage Ditch, which runs behind the school, and the LOOW outfall pipe, which carried toxic waste directly across the school property for discharge into the Niagara River. He stated there is a potential risk of contamination to Lewport and stressed the need for urgent comprehensive environmental testing in order to address the problem.

After these presentations, several School Board members registered their support for a test program. "It is encouraging", said Roberts. "There seems to be a gradual realization by the community that there is a potential risk of contamination at Lewport; the responsible approach has to be to test the school campus. Hopefully we won't find a problem, but if we do, steps can be taken to deal with it."

More recently, RRG members have met with Dr. Joe Gardella of Buffalo University. Dr. Gardella holds a Ph.D.

in analytical chemistry and is professor of chemistry and associate dean for external affairs. He is experienced in advising community groups on environmental issues, and was impressed with RRG's detailed review of the LOOW site and its potential impact on Lewport. He has also recognized the need for environmental testing at Lewport and felt the university could help with the design of an appropriate test program. Further liaison between Dr. Gardella and the Lewport School Board is being arranged.

An RRG information symposium to get more details to residents is in the planning stage for October. Anyone interested in being part of the planning process is invited to the next meeting: Saturday September 14, 9:30 AM, Youngstown Village Hall.

## Late Breaking News:

**Gazette Endorses RRG Cause:** In a crucial show of support, the Niagara Gazette stepped forward with a full column editorial page "Our View" siding with the RRG position on toxic waste, with a title of "Niagara already has paid its dues. No more toxics for CWM landfill." What more can we say, when the paper says that "the environmental group's (RRG's) goal is a worthy one."

**Resident's Poll Strongly Agrees with RRG:** A phone survey to over 300 attendees of earlier RRG public briefings showed 98.5% strongly believed in RRG's mission to countermand the CWM zoning decision and to get more public input into such future decisions.

**CWM Open House:** To be an informed populace, RRG encourages all residents to attend the CWM open house, September 14, 10 to 2 o'clock, at 1550 Balmer Road. Bring neighbors and ask lots of questions; then, give us your comments on our web site: [www.rrg-wny.org](http://www.rrg-wny.org)

**CWM Fined for Mishandling PCBs:** The Federal EPA levied a "token fine" of \$78,000 for CWM's mislabeling, falsifying records, and improperly burying toxic materials which are not allowed in this local dump. EPA had threatened fines up to \$1.6 million. Because it cost CWM money and a protracted time to dig around in the pit to retrieve them, a minute penalty was lived (something like smashing your car up while driving drunk; then you don't pay the fine, so you can keep the money to fix your car!).

**Coalition Building Continues:** RRG has garnered strong support from several citizen action groups, at its last meeting. Since Lois Gibb's presentation and offer of further help, toxic waste and environmental groups have stepped forward to endorse RRG's critical role to defend Western New York's continual plight of being the only toxic waste site in the entire northeast. Erie and Niagara Counties, along with 25 other municipalities have gone on record to ban the transport of Hudson River PCBs through the region. RRG thanks all of its allies!

**Landfill Information:** RRG Health & School Environment Committee members are recommending that everyone review an excellent paper on this subject at [www.gfredlee.com/hwlf-pap.htm](http://www.gfredlee.com/hwlf-pap.htm).

**Coalition to Hold Bus Tour of Toxic Sites:** An even better way to become informed about the myriad of toxic sites in Western New York is to take a bus tour, sponsored by COIN (Coalition of Impacted Neighborhoods), an active supporter of RRG projects. They will announce an October date at their 12:30 PM 9/4 press conference, in front of CWM's gate -- come and make an appearance. They are making a "toxic quilt;" RRG will supply a panel.

## My Story

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Last month we explained that this regular feature provides space for "My Story" from local residents. Although it may be difficult to establish direct cause and effect, these stories show the depth of concern and worry of concerned residents. As such they should be an inspiration to local leaders, legislators, business officials, and citizens to become more involved in the hazardous waste issues that so heavily impact this area. This month's article is anonymous as requested, but no less valid.

### The Story of a Life-long Town of Porter Resident

At first, writing about "my story" seemed easy, but it became hard to share with equally anonymous readers. All of my 45 year life, I have lived north of Balmer Road.

In my teens, I was always tired with very low endurance. My skin was always blemished and slow to heal. A dermatologist prescribed many medications, without avail. Other doctors said that I was too young for this to be happening at such an early age. In the late '70s, headaches were a daily occurrence, along with high doses of pain killers. Migraine headaches and nausea followed. That required a dark room and cold packs, 12 to 72 hours. The severe pain left me in a further weakened state.

In the early 1990s, daily symptoms intensified more and numerous problems began. Doctors didn't know what to do -- a very frightening and frustrating position when you need help the most! Exploring alternative medications and environmental doctors, yielded the following analysis:

- Immune system dysfunction
- Extremely low adrenal function
- Hormonal dysfunction
- High toxic load
- Sensitivity to odors and chemicals
- Severe allergies and allergic responses

There are many limitations, struggles and challenges with which I deal. Toxins, chemicals and allergens burden and compromise the human body's immune system.

It has been explained to me that the human body is like a barrel that continues to fill up with harmful toxins, eventually overflowing, compromising the immune system and causing sickness and disease. Some have called this an invisible illness which slowly creeps up on the healthy.

I continue to struggle with my health problems; some days are more severe than others. We live in a world of numerous chemicals. Must we allow the hazardous toxins into our neighborhood? Let's protect our future and health. How full is your barrel, or your loved ones? Will they overflow?