

The **CATE** Letter

CITIZENS AGAINST TOXIC EXPOSURE

Greetings,

We want to thank Ken Young of 2IT Web Design for his original design, hosting, and the recent update of the **CATE** website, <<http://www.cate.ws>>. Ken worked with me and with Frances Dunham to add new information and links. We're proud of the website, and we think you will find it very informative.

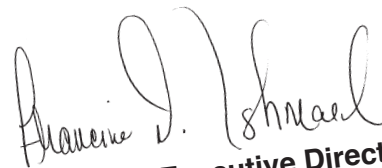
The **CATE**/Community Environmental Health Project (CEHP) is eager to enroll every eligible resident and worker in the program. If you haven't done so already, please make a point of calling the Escambia County Health Department at 595-6402 to schedule an appointment for your free health screening. Whether you are new to the project or have started but never finished it, take advantage of the benefits you can derive from the CEHP health evaluation. **CATE** provides transportation to and from appointments.

Another way **CATE** works to improve your quality of life is by offering Health and Environment Workshops. Expert advice on serious health issues, stated in non-technical language. The dates for May and June are not available as this newsletter goes to press, so please call 478-5799 for the schedule. Workshops will also be announced at the regular **CATE** membership meetings, May 12 and June 9.

The Bay Area Safe Air Coalition (BASAC) now meets quarterly on the second Thursday, with the next meeting falling on June 12. We hope you'll plan on joining us.

We enjoyed our involvement with Earth Day on April 19. The weather was lovely, and many people stopped by **CATE**'s table to ask about our issues.

My injured arm is healing. I appreciate all the inquires and wishes for a complete recovery. Along with the physical therapy, I know they have helped (and, unlike the therapy, they were painless!).



Francine D. Ishmael, Executive Director
May 2008

The business of cancer: how chemicals became innocent and patients became guilty

The Secret History of the War on Cancer by Devra Davis

In the summer of 1936, 200 of the world's top cancer scientists met in Brussels, Belgium, to discuss research carried out over several centuries. There were no holds barred, no industrial or state secrets impeding the free flow of dialogue to advance the campaign against cancer. The focus was on environmental and social causes — *prevention*.

By 1936, cancer had already become one-third more prevalent than it had been in 1900. The relationship between the disease and certain occupations had been known as early as the middle ages. At the Brussels conference, scientists from the United States, Latin America, Europe, Russia, and Japan presented findings as significant as the following: there is no causal connection between heredity and cancer, there is a time lag of 20 years or more between exposure and cancer development, and the causes of cancer include radiation, arsenic, benzene, asbestos, and synthetic dyes and hormones.

In 1971, President Nixon signed the National Cancer Act, officially launching the U.S. “War on Cancer.” The big guns were carefully pointed away from well-documented cancer causes such as chemical exposures and tobacco.

Today, 500,000 Americans die of cancer each year, and it is nearly impossible for the victims or their survivors to prove in court that their diseases were due to environmental or workplace exposures. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), whose mission is to regulate worker exposures, has set standards for just 25 chemicals of the

thousands in current use, and its close ties to industrial trade groups call its conclusions into question. Environmental causes of cancer are seldom researched except under corporate control and funding, and many of those studies are protected as “trade secrets” not to be revealed to the public, not even to those exposed.

What happened between 1936 and today is the subject of *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* by Devra Davis, director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. Dr. Davis details unholy alliances between corporations, government agencies, cancer charities, and compromised researchers that have obscured the causes of cancer and instead promoted enormously profitable cancer drugs and technologies.

“Centuries-old knowledge about the causes of cancer, accepted by scientists and businesses alike in 1936, is now inadmissible in court — not because it has been disproved, but because it has been superseded by legal maneuvers and disqualified by a subtle shift in what is considered proof of harm,” Davis writes.

In short, profit trumped protection. World War II and its aftermath saw the explosive growth of what President Eisenhower called “the military industrial complex” and its embrace of technologies with military or commercial potential. Germany had rigorously studied the effects (including cancer) of tobacco and synthetic chemicals during the 1930s, research that, if heeded, could have warned of dangers to come. But, as the U.S. recoiled at Nazi atrocities, its rejection

of Nazi research was highly selective. What the Nazis had learned about rockets was prized; what they had learned about cancer prevention was discarded.

“If Nazi inventions like rocketry were easily adapted by the Allies and the work of [German researcher] Pernkopf continues to be used as a classic reference in anatomy departments around the world,” Davis asks, “why then were the findings of the cancer hazards of synthetic organic chemicals and tobacco treated so differently?”

During the 1950s, machinations of the U.S. and British governments, the American Cancer Society, and the American Medical Association exaggerated the debate about tobacco's role in lung cancer and other diseases. Studies secretly funded by tobacco companies succeeded in confusing and diverting blame. Lawyers for tobacco companies put cancer victims on trial by demanding evidence for the cause of disease no human being could satisfy, parodied by one scientist in 1958:

1. *Secure some human volunteers willing to have a bronchus painted with cigarette tar, perhaps through a bronchial fistula.*
2. *The experiment must be carried on for at least twenty or twenty-five years.*
3. *The subjects must spend the whole period in air conditioned quarters, never leaving them even for an hour or so, in order that there may be no contamination by a polluted atmosphere.*
4. *At the end of the twenty-five years they must submit to an operation or an autopsy to determine the result of the experiment.*

Meanwhile, chemical companies exploited the tobacco controversy as a literal smoke screen to hide the human health damage of workplace and environmental exposure to synthetic chemicals. Many have profited handsomely from the drugs designed to treat cancer as well as the toxic chemicals that cause it.

The use of synthetic chemicals grew exponentially during the 1960s and 1970s. However, scientists who reported on their threats to the health of workers and the public were hounded, isolated, and often silenced. The legitimate scientific interest in more research was perverted into a state of paralysis in which no amount of study and consensus could justify action. Epidemiology was shaped to the ends of manufacturers, delaying conclu-

sions that could result in regulation.

“The new strategy can be summed up very simply: create doubt. Be prepared to buy the best expertise available to insist that more research is needed before conclusions can be reached.”

The infamous revolving door between government and industry and the influence of lobbying and campaign funding combine to keep regulation minimal and frequently under siege today. And the legal precedents tobacco established now stand as hurdles to victims of chemical exposure as well as smokers.

In effect, human beings are serving as subjects in huge uncontrolled experiments, as substances with unknown

effects are introduced into our bodies and our environments. New chemicals and technologies appear each year; in most cases, only their profit potential has been seriously considered beforehand. Davis is concerned about present practices whose risks are inadequately defined: cell phones (especially their use by children), pesticides, asbestos, dioxin and other hormone-like chemicals, overuse of CT scans, aspartame, combined low-dose exposures, and some ingredients in personal products. She makes a powerful argument for using scientific expertise to avoid the mistakes of the past. 20 years in the writing, *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* is a dense and demanding book, but it makes a major contribution to our understanding of one of our most urgent problems.

CATE Community Environmental Health Project provides screening, evaluation and education

For almost eight years, **CATE**'s Community Health Project (CEHP) has reached out to the residents, former residents, and workers from the areas surrounding Escambia Treating Company and Agrico Superfund sites, CSX (formerly L&N) Railway, and Florida Drum, offering health services designed to address health effects of industrial contaminants. The joint project of the Escambia County Health Department and **CATE** is funded through the Florida Department of Health in Tallahassee and locally through the County Health Department.

Screenings to help identify warning signs can be valuable in heading off serious health problems. The CEHP clinical staff conducts routine blood and urine samples; analysis for Complete Metabolic Profile, lipid panel, thyroid panel, Complete Blood Count with differential, urinalysis, hepatitis panel, and prostate specific antigen is done by a

commercial laboratory, Laboratory Corporation of America (Labcorp, in Pensacola). A screening chest x-ray is offered to those over 40 years of age. The health evaluation also consists of a survey of each client's medical, exposure, and occupational history. Where indicated, recommendations and referrals are made.

Another aspect of maintaining good health and managing medical conditions is information. **CATE**'s health education series has been very successful in fostering a better understanding of lifestyle choices and their impacts on current and long-term health. Toxicology, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, cancer, migraine headaches, angina, allergic reactions, sleep disorders, osteoporosis, lead poisoning, hepatitis, lupus, and hypertension have been among the topics of **CATE**'s free public Health and Environment Workshops. All presentations are geared for the lay-

man with an interest in — but no special knowledge of — these subjects.

CEHP may have future benefits as well: recognizing the exposures that have occurred in this historically mixed industrial and residential community over the years, and the dangers that toxic chemicals can pose to human health, **CATE** is working to establish a clinic to treat CEHP participants at no cost. Making the case for such a clinic is one important reason that every eligible resident and worker is urged to call the Escambia County Health Department at 595-6402 for a free health screening.

To make participation easy and convenient, **CATE** provides free transportation. Clients should request transportation services when they make their appointments with the Health Department. If there are questions about eligibility for CEHP participation, they should be directed to **CATE** at 478-5799 or 478-5794.



6400 MARIANNA DRIVE, PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32504

CATE *Calendar*

Monday, May 12

- 5:00 pm **CATE** Community Meeting*

May CATE Health & Environment Workshop, *to be arranged*

Monday, June 9

- 4:00 pm, **CATE** Quarterly Board Meeting*
- 5:00 pm, **CATE** Community Meeting*

June CATE Health & Environment Workshop, *to be arranged*

Thursday, June 12

- 5:00 pm, **BASAC** Quarterly Meeting*

Monday, July 14

- 5:00 pm **CATE** Community Meeting*

*New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 3600 North Palafox

**HAVE YOU EVER LIVED NEAR OR WORKED AT
ESCAMBIA TREATING COMPANY
AGRICO CHEMICAL COMPANY
CSX (L & N RAILWAY) or
FLORIDA DRUM?**

HAVE YOU EVER LIVED IN THESE AREAS?

- Oak Park
- Rosewood Terrace
- Lurton Street
- Herman Street
- Pearl Street
- Marcus Drive
- John Gray Street
- Clarinda Lane
- Pensacola Village
- North Clover Street
- West 40th Lane
- West 41st Lane
- West 42nd Lane
- Hayne Street (*North of Texar*)
- Miller Street (*North of Texar*)
- Tarragona Street (*North of Texar*)
- Roosevelt Street (*North of Texar*)
- Escambia Arms Apartments

Please contact:

**Citizens Against Toxic Exposure
6400 Marianna Drive, Pensacola, Florida 32504
Phone 478-5799 or 478-5794**

CATE is working to establish a register for future eligible health benefits.



NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

INDIVIDUAL, \$5 monthly (\$60 yearly)

BUSINESS or SPONSOR, \$25 monthly (\$300 yearly)

Send to:

CATE, 6400 Marianna Drive, Pensacola, Florida 32504
Donations to **CATE** are tax-deductible.

*.....that includes you,
doesn't it?*