

**Center for Health, Environment and Justice
Small Grants Final Report**

*From People for Safe Water, Clark County, Ohio
September 30, 2016*

Contact Name: Marilyn Welker
Email Address: mwelker@ctcn.net
Phone Number: 937-484-6988

Description of our project, including its main objective(s), from grant application:

At this time, we most need 1) strategic help with how to get to “win” with EPA, and 2) continued visibility about the risk to our water supply from the Tremont City Barrel Fill (BF) with people, businesses and leaders of Clark County.

1) We request training from CHEJ to create effective strategies to work with our partners and residents throughout Clark County to influence decision-makers in Ohio and US EPA.

2) We will continue efforts to raise visibility, awareness and engagement: participate in major community events, including the Memorial Day Parade, Clark County Fair, and Springfield Farmers Markets, maintain the listserv and website, distribute yard signs and brochures, give presentations, organize postcard campaigns and calls to decision-makers, etc.

Additionally, we will work with a graphic designer to design 4-5 compelling messages that can be used on local billboards and Facebook ads, our website and other potential uses. While we face no immediate danger to our water supply, we must convey a sense of urgency for people to actively work to protect our water from EPA’s “fix”.

What did you accomplish in carrying out the project?

Regarding Objective #1-- We spent a day of training with CHEJ staff members Lois Gibbs and Teresa Mills in June. With Lois and Teresa, twelve members of our group revisited our slogan, celebrated our successes and accomplishments over the past two years, identified “hooks” to move forward, and named our Top Action ideas for the next six months, along with the lead person to move each action forward.

Regarding Objective #2— Our primary accomplishment has been experiencing much greater awareness from people about the Tremont City Barrel Fill and need to protect our water compared to a year ago. We experienced this especially at the Clark County Fair, where we interacted with people for eight 10-hour days.

We have engaged our community through events, presentations, various avenues of publicity and promotion, many meetings with public officials, and use of social media, as follows:

- Spoken about the BF with 18 West End Neighborhood Association members; 15 Wittenberg University students in a class on social justice; and 60 Clark County Township Trustees and their guests at their Spring dinner
- Participated in the Springfield Memorial Day Parade with a pick-up truck “float” dramatizing the site’s hazardous wastes;

Held an informational and fund-raising event, hosted by the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, attended by 60+ people, received \$2500 in donations toward media campaign;

Raised \$4800 total YTD in contributions from individuals to support media efforts;

Sent 9 emails to our subscribers list of 250+ people, promoting events, asking them to make calls to decision-makers, informing them of ongoing developments related to protecting our water, etc.;

Sponsored a booth at the Clark County Fair, July 22-29, staffing it for 8 10-hr. days, informing and engaging people about the BF, inviting them to sign letters to President Obama, providing t-shirts for a donation, etc.;

Generated > 575 letters to President Obama throughout July, August and September, urging him “not to make us another Flint!”; also generated unknown number of calls to White House comment line, asking the President to work w/ Gina McCarthy to change the plan;

Interviewed by Mary Kuhlman of Ohio Public News Service, with story, “Ohio Community at Odds with EPA over Toxic Waste Site,” airing on 12 media outlets throughout Ohio, <http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2016-05-19/environment/ohio-community-at-odds-with-epa-over-toxic-waste-site/a51986-1>;

Led sixty 6th graders through hands-on activity to create a mini-aquifer, demonstrating our aquifer and our collective need to protect it;

Distributed yard signs, t-shirts, magnets and Infographic about our water supply at all public events in which we participated, the magnets asking people to call the White House frequently to urge a change to the BF cleanup plan;

Tabled at Springfield Farmers Mkt., Gay Pride Festival, and PromiseFest, a neighborhood festival, inviting people to sign letters to Pres. Obama and call the White House comment line;

Held the First Anniversary Party of the 8/15 US EPA meeting (where we broke the all-time attendance record at one of their mtgs.), attended by 100+ people, including many newbies to the BF. People signed letters to Obama and were asked to call White House comment line;

Attended Candidates Night in late September to put candidates on record for their position on the BF cleanup plan;

Represented by Sierra Club Ohio Chapter staff person at Ohio Interfaith Power & Light conference in late September, talking about BF and the importance of persistence;

Generated two stories in *Springfield News-Sun* about the BF:
<http://www.springfieldnewssun.com/search/?q=Tremont+City+Barrel+Fill>

Met with and communicated frequently with our local elected officials and state legislators, encouraging them to advocate with our Ohio EPA leaders;

Continued to build relationships with our Congressional staff aides, keeping them informed of our work and position and asking our U.S. Senators and Representative to advocate with EPA on our behalf;

Purchased Facebook ads for May Chamber event, reaching 2796 people, 95 people engaging, and August Anniversary event, reaching 3960 people, 121 people engaging;

Underwrote drive-time news programming with 20 spots on local NPR station to promote August Anniversary event;

Maintained Facebook and website to provide current information, background, and

actions to take related to the BF; average reach for our Facebook posts is 300 people/post;

What was the impact of the project?

The period covered by this grant is on the continuum of getting to “win”. *Our group continues to be our county’s primary catalyst* for coordinating efforts between and among our elected officials, our communities’ leaders, residents and businesses, local media, and Ohio and US EPA officials. We have built and continue to build positive relationships with all of the above. We continue to have unanimous opposition to US EPA’s current cleanup plan for the BF from our county and from Ohio EPA. We hear regularly from community leaders that our role is invaluable in this effort.

Our group does the strategic thinking and communicating with key “thought leaders”, people like Lois and Teresa from CHEJ, a former Ohio EPA employee who knows the BF better than anyone else, a former U.S. Congressman who fought for this site years ago, and Congressional aides. We consult regularly with all of the above.

This is the first year we have actively fund-raised to support our events and media outreach. We are deeply appreciative of people’s generosity and now in a financial position to continue to fund media outreach.

While we had thought that the visibility of billboards would be a big plus, we have had enough cautions questioning their “bang for the buck” that we have chosen other media approaches. Face to face dialogue, community event participation, engaging people through actions, using the larger context of EPA’s failure to protect Flint residents’ water supply, building a constituency that understands the need to be proactive in protecting our water—these are all pieces on which we continue to work. As mentioned before, we are experiencing more people who know about the BF and are eager to lend their voice for a protective cleanup.

Were there any challenges that you had to address in carrying out the project?

Yes—always! Our three most significant challenges are 1) still not knowing who in US EPA has the authority to make significant changes to the BF plan; 2) walking the fine line of not implying our water is currently unsafe while speaking clearly to the future dangers if the BF is not adequately cleaned up; and 3) maintaining our core group’s energies over time.

1) EPA Region 5 has seen major personnel changes in the past six months, including a new Acting Administrator, an Interim Superfund Division Chief, and a newly assigned site Project Manager. Knowing that, come January, we will have a new President and EPA Administrator, any major decisions regarding our site are unlikely this fall. Add the catastrophe of Flint, MI, to the mix, and Lois Gibbs counseled us that any significant change to our site’s cleanup plan will come from EPA Headquarters, not Region 5. Therefore, we have turned our focus to EPA Headquarters and President Obama, asking Sen. Sherrod Brown’s assistance with the EPA and the President and generating as many letters and phone calls to the White House as we can. We have also asked to meet with the head of Superfund at EPA Headquarters, Mathy Stanislaus.

2) This challenge has been felt most in our relationship with the Chamber of Commerce. Business leaders are adverse to any message that suggests our water is a problem as they actively recruit businesses to move into our county. (Our poverty rate is high and our median income low for a city the size of Springfield.) We had worked with a graphic artist and developed a message which the Chamber leaders asked us not to use, especially on a billboard. Our decision thus far has been to use other media strategies to keep the BF in front of people.

3) Our group has been working on the BF cleanup since April 2012. People's life circumstances change over time, and we have lost a few good people from our group in the past six months (moving away; priority needs of family, etc.) We continue to work on including new people and are grateful for the very extraordinary group of people who have "stayed the course" these past four years.

How were the funds spent?

CHEJ Training Fee - \$362.

Event fee - \$260 Clark County Fair Booth registration

First Anniversary Event of EPA mtg. - \$150

Promotional items to distribute—

 Magnets - \$100 w/ White House comment line phone #

 T-shirts - \$360 w/ message "EPA: Protect our Water" (donations requested)

Media Campaign—

 Letters to White House - \$250

 Facebook ads for event promotion - \$150

 WYSO sponsorships for event promotion - \$150

 Poster - \$18

TOTAL - \$1800

We also leveraged considerable in-kind resources, including printing and promotional assistance from community partners, donated meeting space, and personal contributions.

We thank you, CHEJ and Generous Donor, for your support of our efforts to protect our water. We especially acknowledge and thank CHEJ staff member Teresa Mills for her ongoing counsel and mentorship.

People for Safe Water – Marilyn Welker, President; Peter Townsend, Hydrogeologic consultant; Karen Duncan, Springfield City Commissioner; Kali Lawrence, Facebook and social media guru; Larry and Jeannie Ricketts; Peggy and Jim Hanna; Sally Lane; Laura Kaffenbarger; Andy Dill

Attachments:

Folder: PFSW photos May-Aug 2016

File: PFSW Infographic about our aquifer

File: Letter to President Obama

See also: *Springfield News-Sun* articles and Public News Service story links on page 2;

Facebook: <https://www.Facebook.com/peopleforsafewater>

Website: www.peopleforsafewater.org