



A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Community Toxics Collection Days

So you've been dutifully collecting your household toxics, holding them for proper disposal, keeping them out of our landfills where they can leach. Good for you!

You've gathered together your old batteries, paint, paint thinners, solvents, pesticides, fluorescent bulbs, cleansers, medications, nail polish and remover.

So, now what do you do? One option is to drop them at the **Household Toxics Facility**, at Petaluma's Central Dump. They're open Th-Sa 7:30am-3:30pm. Bring your ID to prove residency.

Another convenient option is the **Community Toxics Collections** that happen each Tuesday from 4-8pm in towns around Sonoma County. Upcoming dates in our area are: Oct. 28 Forestville, Nov. 18 Sebastopol, and Feb. 24 Sebastopol. An appointment is required; call (877) 747-1870 or 795-2025. Also, bring your ID.

For more about this and other aspects of toxics disposal, see <www.recyclenow.org> or the Recycling Guide in your Yellow Pages (under "R"); or call 565-3375.

toxicology & Neurological Disorders, "The bottom line is, it is our ethical responsibility to ensure all children have a healthy future."

The authors intend this document to be a guide for scientists, policy-makers, health professionals, health-affected groups, and the general public in advancing efforts to address these issues.

To me, this report demonstrates once again that often the simplest and cheapest cure is not another expensive drug, but avoiding toxic exposures in the first place.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE: <www.iceh.org/LDDI.html>

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An article in the May 2008 edition of *Delicious Living* magazine explored how changes in diet can help heal ADHD, autism, and other behav-

See *LEARNING*, over

Toxics & Learning Disabilities

An estimated one in six U.S. children under 18 suffer from a learning or development disability. This includes ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), which is characterized by impulsiveness, hyperactivity, and an inability to focus.

Is there a connection between toxics and these neurological disorders?

A prestigious committee of scientists and health professionals asked just this question, as they integrated the latest scientific findings on this topic, including over 200 studies, into their *Scientific Consensus Statement on Environmental Agents Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders*. These disorders include ADHD, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, and developmental delays.

Their conclusion? That "**environmental contaminants are an important cause of learning and developmental disabilities (LDDs)**." These health problems impact not only the affected individual, the report said, but "also have profound implications for the fam-

ily, school system, local community, and greater society."

Environmental agents that the signatories felt confident can cause LDDs in humans include pesticides, lead, solvents, mercury, and PCBs. They also found evidence for other potential contributors, including endocrine disruptors and food additives.

Therefore, the group said, "**protecting children from neurotoxic environmental exposures from the earliest stages of fetal development through adolescence is clearly an essential public health measure**" to help reduce the growing numbers with these disorders "and create an environment in which all children can reach and maintain their full potential."

Reviewer Dr. Martha Herbert, PhD, MD, an Assistant Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School, commented, "We know enough now to move on with taking steps to protect our children."

Other researchers on the review committee underscored the cost-savings, and policy-related and ethical implications, of understanding these connections. "We could cut the health costs of childhood disabilities and disease by billions of dollars every year by minimizing contaminants in the environment," said Dr. Philip Landrigan, MD, of the Children's Environmental Health Center at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "Investing in our children's health is both cost-effective and the right thing to do."

Said lead author Dr. Steven G. Gilbert, PhD, of the Institute of Neuro-



LEARNING, continued

ior and learning problems. (This is in addition, they noted, to behavioral and educational therapies).

Each child is different. However, dietary approaches that have worked for others include: reducing toxic exposures by buying organic; avoiding artificial additives and colors; eliminating trans fats and sugary caffeinated sodas; removing problem foods, such as dairy, gluten, and soy; increasing nutrients, such as magnesium, calcium, and zinc; and shifting from refined flour and sugar to whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables.

The article discusses the logic and research that supports these approaches. For instance, lack of magnesium can cause hyperactive-like behavior, sound sensitivity, and irritability. Zinc deficiency can change a child's sense of taste and smell, helping explain why autistic children are often very picky eaters.

To identify the appropriate solution for your child, identify their symptoms and look for correlations. Try an elimination diet, where certain items are removed to see if symptoms improve. A dietician can also run tests to identify what nutrients might be missing.

For more information and resources, see this article at <www.deliciouslivingmag.com/health/conditions/autism-nutrition-link>.

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**. STEP is a project of the **City of Sebastopol**, implemented by local citizen volunteers. STEP's mission is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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Affording Organic

Are you wondering how you can fit organic into a tight budget? Here are some thoughts.

Remember the Big Picture

1) Organic isn't always more expensive. Many prices have come down, often to conventional levels.

2) Organic supports our health and well-being. Many studies show that organic food contains notably more nutrients but negligible toxics, nurturing our bodies more with every bite. Some see organic as health insurance, because avoiding disease is always cheaper than trying to cure it afterwards. Plus all of our life tasks and goals are easier to achieve when we feel our body's vitality. Organic is especially important for children, whose growing systems and life-long health are greatly harmed by toxics.

3) Nature, not money, is what feeds us. Organic farmers have shown that it's possible to grow equivalent amounts of food without poisoning our earth, air, and water, instead respecting our essential ecosystems and nature's creatures. If you also buy *local* organic, you're helping reduce the toxics in this region.

4) Our future food supply will need organics. Toxic pesticides and fertilizers require petroleum. As that gets more expensive and scarce, organic will become more attractive and necessary. By ramping up alternatives proactively we can help ensure a smoother transition, avoiding abrupt drops in our food supply.

5) Organic is a grassroots success story. We only have this alternative to mainstream toxic food and farming because of decades of hard work and vision by countless people around the world. Yes, some aspects of the organic system are still being refined. Still, organic provides us with a powerful option to toxics. Let's ensure that it remains a choice.

Saving Money on Organic

Unfortunately, our current economic system poorly reflects our survival dependency on nature. So, for

those with tight budgets, here are some tips for frugally including organic in your diet:

1) Look at actual prices. Organic items are often priced about the same!

2) Shop around, comparing prices at different stores, looking for sales, and stocking up on deals.

3) Buy in season and directly from local farmers. This reduces transportation, handling, and other costs.

4) Shift your diet towards fresh produce and whole grains, and away from meat and packaged foods. What health experts recommend is also less expensive! Plus it tastes great and further reduces your environmental impact.

5) Discover easy ways to cook from scratch. Short on time? Make one-pot meals, such as soup or veggies with rice. Or find other quick recipes that you and your family enjoy. (Organic produce is often so delicious that only simple preparations are needed!) You can make dishes in advance and freeze them. Or share meals with family and friends, building community while creating wonderful memories!

6) Grow your own. Organic gardening can be nurturing and fun to do with friends and kids. If you have space, plant abundant crops like tomatoes and zucchinis. Even on a patio you can grow herbs like rosemary, basil, and thyme, which bring surprising freshness and depth to ordinary meals.

So there you have it, some fun ideas for including organic in your budget. I also encourage you to **help adjust our economic playing field** so that it rewards consumer choices that align with our overall shared well-being. To learn more about creative approaches for doing this, I highly recommend Paul Hawken's book, *The Ecology of Commerce*.

~ Patricia Dines

