



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Gathering to Reduce Toxics Locally

I was delighted to attend and table for STEP at the recent "Pesticides in Paradise?" event, which was held on August 5 at the Sebastopol Grange.

It was fun connecting with other folks who care about this important topic, and sharing STEP's useful information with them. Plus I got to chat with STEP readers — including one who said that he looks forward to getting STEP in each water bill, because "you always keep it pertinent." That's always wonderful to hear!

Over 100 people attended this event — connecting with the groups that were tabling, chatting with each other, and listening to speakers.

Hosting the gathering was a new coalition called Sonoma County SASS (Safe Ag Safe Schools), which is a project of the Conservation Action Fund for Education (CAFE).

SASS has grown out of the work that local folks have been doing the past two years to encourage Sonoma County's city and county governments to reduce their pesticide use (and thus our public exposure).

It's been wonderful to see these people and groups successfully encourage these government entities to join the path that the City of Sebastopol pioneered 19 years ago. That's when the City chose



to avoid toxic pesticides on its own land, and encourage residents to reduce their use — with this co-created educational STEP newsletter!

The mission of SASS is "to raise public awareness, provide community education, and strengthen policies that prioritize health and restrict synthetic pesticide use within Sonoma County." Its ultimate goal is a Pesticide-free Sonoma County, and it's offering yard signs, stickers, and t-shirts with that vision!

Members of SASS include: Sonoma County Conservation Action, North Bay Organizing Project, Daily Acts, Preserve Rural Sonoma County, Families Advocating for Chemical and Toxics Safety (FACTS), Wine and Water Watch, Pesticide Action Network North America, and Californians for Pesticide Reform.

To support their current actions, see Sonoma County Conservation Action's campaign "Ensuring a Toxic Free Future" at www.conservationaction.org/news/toxicfree. You can also see our past articles about their successes in the STEP Index under **Sonoma County activities**.

~ Patricia Dines

Safe Toxics Disposal

For more about what's toxic and how to discard it safely, see the **Zero Waste Sonoma website**, www.zerowastesonoma.gov. Or call (707) 565-3375. To learn more about the recent renaming of this local government entity, see the STEP Online Index under **Toxics disposal**, XIX/3.

Rounding Up Roundup

A new study by The Center for Environmental Health (CEH) found that over 90% of the families tested in the study had the herbicide glyphosate in their bodies. These findings corroborate other recent studies that found glyphosate in the bodies of 70 to 93% of those tested.

Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Bayer/Monsanto's Roundup, is the most heavily-used pesticide in history. About 2.4 billion pounds have been sprayed on American farmland in the last decade. The World Health Organization has classified it as a "probable human carcinogen." California's Environmental Protection Agency has listed glyphosate as a chemical known to cause cancer. Recent research found that it can increase the risk of some cancers by more than 40%, as well as disrupt hormones, damage human cells, and cause birth defects.

We can be exposed to glyphosate/Roundup (and other toxic pesticides) through our food and when we're at or near places that use these products, including farms, homes, schools, and parks. Alexis Luckey, Executive Director of Toxic Free North Carolina, says, "[T]here's no assurance that any level of glyphosate exposure is safe. This [CEH] study highlights the need to protect children and families by promoting organic alternatives."

Caroline Cox, CEH's Senior Scientist, says, "Our findings are particularly alarming for children, whose bodies are still developing.... A toxic weedkiller known to cause cancer has no business in our bodies or our food. Human health and the health of our children should outweigh the chemical industry's right to profit."

Bayer/Monsanto has recently lost three landmark court cases. The juries ruled that the plaintiffs had contracted non-Hodgkin's lymphoma because of exposure to glyphosate/Roundup, and awarded them approximately \$2.4 billion in damages. More than 13,000 similar cases are currently awaiting trial.

Unfortunately, the current federal administration's Environmental

See **Roundup**, over

Detoxing Your Food — & Body

We've previously described studies that show that eating organic can notably reduce the pesticide levels in our bodies. (See our STEP Online index under **Body Burden** for our past articles on this topic.)

A recently published peer-reviewed study adds to that evidence. This study (led by researchers at University of California/Berkeley and Friends of the Earth) tracked pesticide levels in four families from across the country for two weeks. During the first week, the families ate their typical diets of non-organic food. The second week, they ate completely organic. Before and after, their urine samples were tested for 14 pesticides and their breakdown products (metabolites).

These materials have been linked to increased risks of autism, cancer, Parkinson's Disease, infertility, and other significant health impacts.

The results? At the start, every person in every family had detectable levels of these chemicals. But, after only six days on an organic diet, their levels of these pesticides dropped dramatically — by more than half on average!

So, yes, when we choose organically-grown food products, we are reducing our exposure to toxic pesticides. We're also encouraging farmers to grow without toxic pesticides, thus helping reduce these toxics in our shared earth, air, and water. This is especially important in agricultural areas like ours!

SOURCE: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/15/what-the-pesticides-in-our-urine-tell-us-about-organic-food

Roundup, continued

Protection Agency (EPA) is poised to approve the continued widespread use of glyphosate in the U.S. for another 15 years. Already 150,000 public comments have been submitted urging the agency to ban its use.

So it's been up to U.S. cities and counties (and a growing number of countries) to restrict or ban the use of glyphosate (and other toxic pesticides). Additionally, consumers can reduce their exposure to pesticides such as Roundup by avoiding their use at home and work, and by purchasing organic food as much as possible.

For a handy information page on Roundup's health and environmental harm, and the alternatives, see my page, www.healthyworld.org/Roundup.html.

SOURCE: www.ceh.org/news-events/press-releases/content/study-finds-90-families-toxic-weed-killer-bodies-significantly-higher-levels-found-children

Movie Night

After the Aug. 5 event, Sebastopol resident Jackie Braun emailed me her recommendation for the movie *Secret Ingredients*. She said that she and her husband Shawn had "found it quite eye-opening, even though we're already dedicated 'organics.'"

The film's website says, "[T]his powerful film by Amy Hart and Jeffrey Smith shares remarkable stories of people who regain their health ... after adopting a diet that avoids genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and food sprayed with toxic herbicides like Roundup."

For instance, one family of five was "constantly struggling with one condition after another ... despite living a healthy lifestyle and making a point to exercise and 'eat right.'"

But, after they removed these hidden ingredients from their diets, according to the film's website, their health improved dramatically. The film also offers additional information from doctors and scientists.

Perhaps this movie is an agreeable way to inspire yourself and others to get the toxics out! www.secretingredientsmovie.com

Timely Tips

■ **Is Roundup a pesticide or an herbicide? It's both!** "Pesticide" is an *umbrella* term for materials we use to kill various things we consider "pests." An "herbicide" is a *type of pesticide* that's used to kill plants.

■ **Keeping children safe at school.** Do you know what pesticides are being used at your child's school? The California Healthy Schools Act can help! It requires schools to inform parents about pesticide use and encourages use reduction. Learn more via the STEP Online Index, under **Schools**.

■ **Clearing your poison oak.** Now is a good time to prepare your land for winter. Learn more about clearing out your poison oak less-toxically through the STEP Online Index, under **Poison oak**.

■ **Connecting the health dots.** Do you want to know more about the evidence linking toxics to health harm — and help health professionals also make the connection? See the STEP Online Index under **Health problems**. You might also want to check out the articles under **Environmental Harm**.

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- **Got a pest problem?** •
- **Or a toxics question?** •
- **The STEP Online Index can help!** It makes it easy to look up your topic of interest and find our well-researched, condensed, and useful information — to help you get up-to-speed and into action. It also makes it easy to share this information!
- www.healthyworld.org/STEP •
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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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