

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Setting Your New Year's Visions & Intentions

The cozy curling up of winter's dormancy is a great time to consider our goals and intentions for the coming year. What would we like to see better in our life and world? It's empowering to have inspiring goals!

It's even more helpful because our current disrupted times can actually make it easier to create personal and collective change. We're rebuilding anyway; why not rebuild better?

And, as you muse on your plans, I invite you to include toxics reduction! The benefits can include improving your health, saving money, encouraging sustainable businesses, supporting others, and creating healthier communities.

And STEP can help you take action! Our 20 years of helpful well-researched information is easily available to you through our **Online STEP Index**. Just go to www.healthyworld.org/STEP and choose the Index. Then scroll to see the many topics available. Or use your browser's search command to find articles on your topic of interest.

Here's just a taste of what you can find there.

■ **Healthier housecleaning.** A 20-year study found that using mainstream cleaning products for 10 to 20

years can be as harmful to lungs as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day for the same time period. (Find this article in the Index, **Healthier Housecleaning** section, issue XIX/6.)

Thankfully there are so many effective less-toxic options that you can use to create a healthier home for you and your family — and even make cleaning a little more pleasant!

The **Healthier Housecleaning** section has links for lots of our articles with helpful ideas for avoiding toxics, choosing better products, and creating a healthier home!

■ **Less-toxic gardening and lawn care.** Now is a good time to read the packages of the products you're using — and replace any toxic ones with less-toxic products and/or practices. Be ready for spring! Don't just believe the ads that coax you with fantasy images but neglect to mention the toxics inside. Go to the Index under **Gardening** and find useful information on fertilizers, composting, lawn/tree/rose care, dandelions, weeds, seed saving, whiteflies, snails and slugs, companion planting, and so much more.

■ **Evaluating toxics and prioritizing reduction.** So how do you evaluate the products you have or are considering buying, to see how toxic they are? And how do you prioritize which products to replace first? You don't have to do it all at once! You can do just one section of your house or life at a time.

We have articles to help with that process. Look under **Assessing Toxics and Prioritizing Reduction**.

See *Intentions*, over

"I enjoy the STEP newsletter, and the information you provide is very valuable. Thank you for your service to our community!"

~ Maria Green



It's Our Birthday!!

With this issue, we're celebrating 20 years of publishing *The Next STEP (TNS)*!

Now we need your help! Please fill out the easy enclosed survey card to give us your feedback about our efforts. (This card is also in the City's online bill paying system, at the bottom of the My Bill tab.)

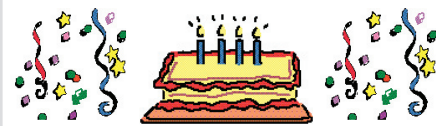
Our goal with this innovative City project is to nurture a healthier Sebastopol for everyone by reducing our exposure to toxics.

So we help folks reduce the toxics used in our homes, schools, parks, businesses, food, ecosystems, and more.

TNS is produced by a small team of local citizens, working on a volunteer basis (which keeps costs very low) because we support this goal. We're grateful to the City Council and staff for acting in the community's best interest with this project.

Also let us know how we can best support your toxics reduction in the coming year, including any questions, tips, story ideas, or success stories.

We want to hear from you! Your support makes this project possible. Thank you!



Did You Know?

The Next STEP costs the City almost nothing. Created entirely by volunteer efforts, and with no added postage expense, its primary cost is copying. This is literally a drop in the bucket of Sebastopol's \$20 million annual budget. Given the consistent evidence that common toxics are harming us all, this is a bargain for our shared health, now and long into the future.

Protecting Ourselves Collectively

Every two minutes in the U.S., a mother/daughter/sister/woman learns that she has breast cancer (BC), with all its serious physical, emotional, and financial challenges. About 280,000 U.S. women (plus 2,600 men) are diagnosed with BC each year. More than 42,000 women and 500 men die from it. Thirteen percent (one in eight women) are diagnosed with BC in their lifetimes. Currently 3.5 million women in the U.S. have had BC. It's a sobering reality that impacts so many lives and families.

Most people with BC have no inherited risk or family history of the disease. And there's strong evidence connecting toxics with increased cancer.

Yet most BC nonprofits never mention reducing exposure to toxics or pollution as part of "the cure." And often these groups receive funding from polluters, and their "pink ribbon" campaigns feature toxic products.

Thankfully some organizations do recognize that our widespread involuntary toxics exposure is part of the cause, so removing it must be part of the cure. That's true prevention, not just diagnosis and painful treatments.

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (BCPP) based in San Francisco calls itself "the leading

science-based policy and advocacy organization working to prevent breast cancer by eliminating our exposure to toxic chemicals and radiation." (www.bcpc.org)

BCPP recently prepared a report, *Paths to Prevention* — "California's new (and only!) primary prevention breast cancer action plan." Focusing on 23 different risk factors, it offers tangible, systemic interventions, rather than just focusing on individual actions, to stem rising BC rates. BCPP hopes this can serve as a model for the U.S. and beyond. (<https://bit.ly/37h87IH>)

Another San Francisco nonprofit, **Breast Cancer Action (BCA)**, has **launched several campaigns** that call on federal agencies to better address the toxic link to cancer.

This includes calling on the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to take five key actions. The NCI is the federal government's principal agency for cancer research and training, and the world's largest funder of cancer research. But its website doesn't include the evidence linking chemicals to BC, and actually dismisses the connection. By ignoring the science, it blocks action that could save so many lives.

BCA's call for NCI action was supported by over 100 leading scientists, cancer specialists, health and justice organizations, and breast cancer advocates. **And (yay!) the NCI agreed to one proposal** — post information about the chemical/cancer link on its website.

In a medical periodical op-ed, two prominent doctors said, "we believe NCI sharing this research would **reshape our national approach to prevention-oriented public health policy** for breast cancer and beyond." And hopefully help so many people avoid this diagnosis.

BCA continues championing its four other NCI proposals. **Send a letter of support** at www.bcaction.org/2020/11/23/nci-responded.

And look for other ways to support groups working to protect us all. Some actions do need to be done collectively. And, of course, also reduce your risk by eating organic and avoiding exposure to toxics!

Local Toxics Disposal

■ **To discard your household toxics safely, bring them to the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility.** It's at 500 Mecham Road, between Cotati and Petaluma, and is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 7:30am to 2:30pm.

■ **Check the Zero Waste Sonoma website** (www.zerowastesonoma.gov) for more information on this, or to see what city HHW Collection Events are currently scheduled. Or call 707/565-3375 or 707/364-6927.

Quick Tip: Have you heard about the **pumice stone? Made from volcanic rock, it's a handy less-toxic way to remove stains on porcelain.** It's most often bought in stick form. But you can also get it as a flexible sheet (Flexi-Scour), for working on more curved shapes!

Intentions, continued

And, for those who want to know more about the STEP program, read the light-hearted article I wrote about our history at www.healthyworld.org/STEP-Mystery.html. More project details are in the Index under **STEP**.

Thank you to everyone who has supported STEP over the years. You are truly part of everything we do and accomplish.

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- **Want to detox your new year? Got a pest problem? Or a toxics question?** •
- **The STEP Online Index can help!** It's easy to look up your topic 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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