

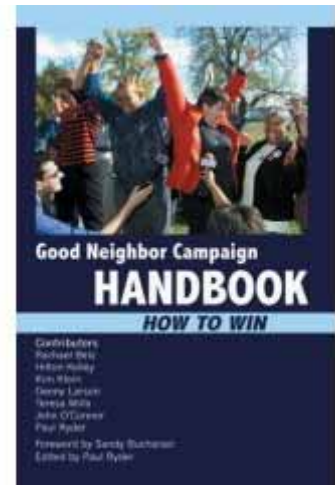
Ohio Citizen Action 2006 Year in Review

Ohio Citizen Action and Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund saw the fruition of several important campaigns in 2006, demonstrating the impact that our work can have not only in Ohio, but nationally. Below is a description of our major campaign accomplishments:

I. Good Neighbor Campaigns

Running successful good neighbor campaigns - and training other organizations in these techniques – continued to be the organization's focus in 2006.

We published the *Good Neighbor Campaign Handbook: How to Win* in March 2006, with the support of the George Gund Foundation. The handbook combines the lessons of our campaigns in Ohio along with examples from Louisiana, Texas, Massachusetts and other states. The handbook is available through major on-line retailers. We also distributed several hundred copies through the Hudson Bay canvassing network and the national Bucket Brigade network. We have received very positive reports about how the book is being used by organizations in Ohio and around the country.



Here are the major campaigns we organized over the course of the year:



Lanxess Plastics - Cincinnati

The Lanxess Plastics plant, formerly owned by Bayer and Monsanto, sits on the Ohio River, directly across the street from Meredith Hitchens Elementary School, and has been an ongoing source of toxic chemical pollution in the community.

Ohio Citizen Action launched a good neighbor campaign at Lanxess Plastics in July 2004, making major progress by September 2005,

when the company changed plant management and made commitments to reduce its emissions. We continued to work with the community and the company in 2006 to cement those changes, with the following results:

- In January 2006, the school board announced the permanent closing of Meredith Hitchens Elementary school, due to its proximity to the chemical plant. Our campaign spurred the county to take air samples at the school, documenting toxic chemical exposures.
- Lanxess continued to make investments in pollution reduction in 2006. We toured the plant with the neighbors in November 2006. Lanxess highlighted improvements made to their butadiene flare, the thermal oxidizer and waste water treatment process. Lanxess plans to make more improvements in 2007, focusing on reductions of acrylonitrile, styrene and odors. The company also hired an external systems improvement/pollution prevention expert whom we had recommended (and they have changed the company's name again, to Lustran).
- Our campaign spurred enforcement actions by the Ohio EPA and U.S. EPA, as well as a cancer study by the Health Department and improved community air monitoring by the Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services.

Eramet - Marietta

The Eramet manganese refinery in Marietta dumps over six million pounds of pollution into the air and Ohio River each year, and is one of the top emitters of manganese in the nation. Manganese exposure can affect the brain, making it harder for children to learn and develop, much like the effects of lead poisoning. Long term exposure to manganese can cause symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease in adults, as well as irritability, headaches, and changes in behavior. Eramet is headquartered in Paris, and is partially owned by the government of France.



In March, Ohio Citizen Action launched a “good neighbor campaign” with the goal of preventing pollution from Eramet. Here’s what we’ve accomplished in the past year:

- We worked with our allies in Marietta to form a new citizens’ organization, Neighbors for Clean Air, who have taken leadership in every phase of the campaign;
- We took samples of dust particles in locations throughout the area, finding manganese and chromium throughout the region.
- We researched the plant and published a “citizens’ audit” of the facility, which included the discovery that Eramet has similar plants in Norway which emit ten times LESS pollution than the facility in Marietta

- We worked with the University of Cincinnati's new public health investigation about the effects of manganese exposure in the region
- We provided support to the employees of Eramet while they were locked out of the plant from August 2006 to February 2007, collecting food and supplies
- In interviews with locked-out workers, we uncovered the problem of dust in the plant known as the "red death. " This dust is 87 percent manganese and requires workers' to wear protective gear to prevent inhalation.
- Over 25,000 neighbors from throughout the region sent personal letters and petitions to Eramet management, urging them to prevent pollution
- As a result of public attention on the problem, government agencies announced they would increase their air monitoring for manganese in the area.
- We filmed, produced, and released a new 25-minute documentary entitled "Eramet Marietta Neighbors Speak Out"(which was released in March 2007).

DuPont Teflon products



Although DuPont has known since as early as the 1960s that the chemicals used to make Teflon and non-stick coatings can cause serious health hazards to workers and consumers, they hid the information from the public. The chemicals used to make Teflon, which can cause cancer and birth defects, have been found in the blood of 95% of Americans. The actions of courageous whistleblowers and strong research and legal action by Southeast Ohio water suppliers enabled the

Environmental Working Group, a national research organization with whom we work, to bring the information to light.

We began our campaign to expose the dangers of the Teflon chemical C8 in food packaging in 2005. By January 2006, DuPont and U.S. EPA announced that DuPont and other manufacturers would phase out their use of the chemical in consumer products by the year 2010.

Although this news was welcome, we decided it was important to use market forces to accelerate the phase-out. All three of our field canvasses and the phone canvass spent several months in late 2005 and early 2006 organizing our members to write to their local Kroger and Wal-Mart stores, urging them to use their clout to tell their suppliers not to use C8. By June 2006, we received a commitment from Wal-Mart to work with their suppliers to phase out the chemical in the course of one year. And by July, ConAgra, the food company giant which had alternatively admitted and denied the use of C8 in the packaging of its Orville Redenbacher popcorn, announced that it was phasing the use of these chemicals in its packaging.

One of the reasons for our success in this campaign was Ohio's strategic importance as a retail market. The Columbus area in particular, is often used as a market-test area for major retailers, so that a consumer campaign in Columbus can have a strong impact. We made tremendous use of our website, to the point where it became the #1 site on Google for the search term "DuPont C8," attracting visitors from 41 countries. We worked with several national organizations on this campaign, including Environmental Working Group, United Steelworkers of America, and DuPont Shareholders for Fair Value.

Mittal Steel and General Environmental Management - Cleveland, OH

Mittal Steel, the largest private steel-making company in the world, bought the giant steel mill in Cleveland's Flats in 2005. The mill is the largest air polluter in Cuyahoga County, emitting soot, chemicals, and sulfur dioxide which can trigger asthma and/ or cause cancer and heart problems. The Cleveland mill has more neighbors than any steel mill in the country: 390,000 residents and half of Cleveland's public schools are located within five miles of the facility.



General Environmental Management (GEM), an industrial waste treatment firm just down the road from Mittal, has been the source of terrible odors and pollution for several years. Due to its proximity to Mittal, overwhelming odor issues, and a major fire and explosion in April, we turned our attention to working on this facility for several months in the summer of 2006.

Here are the major activities we undertook in the Cleveland area in 2006:

- We launched a citizens air testing program in March, using bucket samples, a real-time air monitor, and swipe samples, and publicized the test results, with excellent response by the media.
- We worked with the Case Western Reserve University medical school to host “environmental justice” tours of Cleveland.
- When GEM exploded in April, we organized over 1500 people to call and write Mayor Jackson to keep the facility shut down, and provided community support for the Fire Department’s legal action against GEM (the court ultimately allowed GEM to reopen, and at least three separate agencies are currently pursuing environmental enforcement cases against GEM).
- We organized a public meeting about GEM at Cuyahoga Community College, distributed duct tape ribbons at community events (GEM is notorious for its duct-tape at the facility), published information about GEM’s numerous environmental violations, and organized turnout at a community meeting held by Ohio EPA.
- We worked with legal counsel to oppose GEM’s attempt to hide documents from the public record, and received editorial support for this issue from the *Plain Dealer*.
- We highlighted the deficiencies of the City of Cleveland’s regulation and testing of air pollution, and made recommendations about how they can improve their program (several of which have since been implemented).
- In the fall, we resumed our public pressure on Mittal Steel, organizing over 25,000 of our members to write letters to the plant manager, and exposing the weaknesses of their public relations campaign (including their planting of ornamental grasses around the facility).

Georgia-Pacific - Columbus, OH

Georgia-Pacific’s resin manufacturing plant on the South Side of Columbus has been a long-term source of health hazards and dangers to its neighbors.

Following a huge explosion in 1997, Georgia-Pacific settled a lawsuit with the community, but some major problems still exist at the facility.



We launched a good neighbor campaign at Georgia-Pacific in August 2006, with the goals of closing the “toxic pit” where the company dumps hazardous wastewater, modernizing the formaldehyde plant, and improving company-community relationships.

Activities in 2006 included:

- Organizing community residents to participate in an Ohio EPA public meeting on the facility;
- Working with technical experts familiar with Georgia-Pacific to identify the problem areas at the plant;
- Working with Buckeye Environmental Network on the campaign, and identifying the fact that several nearby residents are still relying on well water for their drinking water, even though earlier tests had show that the wells had been contaminated with phenol;
- Launching a letter-writing campaign to the plant manager and conducting “walk and talks” on the South Side.

Cemex Cement, Lyons, Colorado



The Cemex Cement plant borders the Rocky Mountains and has been a constant source of particle pollution for the residents of Lyons and the surrounding areas. In late 2005, Ohio Citizen Action and our canvassing partners at Hudson Bay Company assisted in the formation of a new organization, Colorado Citizens Campaign, when Clean Water Action decided to close its canvass office in Denver. In 2006, we helped Colorado Citizens Campaign identify the Cemex

plant as the location for their first good neighbor campaign.

We provided campaign supervision and assistance to Colorado Citizens Campaign (CCC) for their good neighbor campaign in 2006. Major activities included:

Working with several local citizens organizations to launch the campaign, and coordinating activities with them throughout the year;

- Taking samples of the soot and ash which cover neighbors’ homes, and releasing the test results;
- Giving the issue a high media profile, including highlighting the plant’s air pollution violations;
- Forming a national alliance of groups dealing with Cemex plants in the U.S., including a group in Fairborn near Dayton (we also helped the Dayton group with a postcard campaign in October).

- Organizing a letter writing campaign to the plant manager, and opening up communications with him. He read our “Good Neighbor Handbook” over the Christmas holiday break and agreed to meet with neighbors after reading it!

II. Money and Politics

The issue of corruption in Ohio politics finally reached a “tipping point” in 2006, when it became the key issue in the elections for statewide officeholders. Below are some of our activities in this arena:

Following the Money

Throughout the year, Ohio Citizen Action tracked campaign contributions to the candidates for statewide office, including governor, justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, and attorney general. We then worked with reporters to service their research needs for the individual races, providing specific reports where necessary. When the election was over, we also issued a report on major contributors to the new governor. All of our reports and the media coverage from throughout the year can be found on our website at: <http://www.ohiocitizen.org/moneypolitics/mp.html>.



The most important scandal in Ohio politics in 2006, which became the defining issue for the election, was “Coingate.” Thomas Noe, a major donor to the Ohio Republican Party, had convinced the state-run Bureau of Workers Compensation to invest in his rare coins and collectibles business and had circumvented a variety of campaign finance laws, involving most of the state’s major office-holders. We worked closely with reporters to uncover and track a number of aspects of the Noe scandal. A week after the election, Noe was convicted of charge of racketeering, money laundering, forgery and tampering with records, and sent to jail.

We provided frequent commentary to the press on important issues throughout the election, including the ethical violations of U.S. Representative Robert Ney, who ultimately pled guilty in the Abramoff scandals in Congress.

In addition to the individual candidates on the November ballot, Ohio had a record number of ballot initiatives sponsored by a variety of interest groups. Throughout the campaign, we analyzed the flow of money in the ballot initiative campaigns. After the election was over, we issued a detailed analysis of the historic nature of these issues, particularly the significance of the voters' decision to pass a no-smoking initiative while rejecting a counter-measure proposed by the tobacco industry. This analysis can be found on our website at: www.ohiocitizen.org/moneypolitics/2006/2006_Ballot_Issue_Study.doc.

Election Protection and Proposals for Reform

Ohio Citizen Action was part of Ohio Fair Elections, a loosely-knit coalition of groups working on election protection. Ohio Citizen Action worked to educate voters about the changes in election procedures, specifically the need for voter identification at the polls. Ohio Citizen Action field canvass distributed 15,000 fliers about the need for proper voter identification.



Election protection issues were intricately entwined with the candidates, since the sitting Secretary of State, Ken Blackwell, was also the Republican candidate for governor. Ohio Citizen Action took legal action just before the election to attempt to force the Secretary of State to reverse his earlier ruling that polling places would not have to post the lists of people who voted on election day. We lost this legal challenge on procedural grounds.

We have also participated in post-election reviews of the performance of boards of elections and new voting machines, most notably in the Dayton area, where the new machines were found to have a problem with “vote-flipping.”

On October 3, Ohio Citizen Action released *Reforming Ohio's Democracy*, which examines the need for redistricting, campaign finance, judicial, ethical reforms, and the need for a better open records law. *Reforming Ohio's Democracy* was co-written by authors from the Ohio State University and, the League of Women Voters of Ohio. We also continued to work to provide better access to public records in Ohio.