



**WVE**

Women's Voices For The Earth

# THE VOICE

## On the Front Lines of CLEANING UP THE CLEANING PRODUCT INDUSTRY

### *WVE moves ingredient transparency forward at state and federal levels*

Unlike food and personal care products, you can't pick up your household cleaner and find ingredients on the label. Although chemicals commonly used in cleaning products have been linked to breast cancer, asthma, and hormone disruption, there is no law that requires



You deserve to know what you're cleaning your home with. That's why WVE has pressured 17 major cleaning product companies to begin disclosing ingredients, a landmark step in transparency!

cleaning product companies to disclose ingredients used in their products, on the product label. WVE is changing that.

Last year, WVE teamed up with Earthjustice to file a lawsuit against four major cleaning product companies who refused to follow a New York law requiring them to disclose the ingredients in their products. As a result of that lawsuit, **New York announced in September that it would enforce this law for the first time in over three decades, requiring cleaning product giants to disclose *all* of their ingredients.** The New York State Department of Conservation invited WVE to participate in an exclusive stakeholder meeting along with industry representatives and other advocates to discuss implementation of the law. As the Department begins implementation, WVE will continue to provide recommendations to ensure the public receives the information they need and deserve.

This landmark victory provides great momentum for our continued collaboration with Senator Al Franken and Representative Steve Israel on the federal Household Products Labeling Act, which was introduced last year. This bill would require that household cleaning products bear a label with the full list of ingredients, including fragrance ingredients. This year, we worked to strengthen the bill to include institutional cleaning products so that women cleaning in hotels, schools, and other public buildings will have the information they need to protect themselves from toxic chemicals. WVE organized a coalition of more than 40 groups, including labor unions and occupational health and safety groups, calling for the inclusion of institutional cleaning products in the legislation. We are confident that our efforts will result in expanding the bill language to protect women from occupational exposures when it's reintroduced in Congress next year.

### *Working with corporations to make products safer*

After continued demands from WVE members to know what's in the products they use clean their homes with, WVE is thrilled to report that for the first time 17 major companies are now disclosing some of the ingredients in their products including Clorox, Simple Green, SC Johnson (Windex®, Fantastik®, Glade®), Procter & Gamble (Mr. Clean®, Tide®, Dawn®), and Reckitt Benckiser (Easy Off®, Lysol®, Woolite®). Most of these companies had been keeping all ingredients a secret from consumers before January. This unprecedented step towards transparency is a result of thousands of women raising their voices for change—we'll continue to raise our voices until we know every single ingredient in these products!

WVE continues to convince major companies to remove toxic chemicals linked to women's health problems from their products. In the spring, after continued conversations with WVE on the company's use of potentially harmful chemicals in its products, Clorox announced the removal of two chemicals of concern from their products' fragrances –phthalates and alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs), both of which are linked to reproductive harm. WVE first identified these harmful chemicals in 2007 with the release of our report, Household Hazards.

In June, WVE released *What's That Smell?*, a new report that examines the health impacts of toxic chemicals in fragranced cleaning products. The report identified phthalates and synthetic musks, which are linked to hormone disruption, as red-flag chemicals. WVE mobilized our members to demand that companies disclose their use of these chemicals in their fragrances and to ask for their immediate removal. And companies paid attention. Reckitt Benckiser revealed the prohibition of phthalates and musks in their products; Simple Green revealed a list of products without phthalates or musks and committed to reformulate products that still contain those chemicals. In the coming year, WVE will continue to chip away at the industry's armor to reveal toxic ingredients in fragrance.



## Note from Erin

Women's Voices for the Earth was born out of the belief that women have incredible economic, political, and social power to influence government policies and corporate practices that impact our health. This is exemplified through actions like our green cleaning parties, where women across the country meet to make their own cleaners and demand safer products. In fact,

this party phenomenon is changing the face of a global industry. A 2009 survey conducted by the cleaning product association themselves reported 28 percent of Americans have mixed their own cleaning products at home. When asked what was the most important factor in deciding to try and make their own concoction, those who did so said they believed it was safer to know what was in the products (38%), they believed it was cheaper (38%), or they believed it was more effective (28%). According to the 2010 report "Are You Ready for EcoAware Mom?," there is an "EcoAware Moms" market, which includes more than 51 million women, 69 percent of moms, and has more than \$1.45 trillion in buying power. The number one thing moms are doing to be "Eco Aware" is increasing their use of chemical-free cleaning products (47% increase). Furthermore, women consistently rate chemical pollution in the environment as one of their greatest concerns, regardless of political party affiliation.

WVE is harnessing this incredible power and energy to institute sweeping policy changes in the United States. Quite simply, it's evident to us that women will be leaders in the movement for toxic-free homes and workplaces – and with this kind of market influence, we won't be ignored.

Erin Switalski

Executive Director

## Formaldehyde Legally Allowed in Products We Put on Our Bodies? NO THANKS.

*Safe Cosmetics Act to make personal care products safe for consumers*

Currently, it's perfectly legal for cosmetic manufacturers to use chemicals linked to cancer, birth defects, learning disabilities and other illnesses in the products we use on our bodies every day. Many of these chemicals are showing up in our bodies, our breast milk, and our children.



Uyen Nguyen explains why she launched a green salon in the film, "Do You Want a Toxic Manicure?"

This is why WVE helped to draft the Safe Cosmetics Act, which was introduced in Congress this summer. This bill will ban known carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins from personal care products, including salon products. WVE is working overtime with our coalitions to raise support for this groundbreaking legislation. We released the report *Not So Sexy* on toxic chemicals in perfume, as well as "The Story of Cosmetics", which has been viewed almost 500,000 times. We're excited to include you in our continued efforts in the coming year to ensure that we are no longer used as un-consenting testing grounds for chemicals in products that we put on our bodies.

### Stepping Up for Salon Worker Safety

Working with our partners in the National Healthy Nail Salon Alliance, WVE ensured that the Safe Cosmetics Act includes language to focus on specific concerns to salon workers. In addition to banning known harmful chemicals, the bill calls for safety standards that are protective enough for "vulnerable populations." WVE made certain that salon workers were included in the definition of "vulnerable populations," so that manufacturers must ensure that their products are safe enough

**89%**  
**of the 10,000+**  
**chemicals used in personal**  
**care products have never been**  
**tested for safety.**  
**The Safe Cosmetics Act**  
**will change that.**

salon workers by watching the short video, "Do You Want a Toxic Manicure?" on our website, and passing it on to friends and family.

In October, our colleagues at Oregon Health and Science University informed us that they had tested popular hair straightening products manufactured by the company Brazilian Blowout after a salon worker complained of bloody noses and breathing problems while giving the treatment. When the tests revealed up to 10% formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, in the products—one of which was labeled "formaldehyde-free"—WVE led the charge to expose the dangers of these products. WVE alerted our partners at the National Healthy Nail Salon and Campaign for Safe Cosmetics and

together, we quickly mobilized women across the country to call on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to issue a recall of the toxic products. We are currently waiting for a decision from the FDA. We brought the issue to the attention of the national media as well, and news outlets like the Today show and NPR have aired segments on it. The Brazilian Blowout problem underscores

the urgent need to pass the Safe Cosmetics Act as soon as possible. Formaldehyde shouldn't be found in products we put on our bodies, period.

## DONORS

We received the following donations between January 1, 2009 and January 31, 2010. Due to various limitations prevent us from listing all donors here, but every contribution is critical to the success of our work.

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- Nazareth Area School District

## How to Support

Together we can create a safer world for our workplaces, and communities. Let's eliminate environmental hazards and protect women's health. Please contact [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org) or call Solomon at 406-543-3744.

**CASH GIFT** – Make automatic monthly donations to sustain WVE's work.

**BEQUEST** – Designate WVE as a beneficiary in your will, cash gift or a percentage of your estate.

**EMPLOYEE MATCHING** – Encourage your employer match your contributions.

**TRIBUTE/MEMORIAL** – Honor a special individual with a donation.

**STOCK** – By contributing through a brokerage account, you receive a tax deductible contribution and avoid capital gains tax.

## WVE Ensuring that Chemicals Are Safe Before They're Placed in Our Products

*Women across the country raise their voices in support of the Safe Chemicals Act*

WVE took a historic step forward in protecting women's health from toxic chemicals this year by advocating for an overhaul of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). TSCA is the federal law that regulates the 80,000+ chemicals on the market; unfortunately, this law fails to protect us from exposure to many harmful chemicals like lead, BPA, and phthalates. In the 34 years since the law has been established, **only 200 chemicals have been evaluated for safety and only five have been banned for use. Working in coalition with hundreds of public health advocates, environmental organizations, the medical community, learning disabilities advocates, and more, we are proud to report the introduction of the Safe Chemicals Act in April.** This groundbreaking legislation will require that chemicals be evaluated for safety before they're put into everyday products. The Safe Chemicals Act includes many of the solutions we've worked toward, including evaluating a chemical's safety based on exposure to vulnerable populations like babies, pregnant women, and workers, and will also require immediate action to phase out the



Green cleaning parties in Montana call on the state's Senators to support the Safe Chemicals Act.

most harmful chemicals, such as mercury and formaldehyde.

To highlight the urgency for reform, WVE co-released the report *No More Silver Lining*, which revealed that common canned foods contain concerning levels of bisphenol-A (BPA), a chemical suspected of interfering with the bodies' hormones, and co-released the clever animated video "The Toxic Chemicals Lobby". WVE also organized green cleaning parties across the country during Earth Week;

50 women hosted parties that week to shine a national spotlight on the devastating impact that unregulated and untested chemicals have on health. WVE trained 23 of these women as public spokeswomen so that they could better inform their guests, friends, and communities about the need for the Safe Chemicals Act. With rates of breast cancer, infertility, and other chronic diseases on the rise, it's past time for industry and government to regulate chemicals and protect public health. WVE will continue advocating for this critical legislation in 2011 and will keep you posted on ways to get involved and raise your voice in support!

## Raising Voices: WVE Women Take the Media by Storm

*Over the last two years, WVE has trained more than 100 women as media spokespeople, empowering these women to speak out on important issues of toxic chemical exposures and women's health. Let us introduce you to a few of our Actionistas!*



Leigh's son has Asperger's Syndrome. As any mother would, Leigh spent countless hours researching the disease. Leigh discovered that her son doesn't filter out toxins, including those found in

cleaning products, as well as the majority of the population. So Leigh came to WVE to learn more and host a green cleaning party. She participated in a media spokesperson training led by WVE to gain talking points about the problem of toxic chemicals in cleaning products. As a veteran blogger, Leigh wrote about her party on the Dallas Moms Blog on the Dallas Morning News website, reaching far beyond the guests at her party to spread her message to thousands of people. She continues to raise her voice on the health impacts of toxic chemicals as the Assistant Editor for AutismSpot.com and as a Guest Blogger for the Dallas Moms. We've gotten to know Leigh well at WVE, and we're continually impressed with her passionate advocacy efforts.

Melody is an environmental consultant and owner of Ecodynamic Living Solutions who hosted a green cleaning party in June. Melody has fibromyalgia, a



condition characterized by long-term body wide pain. After conventional medicine failed to make a difference in her condition, she began eliminating toxic chemicals from her home and happily noticed an improvement in her health. Seeking an effective venue to discuss chemical exposure with her friends, Melody was thrilled to discover green cleaning parties and immediately began planning one. Recognizing her passion and commitment, WVE provided media training to Melody and then connected her with a reporter from the Fort Worth Star Telegram. Days later, the newspaper published an article on her party that focused on the links between chemicals and health. Within two months, Melody's story was syndicated and appeared in outlets across the country, including The LA Times, Baltimore Sun, and Chicago Tribune. It's incredibly powerful that Melody started out to host a party reaching 10 guests, and her message snowballed to reach millions of people! Thanks so much for lending some of your amazing energy to WVE, Melody!



Hilary is another WVE member who's green cleaning party appeared in the media—and her story illustrates that these articles can be even more powerful than we might realize. The Minneapolis Star Tribune approached

WVE in late May looking for a party to attend and report on, and WVE connected the reporter with Hilary. Shortly after the article ran in the paper, Sarah from the Linden Hills Co-Op contacted WVE looking for Hilary to teach a class on green cleaning. Sarah wrote, "As I was sitting outside reading the paper yesterday I came across a green cleaning article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. I'm very interested in

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this topic as I know a lot of our members and shoppers are as well. I would love to have Hilary teach a class here at Linden Hills Co-op. I'm so glad I saw the article and the website for Women's Voices for the Earth. Thank you for highlighting something that is so important." Hilary ended up teaching the class, and has since taught several more workshops in the community using WVE's resources and talking points. We're so thrilled that women like Hilary can take our materials and reach women one-on-one with our message and calls to action!

## A Unique Opportunity to Train New Advocates

This summer, WVE traveled to the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, Montana to lead our second green cleaning workshop. Toxic mold threatens several homes in the community there, jeopardizing the health of residents who often have to resort



Residents of Blackfeet Housing mix up non-toxic cleaning products for healthy home kits.

to harmful quantities of bleach to deal with the problem. The overuse of bleach is significantly correlated with asthma symptoms. In fact, the Blackfeet Reservation has one of the highest rates of asthma in the country. That's why WVE presented a workshop to 25 residents and employees of Blackfeet Housing that covered the problems with commercial cleaners, explained how to make non-toxic cleaning products, and suggested several green cleaning practices to employ in their own homes. 75 green cleaning kits that included creamy soft scrub, all-purpose spray, scrubbers, sponges, brushes, buckets, and educational resources were distributed to households on the Blackfeet Reservation in an effort to improve indoor air quality. WVE is proud to be part of this effort to create healthier homes on the Blackfeet Reservation and is grateful to our partners at Blackfeet Housing who made the workshop possible. We hope this effort can be a model for other communities facing similar challenges.

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## Your Health, Your Voice: Leverage Your Power

WVE believes that women have incredible social, political, and economic power to influence decisions that impact our health and the environment. And we all know that knowledge is power. That's why WVE created Your Health, Your Voice, a kit for women to educate their friends and family about toxic chemicals in everyday products and motivate them to take action. The kit comes with a powerpoint presentation complete with notes for the host, a discussion guide, and options for getting involved in WVE's work to eliminate toxic chemicals. To date, 50 women have signed up for Your Health, Your Voice, building the movement of people who believe that we deserve to live in a safe, healthy environment free from toxic chemicals. Leverage your power: sign up today at

[www.womensvoices.org](http://www.womensvoices.org).

FOLD LINE



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