



WE ACT: Building Healthy Communities Since 1988

Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) Reform in the works

Calendar of Events:

- ❖ **Mother Clara Hale Task Force:** Last Thursday of every month (p. 5)
- ❖ **Grady Tate – Jammin’ on the Hudson:** August 7th (p. 2)
- ❖ **TRAC Summer BBQ:** August 13th (p. 2)
- ❖ **Hacia Afuera:** August 13th – 14th (p. 4)
- ❖ **NYC Health Fair + Expo:** August 20th (p. 3)
- ❖ **153rd Street Block Fest:** August 20th
- ❖ **Garbage, Pests, and Pesticides Meeting with Local Businesses:** August 25th (p. 5)
- ❖ **Deadline for Art Submissions for Mother Clara Hale Bus Depot:** August 26th (p. 6)
- ❖ **Percy Sutton 5k Run:** August 27th (p. 6)

Please confirm meeting times and locations with Charles Callaway: (212-961-1000 ext. 309), or Charles@weact.org.

In 1976, the Apple Computer Company was established, an American Panel warned that CFC’s use in Aerosol Cans were causing a hole in the ozone layer, and the VHS home video cassette recorder was first introduced to the world. Now, just 35 years later, one can hardly ride the subway without spotting a passenger clicking away on one of Apple’s products, CFC’s have been phased out, greatly reducing their threat to the ozone hole, and Blu-ray and DVDs make VHS cassettes look like dinosaur fossils stored on living room shelves. Technology has been growing at an exponential rate, and our modern lives continue to recognize and respond to the swift changes. Yet, one feature of science’s drastic 35-year transformation has not been adequately confronted: the wave of new and poorly understood chemicals that are flooding the market and leaking into our environment and our homes.

Since its enactment in 1976, the Nation’s chemical safety regulation – Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) – has not been reformed to effectively deal with the growing production and omnipresence of manufactured chemicals. There are now over 82,000 chemicals sold in the U.S. with the EPA having reviewed a mere 200 of them. Under TSCA, companies are not obligated to prove that the chemicals in their products will not be detrimental to the consumer’s health or the environment. Instead, the EPA is burdened with the responsibility of proving the safety of a chemical. However, it has little incentive to look for TSCA violations since the fines associated with the infractions are relatively small. Another hindrance on the EPA’s action is the fact that it takes a great deal of time and money to test the safety of a chemical. Thus, the outdated law makes it easy for harmful chemicals to enter the market un-assessed.

There is undeniable evidence that communities of color and low income are most affected by the noxious chemicals that should be regulated under TSCA. Hair products and cosmetics marketed to women of color include chemicals that have not been reviewed by the EPA, but are known to cause early sexual development, as well as other serious health conditions. The 99 cents stores that dominate low-income communities sell some of the most toxic household cleaners on the market. The fast food chains and bodegas found on every block in these communities sell food with high concentrations of obesogens and bioaccumulative substances.

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About WE ACT for Environmental Justice

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (aka West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc.) is a Northern Manhattan community-based organization whose mission is to build healthy communities by assuring that people of color and/or low-income meaningfully participate in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices. WE ACT works to secure *Clean Air; Affordable & Equitable Transit; Reduced Waste, Pests & Pesticides; Toxic-Free Products; Good Food in Schools; Sustainable Land Use; Open & Green Space; and Healthy Indoor Environments.*

TSCA Reform, cont'd from page 1

Even the affordable toys marketed to children of color contain PVC, which can damage the immune system, mimic hormones, and cause cancer.

While it is unsettling to see how chemicals have silently invaded our communities, hope lies in the fact that we can phase out these toxins just as quickly as they were phased in. As part of the national Safer Chemicals Healthy Family (SCHF) campaign, WE ACT for Environmental Justice has been working with local residents, Congress members, and Environmental Justice (EJ) groups across the country to win support for TSCA reform. Our partnership with Just Transition Alliance, and the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice has fostered a three-year initiative focused on an outreach, education and communications strategy. WE ACT's Deputy Director, Cecil Corbin-Mark, has made several trips to Washington D.C. and taken on the many layers of government bureaucracy to educate politicians on the environmental benefits of co-sponsoring TSCA reform. We are proud to report that our hard work has motivated a good portion of the New York Delegation to support the bill. There is now an increased awareness and sensitivity to the issue, and community organizers and politicians are beginning to view the TSCA reform through an environmental justice lens. There is still plenty of work to be done, but WE ACT and the other EJ groups are making great strides in obtaining a stronger chemical safety regulation for the nation.

Technology and the abundance of new discoveries are altering modern life at an unrivaled pace, but we have the power and the right to determine the direction of these changes. Who knows, maybe 35 years from now history will mark 2011 as the beginning of safer chemicals and healthier families.



Cecil Corbin-Mark

Are you a Jazz Fan?

Then you won't want to miss the **FREE** summer concert: "**Jammin' on the Hudson.**" Come listen to Vocal Stylist **Grady Tate**, one of the most recorded studio drummers in the Jazz World.

Sunday, August 7th
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
 Main Stage of Riverbank
 State Park at 679
 Riverside Drive
 (entrance at 145th St on
 Riverside Drive)

WE ACT asks City Council to Bring Good Food To Schools

On Thursday June 16th, 2011, dozens of protesters camped outside 250 Broadway challenging Mayor Bloomberg's budget cuts. The demonstrators waved their signs and chanted in unison "They got bailed out; we got sold out!" While this energetic rally of citizens demanded attention from all those bustling through the City's financial district, a less obvious front against the administration's budgetary agenda was united inside the building. In a spacious room on the 14th floor, WE ACT joined forces with roughly five other panels to advocate for New York City's Food Metrics Act.

The Food Metrics Act intends to establish "reporting requirements regarding the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food in and for the city."

Join TRAC (Transit Riders Action Committee) for a Celebratory Summer BBQ!

TRAC is part of WE ACT's transportation campaign working hard to provide our community with good and affordable transit. The BBQ will be held on Wednesday, **August 13th from 1:00 – 5:00 pm** at Carmansville Playground on 152nd St. and Amsterdam Ave.

Come honor **Jazz Icons Coleman Hawkins and George Deviviere** Join us for the annual 153rd Street Block Festival on **Saturday, August 20th, 2011**

We will celebrate the 100th birthday of #445 West 153rd St., which was once residence to jazz icons such as Coleman Hawkins and George Deviviere

There will be children's amusements, horseback riding, and entertainment for all ages!

School Food, *cont'd from page 2*

With New York City Public Schools acting as the second largest purchaser of food after the U.S military, parents have a strong interest in the legislation that governs their children's access to healthy food. As part of our effort to secure good food in schools, WE ACT is working towards the passage of the bill, which would increase transparency on the ingredients, origin, and expenditures of food in New York City Public Schools.

WE ACT's Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator for Food Justice, James Subudhi, organized a panel for the City Council hearing that was composed of three community members, each representing Northern Manhattan parents. The panel was a testament to the wonderful success of WE ACT's food justice trainings. The trainings consist of three workshops aimed at building a vision of what parents want for school food, educating them about the school food system, and conducting a power analysis of the school food system to understand what power we need to leverage in order for our elected officials, such as the City Council, to produce the type of food safety legislation our children deserve.



Project 596 Acres! Is letting New York City know that we can be a food sovereign city. If we transform the 596 acres of vacant public land in Brooklyn into public gardens we would have an abundance of fresh, LOCAL fruits and vegetables.

You can email 596acres@gmail.com for a map and directory of this land.

N.Y City Health Fair & Expo

Day-long Health Testings, Exams, Education, Information, Material Distribution, Questions and Answers for the entire family. All FREE!

Saturday August 20th from 11:00 am – 7:00 pm
West 135th St (Between Malcolm X & Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevards.)

Speaking on behalf of the WE ACT panel, Harlem parent – Patricia Pozos – gave a powerful testimony in Spanish, emphasizing the fact that she was speaking on behalf of all Hispanic parents who did not have the resources or the time to testify themselves. Another parent representative, Petula Jarvis, who has worked as an educator in NYC public schools for many years, added the sobering fact that she packs a lunch for her daughter every day after seeing the negative physical and mental effects public school food can have on a child.

The current school food system provides the city's children with unhealthy, overly processed foods that are contributing to childhood obesity, diabetes, and other health issues. The parents on the WE ACT panel discussed how unbalanced nutrition hurts a child's performance in the classroom. They also made clear to the council that their children's safety was at stake, because without access to ingredient information there is no way of preventing allergic reactions.

The passage of the Food Metrics Bill will be advantageous to the health of children in New York City Public Schools *and* to the environment, since the legislation would contain a clause that requires City agencies to make known the origin of the food. Disclosing origins and adopting geographical preference in the purchasing of food would greatly decrease the ecological impact of our City's foodshed. To address the feasibility of placing local food at the center of our food system, a proponent of the bill presented a map developed to illustrate all of the unused land in Brooklyn. The map showed that the amount of vacant land that the City currently possesses is larger than the size of Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Therefore, it is certainly possible to develop a network of community gardens and farms that could provide fresh, healthy food for New York City public schools.

Advocates of the bill are in favor of improving the health of tomorrow's leaders (New York City children), reducing the City's carbon footprint in terms of the production and transportation of food, and creating jobs for developers

School Food, *cont'd from page 3*

and farmers. So, why is there resistance? The best argument the opposition could muster up was that the new legislation would be an administrative burden. The City's Food Policy Coordinator, Kim Kessler, claimed that the information that the bill would mandate would be difficult if not impossible to acquire due to a lack of resources. Many proponents couldn't help but detect a sense of hypocrisy as Bloomberg's appointee stood against making data on school food accessible and easily searchable. After all, the Mayor has often been quoted as saying "In God we trust. Everyone else, bring data."


WE ACT is sticking to this mantra and bringing the data! We have begun putting together a database of the common ingredients found in the food served in NYC public schools. We plan to make this information available via our website so that parents and all others interested can visit the site and analyze the information on the products for themselves. Just one of the shocking discoveries we have encountered through our research is the false health halo placed on the "whole wheat bread" served in schools. While parents are assured by the DOE's declaration that whole wheat is the only type of bread children eat at school, they remain in the dark about the caramel coloring and high fructose corn syrup that is found in every slice.

Advocates of the Food Metrics Act left the council hearing feeling optimistic. While we wait for the passage of the bill, parents can keep working hard to make sure their kids have access to good food in school.

To learn more about how to get involved in this campaign, please visit our website at www.weact.org or contact Charlene Chi, WE ACT's Food Justice Organizer, at Charlene@weact.org or (212) 961-1000 ext. 314.

Fun Summer Snack for Kids!

The (Peanut) Butter-Fly




Ingredients:

- Carrot
- Apple
- Peanut Butter

Instructions:

Simply make a peanut-butter sandwich using apple slices, cut it into quarters, peel carrot, arrange the pieces as shown, and enjoy!

Hacia Afuera Presents the East Harlem Film Festival



Winners of **Arts for Change's** youth and young adult film competitions will showcase their videos about the Spanish Harlem community – past, present, and future.

This **FREE** festival is on **Saturday, August 13th** and **Sunday August 14th** at Art for Change, 1699 Lexington Ave, New York, NY.

CORBIN HILL FARM SHARE



Fresh NY State fruits and vegetables delivered on a weekly basis to neighborhoods in the Bronx and Harlem



Entregas semanales de frutas y verduras frescas de NY State a barrios en el Bronx y Harlem

OPTIONS/OPCIONES:



**MEDIUM SHARE/
PORCIÓN MEDIANA**
(\$12/wk)--feeds 1-2 people



**LARGE SHARE/
PORCIÓN GRANDE**
(\$20/wk)--feeds 3-4 people

We accept cash, check, SNAP (food stamps)/Los pagos se pueden hacer en efectivo, con cheque, o con Cupones para Alimentos (SNAP)



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Preventing Lead Poisoning in Immigrant Homes

To many born on foreign soil, New York City is a land of opportunity. However, after traveling thousands of miles to reach the concrete jungle, it does not take long for most to discover the struggles in the immigrant experience.

Much of New York City's immigrant population resides in homes contaminated with indoor pollution and dangerous concentrations of lead. The deterioration of poorly managed apartment units- occupied largely by recent immigrants who are drawn by the low rent costs- not only divulges the reality of their new hardships, but also uncovers poisonous lead that remains present beneath coatings of fresher paint in old buildings. As the paint on their walls chips and cracks, a layer of the American Dream is peeled away. Cases of miscarriages, and stunted mental and physical development of children due to lead poisoning are predominantly found in New York City's immigrant communities. The threat of lead poisoning is further exacerbated by the fact that the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recently found that it takes lower levels of exposure than previously thought to cause serious damage from lead poisoning.

As part of our Healthy Homes project, WE ACT is working with the Children's Hospital at Montefiore on a preventative lead poisoning initiative to actively counter the lack of knowledge and imbalance of power that leave children of immigrant families, and all those living in these grave conditions, defenseless against lead poisoning. Ana Parks, WE ACT's Community Organizing and Outreach Coordinator, is eliminating young children's exposure to lead one household at a time. Through the Lead Dust Sampling Project, and in collaboration with our partners at the Montefiore Medical Center, Ms. Parks has surveyed close to 100 families in Northern Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn to assess the amount of poisonous lead present in their homes. She has also trained immigrant parents to become better detectors of lead poisoning in their own homes and in the homes of family members, friends and neighbors.

Once contacted by a pediatrician, daycare or family interested in participating in our lead dust wipe initiative,

Ms. Parks travels to residents' homes to evaluate their exposure. She transforms herself into a lead detective, equipped with blue rubber gloves, and her collection of test tubes into which she places the lead wipes, which are then sent out to a laboratory to test the level of contamination. As a bi-lingual, certified technician, Ms. Parks spreads her wisdom by teaching parents how to conduct a lead dust wipe test in their own home using a revolutionary pre-packaged lead dust wipe protocol kit. Ms. Parks compares the results from her wipe to the wipe done by the resident of the home after her demonstration. Finding no significant variance between the two samples demonstrates that once trained, any resident has the capacity to test for lead on their own.



Ana Parks

The kit, which contains all the materials and detailed written instructions needed to adequately collect a home lead dust sample, has proven to be both accurate and economical.

Continued on page 6.

How to Protect Your Child From Lead Poisoning:

1. Be sure that your pediatrician conducts periodic blood testing
2. Provide your child with a diet rich in calcium and iron; limit fried and greasy foods
3. Wash your child's hands often and try to limit hand to mouth activity
4. Mop instead of sweeping

For more information about the Lead Dust Sampling Project contact Ana Parks at Ana@weact.org

On August 25th WE ACT's Garbage, Pests and Pesticides Campaign is holding a meeting with local businesses about garbage disposal and the rampant rodent and roach infestation in Northern Manhattan. If you are interested in participating in this meeting, please contact Charles Callaway: (212) 961-1000 ext. 309 or Charles@weact.org

Lead Poisoning Prevention, cont'd from page 5

The simple lead dust wipe test costs no more than \$40, saving a family the roughly \$500 that they would need to hire a professional technician.

If laboratory results find that a home has tested high for lead pollution, Ms. Parks puts on her community organizer hat and sees to it that the resident is supplied with an application for abatement. She acts as the middleman between landlord and tenants and often finds ways for the city government to help a landlord repair the residence. Our partners at Montefiore Lead Safe House provide temporary housing to protect the children while work is being done to improve the safety of their home.

Families and experts in the medical field agree that the Lead Dust Sampling Project has done a tremendous job in protecting children from lead poisoning. If this initiative was replicated statewide we could surely put an end to the preventable disease of Lead Poison. By providing children with healthy and safe homes we can ensure our kids can have the brightest futures possible.

MAKE EVERY DAY EARTH DAY!

Take advantage of one of the easiest and most convenient ways to support the important programs of WE ACT for Environmental Justice! Hundreds of workplaces across the country give their employees the opportunity to make charitable gifts through payroll contributions. WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a member of EarthShare New York, a federated workplace giving fundraising entity that represents and supports WE ACT and many other respected and responsible environmental and conservation charities.

Find out if your employer hosts a workplace giving campaign and if it includes EarthShare New York and its member charities. Federal employees can support WE ACT in the annual Combined Federal Campaign by designating **CFC code # 82615** on their pledge forms. To learn more about how you and your workplace can support WE ACT for Environmental Justice through an EarthShare New York charitable giving campaign, please call WE ACT's Director of Development Ursula N. Embola at (212) 961-1000 ext. 305, or visit EarthShare New York's web site at: www.earthsharenyc.org.



RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

Saturday, **August 27th**, run with or cheer for the thousands participating in the **Percy Sutton Harlem 5K Run**.

The Run begins at 8:30 am from Edgemcombe Ave at 141st St. A celebration of Harlem Healthy Living will take place in St. Nicholas Park.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

MTA ARTS FOR TRANSIT seeks artists' images for the Mother Clara Hale Bus Depot in Harlem. The new environmentally sustainable facility will display an installation of permanent artwork.

Four finalists will be given an honorarium of \$1,000 to create a proposal for original artwork for the depot. Only one artist will be commissioned.

Submissions due Friday, August 26, 2011

For qualifications and application procedures visit www.mta.info/art or www.facebook.com/MTA.art, or email artsfortransit@mtahq.org.

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Since 2004



About the Harlem Community Voices Newsletter

Written by Elizabeth A Divine,
with support from Dianna Kim and Ursula N. Embola

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:
www.weact.org

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

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We publish this newsletter to keep you informed about WE ACT's organizing campaigns and our progress toward a more healthy, sustainable and just environment. We are working for you, so please let contact us if you have any concerns or issues you want to address in the community.

We also always look forward to hearing your comments on the work we do.

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Please contact us if you are interested in supporting or getting involved with any of our Campaigns!

Name
Street
City, State Zip

Harlem Community Voices

Volume 3, Issue 1
August 2011