

**THE YEAR IN REVIEW**

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**EHP ADDRESSES CHILDHOOD CANCER ISSUE IN SWPA**

In 2019, EHP found itself on the front line of a disturbing controversy surrounding the rise in childhood cancers in SWPA. According to a series published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, there have been a total of 67 rare childhood cancers from 2008-2018 in 4 SWPA counties, including a total of 27 cases of a rare bone cancer, Ewing sarcoma (ES). In the last decade, 6 children in the Canon-McMillan School District alone have been diagnosed with ES. At least 10 additional children attending this school district have been diagnosed with other rare cancers during the same time period.

Despite these alarming numbers, the PA Department of Health (DOH) produced a report concluding that a “cancer cluster” does not exist. In the report, they admitted that the sample size was too small, the data used was incomplete, and further studies are needed. DOH’s inclination to continue to monitor the situation with no further action left the community looking for protective steps to take.

EHP responded by hosting a community meeting attended by nearly 200 residents on June 18. Attendees at the meeting questioned how accurate the DOH’s data was: 2 additional teens were diagnosed with ES in 2018 and not included in the study, and another case was misreported. Invited panelists provided as much clarification as possible and called on the DOH (invited but not in attendance) to take more decisive action. In addition, EHP submitted a grant to the Pittsburgh Foundation to expand outreach and education about these health impacts to residents in Washington and surrounding counties. (continued on page 3)



**A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

As the year winds to a close, I am looking back over the past 8 years as EHP’s Director, and I want to say thank you to everyone I have worked with over the years. Many have sent kind words about our organization and my tenure here, and I truly appreciate each and every one of you, for all the battles we have fought side by side. The issue of health and shale development is more thoroughly understood, and a reckoning may be at hand on this and other environmental health insults and injuries. I hold out hope that in the New Year and this next decade, as our climate continues to shift both socially, politically, and environmentally, we will fully embrace a healthier, happier place in the world.

I take heart from both new and old leaders, such as Greta Thunberg, and public health heroes such as Linda Birnbaum, recently retired from the NIEHS and ready to speak her mind on “forever chemicals” like PFOA. Between the wisdom of youth and of our elders, I will strive in 2020 to strike the right balance between living life large, while finding and giving inspiration, and keeping myself, my family, and my community as healthy as we all can be.

Stay tuned for what’s next, both for EHP, and for me!

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## EHP'S NEW PUBLISHED WORK

### [Assessing exposure to unconventional natural gas development: Using an air pollution dispersal screening model to predict new-onset respiratory symptoms](#)

This study is the combined efforts of staff from EHP and San Diego State University.

The purpose of the study was to:

- use an air pollution dispersal screening model and wind direction to describe air emissions from fracking facilities at each residence studied, and
- assess association of this exposure estimate with respiratory symptoms taken from health records of a sample of 104 adults from southwestern PA who completed a standard clinical interview with a nurse practitioner.



**The researchers found that the higher the number of wells and other facilities located to the west of the home, the greater the likelihood of respiratory symptoms.**

To EHP's knowledge, the above study is only the **second** to include multiple sources of pollution (i.e., well pads, processing plants, and compressor stations) and the **first** to incorporate weather and atmospheric conditions in the exposure estimate. Such improvements in the types of data analyzed should help researchers develop a more accurate picture of potential health harms of fracking.

To read the entire study, click [here](#).

## NEW EHP TOOLS AND RESOURCES

EHP is excited to announce a new page on our website providing more information on the [Health Effects Registry](#).



To better understand possible connections between individuals living or working within 5 miles of fracking and negative health effects, and to better inform communities and policy makers, EHP developed the first Shale Gas and Oil Health Effects Registry in 2017. This allows residents to share information about their health and potential exposures to shale gas development sites.

We need you to join!

With privacy settings, you are in control of your own information! Choose to help educate researchers about symptoms and exposures you are experiencing without giving them access to your name or personal contact information. Informational newsletters are published twice a year that provide updates on what EHP is learning from the registry.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

To share timely news and information with you, EHP has launched a [blog](#)! Visit it from the front page of our website.



Check out our latest posts:

- [The Health Behind Plastics Cracker Plants](#)
- [The Health Effects Registry: Please Help Us to Help You](#)
- [Shale Gas Development and Childhood Cancer: Should I Worry about My Kids?](#)
- [Is My Health at Risk from Shale Gas Development?](#)

Visit our blog for information, resources, and tips on what you can do to protect your and your loved ones' health.

And please give us your feedback in the "Add new comment" section under the posts.

Follow us on social media!



## NEW ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CHANNEL STORIES



**Dale Tiberie**  
West Pike Run Township  
Washington County, PA

When shale gas development arrived in Dale Tiberie's backyard, his quiet, peaceful life became a "living hell." He and his wife live in constant fear of an explosion or spill, and the smell of raw gas permeating his yard has him worried about what he and his family are breathing.

Dale has kept meticulous track of all things related to the fracking by his house, and he has been a constant presence at township meetings, hearings, and meetings with regulators and gas companies. His advocacy has paid off — West Pike Run Township amended two township ordinances, and Dale was recently voted in as West Pike Run Township Supervisor. **Read Dale's story, [here](#).**



**Wayne Rossiter**  
Rogersville  
Greene County, PA

Wayne Rossiter, an associate professor of biology at Waynesburg University, viewed the energy industry favorably before moving to Greene County in 2012. Now Wayne worries what the effects of fracking will be on his two daughters. He sees low, safe air quality readings in his daughters' rooms, but one step outside his front door makes these numbers skyrocket.

Wayne has been extremely active in his county; he's created a public forum for those affected by fracking to share their stories, is a member of the Greene County chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, and has tried to get the support of his elected officials by sending letters to all of his representatives. **Read Wayne's story, [here](#).**

## LATEST FEATURED RESEARCH REVIEWS

- Casey et al. (2019): [Preterm birth, birth weight, and maternal stress and depression](#)
- Denham et al. (2019): [Hospitalizations for skin issues and genital/urinary issues](#)
- Tustin et al. (2017): [Sinus problems, migraines, and fatigue](#)
- Rasmussen et al. (2016): [Asthma exacerbations](#)
- Rabinowitz et al. (2015): [Upper respiratory and skin problems](#)
- Stacy et al. (2015): [Birth weight and small for gestational age](#)

## EHP ADDRESSES CHILDHOOD CANCER (CONT. FROM PG 1)

On October 7, DOH held a community meeting at Canonsburg High School to discuss whether a cluster of ES exists in the school district. Over 200 concerned residents attended the [event](#), and family members of children who had died from ES gave emotional testimonies. Residents wanted to know whether environmental factors, such as fracking, may be linked to this and an outbreak of other rare childhood cancers in the region, but [that issue wasn't addressed](#).

In late November, funds under the umbrella of the Pittsburgh Foundation provided support for EHP and partnering organizations, Center for Coalfield Justice, and Mountain Watershed Association, to offer education to residents on these illnesses and effective ways to advocate for state-level action to address them. We are also pleased to report that these efforts, and particularly the 11/18 trip to Harrisburg by family members of children stricken by these cancers, has moved the governor to allocate [\\$3.9 million to study environmental links to childhood cancers](#). EHP is here to support families and organizations for the long haul.

## REMINDER

The Environmental Health Project provides **FREE** services for residents in Southwestern PA affected by fracking. Contact us at 724-260-5504 for air monitors, or to schedule an appointment with a health professional.

Follow us on social media!



## ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR JILL KRIESKY TO RETIRE AT YEAR'S END

Dear friends and associates of EHP:

As many of you know, I am ending my almost 7-year career at EHP on December 31<sup>st</sup>. I look forward to the next chapter of my life, which will likely include some work as a “civilian” on fracking and health issues. The decision to wrap up my career wasn’t an easy one, largely because the EHP staff, community members, and environmental and academic partners have been such a pleasure to work with. For those of you who invited me and other EHP team members to make presentations at your meetings and conferences, who sent us incredibly talented and energetic interns from your academic programs, and who promoted our tools as we developed them – the Health Impact Assessment, Health Registry, and more – I, on behalf of EHP, have always been grateful and pleased to have you as partners. I will miss daily contact with you!

In the last several months especially, as I have attended meetings with many of you, I have been struck by the immense pool of skill and creativity gathering to take on the health challenges that fracking brings to SWPA communities and beyond. There will undoubtedly be challenges that require extra efforts at communication and compromise in determining how best to use these talents. But I look forward with certainty that this new generation of activists and advocates, working side-by-side with those who have been in environmental struggles for the long haul, will lead us toward a healthier, more humane, and environmentally sound future!



### ON THE ROAD...

You may have seen EHP sharing at...

- 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Shale and Public Health Conference by the League of Women Voters in Pittsburgh
- Cornerstone Health Care Center in Mount Morris
- “How Living Near Fracking Can Impact Your Health” at Canonsburg Middle School and Greene County Physical Health Committee Meeting in Waynesburg
- Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners Conference in Pittsburgh
- Pennsylvania Medical Society’s Annual House of Delegates Meeting in Hershey
- Physicians for Social Responsibility Health Check-Up Series at the Erie County Medical Society
- Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills Green Sanctuary Kickoff

...and many other places!

### EHP defends public health in the face of oil and gas development.

We provide frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance.

We engage diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, public servants, and others.

**Because knowledge protects health.**



**Support EHP by donating now!**

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