



New dioxin warnings to target S.E. Asians

■ Signs and handouts about dioxin in the Moshassuck River are being translated into Southeast Asian languages, to reach a group that is at high risk from contaminated fish.

DARE Direct Action for the River
DARE members were announced last week as the first group to be trained for the task of cleaning up the river. The group will be working with the city and the state to clean up the river. The group will be working with the city and the state to clean up the river.

The Providence Journal

POSITIVE POWER OF YOUTH



\$1 land sale offers lots of lead for little money

■ Sold for \$1, the land is a lot of lead for little money. The city has sold a lot of land for \$1 each, and the lead in the soil is a problem.

PROVIDENCE
The city of Providence has sold a lot of land for \$1 each, and the lead in the soil is a problem. The city has sold a lot of land for \$1 each, and the lead in the soil is a problem.

in news
ALONG THE MOSSHASSUCK

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Youths clear the Moshassuck River banks of the Japanese knotweed. Later in the day, they feed the plant to elephants at Roger Williams Park Zoo.

ALONG THE RIVER

■ An environmental group along the Moshassuck River is working to clear the banks of Japanese knotweed. The group is working to clear the banks of Japanese knotweed. The group is working to clear the banks of Japanese knotweed.



ALONG THE RIVER: A volunteer group along the Moshassuck River is working to clear the banks of Japanese knotweed.



NORTHWEST

WELL FORTY, GASK FIVE, KINGDOM, NORTH PROVIDENCE, SCOTLAND & WOODS

River pollution: Careful but don't panic

■ The city and state are working to clean up the river. The city and state are working to clean up the river. The city and state are working to clean up the river.

Dioxins

■ Dioxins are a type of chemical that can be found in the environment. Dioxins are a type of chemical that can be found in the environment.



CONTAMINATION

IN PROVIDENCE



How DARE's lead



Believe

■ Believe in the power of youth. Believe in the power of youth.

METRO

Case Studies Case Study 3

Lead Poisoning Prevention in Providence, RI

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A group of young people in Providence, R.I., are working to clean up the river. The group is working to clean up the river.



UEI staff and community volunteers disseminate educational materials door to door in Providence, RI.

Case Study 3: Lead Poisoning Prevention in Providence, RI

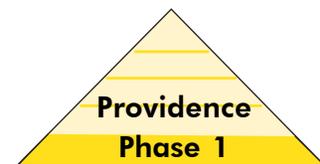
Lead poisoning is a preventable disease, which makes the health effects on children from lead exposure especially tragic. Childhood lead poisoning is one of the most serious environmental health problems in the state of Rhode Island. The prevalence of children with elevated blood lead levels in the state of Rhode Island is more than double the U.S. rate. For Hispanic children, the rate in Rhode

Island is nearly six times the national rate. In 1995, one out of every three children tested in the City of Providence under the age of six had elevated blood lead levels.

Lead poisoning is linked to housing conditions and the burden of lead poisoning is disproportionately borne by low-income families, especially those who live in Providence’s absentee-owned rental properties. These deteriorating structures and the hazards they create affect the quality

of life of entire neighborhoods. Rhode Island has the fourth oldest housing stock in the nation, with 43% of the stock built before 1940 and over 75% built before 1970. Nearly 300,000 housing units in Rhode Island have potential lead paint hazards and associated lead-contaminated yards. Of these units, over 90,000 are low income households. Low income households account for nearly 30% of the homeowners in Rhode Island. Overall, 31% of the low-income owners have housing problems and the rate rises to 41% for minority owner households. Hispanic owner households have the highest percentage with 43.8% experiencing housing problems. In addition to poor housing quality, Providence also has nearly 4,000 city-owned urban residential vacant lots which are host to illegal dumping and a home for rats.

This case study illustrates the value and success of the UEI’s multi-stakeholder, community-based approach to focus federal resources to support community priorities and create safer environments to reduce the number of children with lead poisoning in Providence.



Phase 1: Understanding the Problems and Identifying Stakeholders

The UEI started its work in Providence by hosting community focus groups and meetings to understand the most important problems facing residents. These meetings and discussions with

local leaders identified lead poisoning and rats as top priorities. In 1995, The Childhood Lead Action Project (The Project) was the only community group in Providence exclusively dedicated to lead poisoning prevention. The Project was formed in response to the alarmingly high incidence of lead poisoning in the city and developed and staffed a community-based Get the Lead Out Coalition to raise public awareness about the need for action. It became clear that The Project was a critical partner and that they needed financial and technical assistance to continue tackling this complex issue. The UEI started working with The Project and provided funding to stabilize the organization and support outreach and advocacy efforts representing low-income and minority families with lead poisoned children.

The UEI identified other local stakeholders that could help understand the depth and extent of lead poisoning sources and contamination throughout Providence. The UEI engaged EPA New England’s Lead Program staff and held a day-long “Lead-in-Soils

Charrette” with a diverse set of community stakeholder participants to examine the problem of lead in soils, especially in older residential homes. This charrette created landscape contractor specifications to reduce lead in soils and created a community manual and poster for homeowners to keep families safe from lead in their yards.

The UEI also started to work with the Environmental Studies Program at Brown University to research and analyze housing stock conditions and investigate possible correlations with lead poisoning rates. The research project identified Providence neighborhoods with elevated blood lead levels in children and used GIS technology to map this data across the city along with housing code data from the City of Providence. The research project verified that clusters of children with elevated blood lead levels were primarily located in deteriorating, low income neighborhoods with old housing.

The UEI also worked with the Olneyville Housing Corporation (OHC) to survey housing quality in

Olneyville and South Providence and identify lead exposure pathways for children. These neighborhoods represent two of the most under served, minority and low-income sections of Providence. OHC compiled the survey information and organized a door-to-door outreach campaign with local youth organizers to educate families about lead poisoning prevention. UEI’s initial work with these community partners started to build the pilot program’s credibility and develop a trusting relationship with our partners. These successful small-scale projects helped define the lead poisoning problem in the city and set the stage for identifying more comprehensive projects that would allow these stakeholders to work in partnership to reduce lead poisoning rates.



Phase 2: Building Community Capacity & Developing Local Partnerships

UEI continued to support The Project’s efforts to inform and empower urban families to keep their children safe from lead poisoning through prevention. The Project spearheaded “Train the Trainers” education programs to train local leaders to share prevention strategies and techniques with parents. The Project organized three successful lead conferences designed for environmental and public health leaders, parents, and families to learn about lead poisoning sources, methods for abatement and prevention, and treatment options for children. The UEI worked



Childhood Lead Action Project staff teach children and families how to eliminate incidence of lead poisoning.

with The Project to provide support to engage parent participation and help involve Brown University, Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), local Congressional leaders, and the Mayor's Office in the events.

In 1998, the Mayor of Providence responded to the continuing lead poisoning crisis by convening the Providence Safe Housing Lead Task Force (LTF). The Mayor asked the Executive Director of The Project to serve as Vice-Chair of the LTF to ensure that community needs would be heard and met. The UEI worked closely with The Project, the Mayor's Office, RIDOH, and other community partners to create a consensus-based process to holistically identify ways to reduce lead poisoning rates. The LTF had over fifty active participants representing environmental groups, local residents, public health officials, academia, local business, and government. Participants volunteered their time and expertise to identify solutions to the lead poisoning problem over a period of six months. The LTF had three subcommittees: Housing, Health & Education, and Funding and each met on a regular basis for nine months. The UEI recruited EPA New England's Lead Outreach Coordinator to provide federal regulatory guidance expertise to the Health and Education Subcommittee and ensure that the participants were aware of agency outreach tools and resources.

The UEI participated on all three subcommittees and helped find common ground among stakeholders with differing objectives to ensure that the subcommittees continued moving forward to finish the task force report. One key programmatic challenge facing LTF participants was existing

lead regulations and policies. The regulations and policies focused mainly on lead poisoning detection, rather than prevention or abatement. The participants identified that there were inadequate state and local resources to enforce existing city housing codes and a lack of political will to prioritize enforcement efforts. Despite these challenges, the window for advancing a comprehensive lead poisoning prevention policy for Providence was now firmly open.



Phase 3: Leveraging Public Resources to Improve Public Health & the Environment

The UEI continued to work with and support The Project to expand its outreach and education efforts through "Lead Safe Parties" and engaging parents to advocate for change. UEI provided funding, technical expertise, and staff time to work with community partners to develop the LTF final report recommendations and identify next steps for action. The Project, the Mayor's Office, and the UEI worked together to produce the LTF final report. The recommendations were the result of capacity building, partnership development, and community involvement that effective community-based environmental protection requires. The LTF recommended three approaches to focus action. The first strategy provided outreach, information and knowledge to parents and property owners about the

danger and sources of exposure, and practical prevention methods. The second element created a housing investment and maintenance strategy to produce safe, well-maintained housing in an efficient, affordable manner. The third focus directed federal, state, city and private-sector financial resources to support implementation of LTF recommendations. The Mayor of Providence formally adopted all the recommendations in the final report and created a Steering Committee to guide and oversee implementation.

The UEI and community partners began identifying ways to secure additional public resources to implement the LTF final report. The UEI worked with local government, The Project, and other LTF stakeholders to apply for a U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Lead Based Paint Hazard Control Grant. The partners were awarded \$4 million in resources to perform education and outreach, and lead restoration programs in Providence neighborhoods over three years.

It was also clear to community partners and the UEI that lead poisoning was not solely a housing problem, and also included lead contaminated vacant lots and residential yards. The UEI started working on vacant lots in 1995 to support Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE). DARE played a leadership role in organizing the community and galvanizing city action to address the vacant lot and rat problem. When DARE and the City of Providence were identifying ways to return the vacant lots to productive re-use, lead contamination became an issue. The UEI worked with DARE and the City of Providence to provide resources from EPA New England's

Laboratory to screen vacant lots for lead. The UEI organized volunteers and EPA New England staff to collect and analyze soil samples from 170 city-owned vacant lots. UEI, DARE, the City of Providence and RIDOH shared this information with the public and created a multi-lingual fact sheet to help residents mitigate contamination and protect children from lead poisoning.

The UEI also continued work with Brown University and the City of Providence to gather information from agencies, organizations, community groups, and residents on a range of environmental issues including lead poisoning. The results were published in a report called "Livable Providence 2000" and was released to the public during a community conference in October 1999. The Livable Providence 2000 section on lead poisoning supported the recommendations of the LTF final report. These shared project successes enabled the UEI pilot program to begin a slow transition from a prominent leadership role to

become part of an effective partnership that would work together to achieve results.



Phase 4: Effective Partnerships

Effective partnerships join diverse stakeholders who work together to define and meet clear goals and achieve desired results. When the Mayor of Providence adopted the LTF recommendations and formed the Lead Task Force Steering Committee (LTFSC), UEI provided funding for staff to work with community partners to take the final report recommendations and turn them into a coordinated action plan. The committee contained city officials, the Rhode Island Department of Health, UEI, The Project, The Office of Attorney General, and a

number of other community-based organizations. This steering committee worked for over nine months to turn the LTF final report into a detailed Goals Management Plan (GMP), that outlines specific tasks and timelines for progress. The GMP highlights six areas for lead poisoning prevention work: Health and Education; Prevention; Enforcement; Funding; Monitoring; and Grant Management. Each goal has multiple objectives and tasks that are being coordinated by the LTFSC. The LTFSC is now a working partnership that continues to meet and track GMP progress.

The UEI also helped community partners launch a lead-safe yard program for residential properties statewide in Rhode Island. Working with the Rhode Island Housing (RIH) and Mortgage Finance Corporation through the statewide Lead Hazard Reduction Program, the partners received a \$250,000 grant through EPA's Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking



Childhood Lead Action Project conducts a "Lead Safe Party" providing in-home education to families in need.

(EMPACT) program. The project creates lead safe yards at owner-occupied, home-based daycare units in low-income neighborhoods across the state. The project is managed by community groups that collect and interpret real-time soil lead data at daycare units and homes with contaminated yards and help residents make sound choices to mitigate lead poisoning. The LTFSC partnership and successful expansion of joint projects, combined with continued leadership from The Project and the RIDOH, set the stage for some incredible and measurable environmental results.



Phase 5: Healthy Communities

When the UEI started work in Providence in 1995, one in every three children tested below the age of six had elevated blood lead levels. In 1999, blood sampling from children tested below the age of six had fallen to 1 in 5, compared to 1 in 10 state-wide. This dramatic achievement is the result of years of work of many people, organizations, and thousands of hours of time and our community partners, especially The Project, deserve the credit for always leading the charge. LTFSC is not solely responsible for this dramatic improvement, but its work had a positive impact in focusing federal resources to support education, outreach, and remediation work. Progress made in enforcing lead standards, holding negligent and recalcitrant landlords accountable, years of work by The Project and The Get The

Lead Out Coalition to reach out to urban families about ways to prevent lead poisoning, increasing lead inspections, and securing more funding significantly contributed to reducing elevated blood lead levels in Providence children. To track the implementation of the GMP, the LTFSC is creating a measurement and communications tool to evaluate tasks accomplished and progress made. This tool will release information to the public and will help maintain accountability for results and continue progress to eliminate lead poisoned children in Providence.

Based on their exemplary work in lead outreach and education, The Project

continues its leadership role to respond to the incidence of lead poisoning in Rhode Island in general and in Providence specifically. The Project is creating a Rhode Island Lead Collaborative for community groups and public entities to service other urban cities in Rhode Island. This will be the first attempt to create a state-wide outreach and education agenda for lead poisoning and will hopefully set the stage to find innovative solutions to ensure that one day there are no more lead poisoned children in Rhode Island.



UEI and EPA staff work with community volunteers to conduct soil sampling on vacant lots in Providence, RI.

Lead Poisoning Prevention in Providence, RI

