

LOVE CANAL MEDICAL FUND

Spring 2000

BULLETIN - HEALTH NEWS AND BENEFITS

Issue 5

Summary of the New York State Love Canal Health Study

The New York State Department of Health is undertaking a study of former Love Canal residents. You may have already been contacted by someone from the Health Department. Several residents have asked the Medical Fund Board members if they reviewed the study and have any helpful information about the merits of the study.

To be able to fully answer our questions the Board invited representatives from the New York State Department of Health to a meeting. Dr. Nancy Kim and Dr. Ed Fitzgerald from the health department explained the study and answered the many questions including:

- What diseases are they looking for?
- Who would be included in the study?
- How do they plan to collect the information?
- What are the goals of the study?
- Do they plan to release the results to everyone who participated; and if so, how will they provide the information, for example, letters or news releases?
- If an increase of a specific health problem was identified through the study, are they planning to undertake some activity to directly inform and possibly assist former residents?
- What are their intentions after they finish the study?

Here is what the Love Canal Medical Fund Board members were told in response to these questions.

How the Health Department will collect their information.

The study is looking at everyone from 1940 forward, but is only including people who were still living at Love Canal in 1978. This means if a family lived at Love Canal in 1953 and moved out in 1960 they would not be included. But if that family never moved out of the neighborhood they would be included.

The study will be done almost exclusively by researching existing data bases. This means the health department will be looking at data from cancer and birth defect registries; and birth and death certificates. From these data bases they will track birth weights, defects, (only when the defect is identified at birth), cancer incidence and limited information on deaths.

They also plan to follow some of the Love Canal children who have children of their own. Because they will be using state birth records, the researchers will be able to follow the births of former female residents more consistently than male residents. This, they say, is because women's names, maiden names, and social security numbers are carried on those records and the baby's father's name is not consistently recorded.

Lastly they plan to analyze blood samples they collected in the late 1970s from residents. Although the blood samples were thawed during a 2 to 3 day power outage years ago at the lab where they were stored, the Health Department still believes they can use them. The health department intends to try to match the chemicals in the blood with the chemicals found in the environmental soil samples they took throughout the neighborhood.

Note: The health department cannot use these blood samples without the permission of those individuals who donated the blood. So if you had blood drawn years ago at Love Canal you can expect to be contacted by the Health Department seeking your permission.

What The Data Are Likely To Tell Residents.

The information collected most likely won't provide any useful data to Love Canal families. In fact, because of the small size of the study and other factors, this effort seems to be nothing more than a collection of information.

Furthermore, because the New York State Department of Health did not begin to collect birth defect information until 1983, all of the birth defects that occurred prior to 1983 will not be included in the data base. The state cancer registry began in 1972 so cancers before that time will be absent from the study.

Death certificates list the cause of death not the disease(s) that led to the death. For example, if someone's heart gives out while undergoing treatment of kidney disease, the death certificate and will probably say heart failure. The kidney problem will not be noted on the death certificate so would not be included in the study.

The Love Canal Medical Fund Board was very disappointed after hearing the description of the health study. This study will not give former residents vital health based information nor will it be useful to other communities faced with serious health risks due to chemical exposures. The Love Canal Medical Fund Board expressed our disappointment to Dr. Kim and Dr. Fitzgerald and asked them to make several changes to the study. They said they would review our concerns and meet with us again to discuss them.

We'll keep you informed as we continue these conversations.

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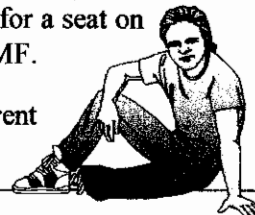
New Board Member Search



The Love Canal Medical Fund Board is looking for new members, especially young adults, the "kids" from Love

Canal. If you know anyone who may be interested in being considered for a seat on the board, please write to LCMF.

We will need their name, current address and phone number.



Spring is here and spring is a good time for you to get an annual physical. The Love Canal Medical Fund will pay up to \$250 with no deductions towards a beneficiary's annual physical. Please take this opportunity to get a check up. Love Canal residents have more risk of health problems than most people. A physical can detect many problems before they become serious.

Remember, you may be entitled to benefits for diseases and medical problems that are reasonably associated to chemical exposures at Love Canal *even if your lawsuit directly compensated you for that disease.*

If you have questions or know someone who can serve on the Love Canal Medical Fund, please contact us at:

Love Canal Medical Fund
P.O. Box 540, Grand Island, NY 14072

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