

Watertrough Childrens Alliance Grange meeting May 29<sup>th</sup>  
Nicole's talk on pesticides, schools, and children

Good evening and welcome.

We are going to cover a lot of ground this evening. I am going start with a story of dirt. I am not a professional or an expert. I am a concerned mother. I came to Sonoma looking for clean dirt -to grow food, raise chickens and let my children play in the mud.

Instead I found men in hazmat suits and gas masks, first spraying at a vineyard across the street from my house near the schools, and again a few weeks ago tearing down a lead painted barn across from the playground where my son was playing- signaling the conversion we're taking about tonight.

Hazmat suits and children- the incongruity and outrage of that moment led to the creation of Watertrough Childrens Alliance just a few weeks ago.

As a new agricultural project seeks to begin next to the 700 children in Watertrough schools, as parents we feel it's our responsibility to make sure whatever is going to happen on that land will be safe for our children.

Our concern is based on facts:

- Almost 2.5 millions POUNDS of agricultural chemicals were used in Sonoma county in 2010
- Only 200 of the more than 80, 000 synthetic chemicals used in the US have been tested under the toxic substances control act. And exactly none of them are regulated on the basis of their potential to affect infant or childhood development.

- No one is studying how much bio accumulation in our water and soil we are really living with.

So that brings us to dirt - The dirt next to our schools. The dirt that my children love to play in.

The dirt reveals the legacy of chemical farming practices from the past 100 years. And we now know that that legacy is also in our bodies and we cannot control its effects.

Lets start with lead arsenate and DDT found in the orchard because they never leave the soil. We now know the devastating effects of lead and arsenic, especially on children, in even miniscule amounts.

DDT- once hailed as the savior of agriculture. Until we found that it causes cancer and shows up in the tissues of our bodies decades after the substances were banned.

Next chapter we find two organophosphates, Lorsban and diazinon, both banned for home use due to the extreme risks they pose to children but still allowed for agricultural applications feet away from my sons kindergarten.

Diazinon is an insecticide that originates from nerve gases the Nazis developed during World War II. Diazinon drifted onto the Apple Blossom Campus one day in 1999.

The farmer was fined the maximum of \$400; the solution-spray in the morning and hose down the playground.

The positive moment in our dirt story in the 90's involves the highly toxic fumigant Methyl bromide. It was going to be injected into the soil in the last orchard to vineyard conversion next to

the schools. Until the parents protested and the owner agreed not to use it. So there is hope.

That brings us to the current favorite herbicide of the day – Roundup. In 2010, Sonoma County applied over 54 tons of it, primarily in vineyards.

Despite being billed as the softest of pesticides, emerging science is suggesting otherwise. I fear that one day we may look back horrified by our ignorance once again.

So we can see the dirt story next to our schools reads like that of a hazardous waste site. It's time to break this legacy.

This is an issue of public health and safety.

The current protections and systems of oversight for drift offer us little assurance. There are no real mitigation measures in place that can contain chemical treatments from covering our children and our schools in such close proximity.

My only recourse to pursue a toxic trespass, is after the damage has been done, and I can prove it. That's like trying to prove your cancer at age 50 was caused by your exposure at age 5 to DDT

It's time to shift the conversation.

From what is an acceptable level of risk to our children's health and what is the least toxic of our toxic options- apples or grapes.

To -what can we envision would be a positive collaboration between agriculture, food, farming, and culture that could move the next generation forward.

That is what we are here to consider tonight as a community.