

## **Class to help parents stop triggers for asthma**

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**BY DIANE DIETZ**

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Groups trying to bring down an elevated rate of childhood asthma in the industrial neighborhoods of west Eugene will present a workshop for parents at Cascade Middle School on Saturday.

The overall asthma rate in Lane County is 11 percent, which is higher than the state and national rates, according to the Eugene nonprofit Beyond Toxics. But in hot spots in the Bethel, Danebo and Trainsong neighborhoods, the group said it found an asthma case in every third household.

This workshop is one in a 1½-year series, which has trained hundreds of parents and supplied them with 200 cleaning kits.

“We’re doing this to provide families with solutions to their respiratory problems caused by bad air — bad indoor air and outdoor air,” said Lisa Arkin, executive director of Beyond Toxics, which is co-sponsor of Saturday’s event with Centro LatinoAmericano and McKenzie--Willamette Medical Center.

Pediatrician Sandra Miller will be on hand to teach.

Swift defensive action is crucial for young children, Arkin said.

“Children’s lungs don’t fully develop until the age of 18,” she said, quoting a study that appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. “When an undeveloped lung is harmed by a chronic disease such as asthma, that lung is damaged for a lifetime.”

Young asthma sufferers can face diminished breathing capacity and chronic lung infections for decades, she said.

The closer that west Eugene schools are to factories that emit high levels of air pollutants, the higher the asthma rates are, Arkin said. Fairfield Elementary School, with nine factories in a one-mile radius, has a 14 percent asthma rate, she said.

A count of air pollutants that are tracked in public documents — Eugene Right To Know files, federal Environmental Protection Agency Toxics Release Inventory records and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency permits — found that industries put 277,000 pounds of pollutants

annually into the air around Fairfield Elementary, according to Beyond Toxics.

But parents don't have a lot of control over that, Arkin said.

"No parent can clean the air by themselves," she said. "They are relying on the agencies and our government to clean the air. But what parents can do is eliminate asthma triggers."

The workshop trains parents to keep the indoor air clean by eliminating chemicals that can irritate the airways — mainly by using environmentally friendly cleaning methods, she said.

"When I was a kid, I was trained to use bleach and piney smelling products," Arkin said.

"When something smelled piney and bleachy, that meant it was clean. But now we know that you don't need the bleach and the pine products. You can create excellent cleanliness with products that don't have toxic chemicals and don't have fragrances."

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### Asthma care

Parents can learn about the symptoms of childhood asthma and how to eliminate triggers inside the home at a free workshop

When and where: 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Cascade Middle School, 1525 Echo Hollow Road

Registration: Call 541-744-6167

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