

# THE greenREPORT



Fall 2003

## White House Fails Grade Environmentally

President George W. Bush has made a point of emphasizing standardized tests, school performance and other educational issues. So, he's opened himself up to a little grading and evaluation on his track record for children's well-being. And as of right now, he has a lot of work to do to get a passing grade before the end of his term.

In the election year of 2000, President Bush committed to making children's health, education and well-being one of his national priorities. One of the results of that pledge was the No Child Left Behind Act, but it doesn't seem to have kept children in sight.

According to a report by the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN), *Are Children Left Behind?: Children's Environmental Health under the Bush Administration*, "While there have been notable exceptions, all too often, when this Administration made important decisions affecting children's health, children ended up with less protection, not more."



In 2000, when he was still a presidential candidate, Bush responded to a questionnaire from CEHN outlining how he would help to protect the nation's children from environmental dangers. His statement strongly supported child-protective measures, such as using an additional safety factor to protect children when regulating pesticides. In his statement, he acknowledged: "Children do have unique exposures and susceptibilities, so standard approaches to assessing and regulating health and safety hazards may not always account explicitly for children's potentially different risks."

Nice words, but the actions haven't been there. CEHN's post-election analyses find that most activities focused on children's environmental health have had to struggle for resources and visibility, and relevant interagency activities have halted or slowed to a crawl.

The report notes specifically that decisions made by this administration "almost uniformly reflect a philosophy of protecting economic interests, not children nor children's health." For example, this Administration has placed greatly increased weight on using cost-benefit analyses that shortchange children when making regulatory decisions. It's easier, it seems, to put a value on dollars than on health and lives.



Making sure that children, teens and even entire families are safe from environmental health hazards requires a government that will look at the big picture. This administration has been far too focused on

### Not Walking the Walk

Here's a rundown of just a few of the worst decisions by the Bush Administration that we and CEHN have logged:

- Weakening the executive order on children's environmental health and safety.
- EPA's withdrawal of already-committed funds for the National Children's Study.
- Filling a federal child lead exposure advisory board with lead industry leaders and defenders instead of impartial and health-related professionals.
- The creation of loopholes in public health protections, such as continued "grandfathering" of power-plants from pollution controls.
- Legislation submitted to Congress that would exempt the Department of Defense from environmental health regulations including clean air, waste management and Superfund laws.

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## Merging of Minds on Mercury?

It's still a bit too early to do any cartwheels, and we need to keep pressure up at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), but there are signs that we might finally be able to get FDA to adopt a more protective standard with regard to methylmercury levels in fish (and other foods, for that matter).

In July, *The New York Times* reported that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and FDA are working towards a joint standard to start in January. A joint meeting held by both agencies seems to substantiate that.

It does indeed look like the FDA will be issuing a new food advisory in January. What is less clear is whether the FDA will issue a new standard that matches the EPA standard (which is far more stringent), or whether it will change the evaluation process. Either way, we are very likely to get a better level of protection via the FDA. But we cannot afford to assume anything, and so we need to encourage the FDA directly to do the right thing.

For more information, visit [www.generationgreen.org/mercury-action-2003.htm](http://www.generationgreen.org/mercury-action-2003.htm). You can also call Mary Guthrie at (800) 652-0827 or e-mail her at [mary@generationgreen.org](mailto:mary@generationgreen.org) to get a copy of our Mercury Action Kit. ■



## Getting the FDA on Track

We should continue to demand that the FDA adopt the EPA's more "health-protective" standard. We should also demand that their new advisory:

- pay particular attention to pregnant and nursing women
- have clear and transparent criteria for testing and for issuing warnings and/or removing products from the shelves
- use sufficient samples and do enough testing to fully understand the scope of the problem
- take into account people's consumption patterns.

## Mercury: Those At Risk

The FDA and EPA have advised that groups most sensitive to methylmercury—women of childbearing age and young children—not eat swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish and shark, all of them having relatively high mercury levels.



One problem is that neither agency defines "young," probably because the brain continues to develop until early adulthood. However, fetuses are most definitely at risk, and the younger your children are, the more concern you should have over the kinds and amount of fish that they eat. Fish are good food, but that doesn't mean all of them are good choices for your table.

## Irradiated Food

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to reiterate to the USDA how much this issue means to us.

We also need to let our local school districts know that we don't want them purchasing and providing irradiated food to schoolchildren. That will be the most direct and effective way to protect our kids in the short term.

Visit [www.generationgreen.org/actionalert\\_08-2003.htm](http://www.generationgreen.org/actionalert_08-2003.htm) to learn more about what you can do and what you should know. ■

## Keeping You in the Loop

Every year, Generation Green and the Generation Green Fund prepare an annual report detailing our activities for the year. To see what we've done and how your work and contributions have paid off in terms of results and initiatives, visit [www.generationgreen.org/Annual%20Reports.htm](http://www.generationgreen.org/Annual%20Reports.htm).

You can also request a physical copy of the annual report by contacting Mary Guthrie at (800) 652-0827 or e-mailing her at [mary@generationgreen.org](mailto:mary@generationgreen.org).

## Failing Grade

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industry concerns over those of consumers and families, and that hurts.

But we can make a difference. Lest you think that your letters to legislators, administrators and others go unheeded, there is this statement from the CEHN report: "A substantial subset of health-protective decisions occurred only after strong public outcry against a proposed policy. In such instances, the Administration's first choice was not to protect children, but public pressure 'encouraged' a better outcome."

We will keep you informed of the most pressing issues in children's environmental health, and together with you and with organizations like CEHN, we will keep the pressure up. To learn more about the CEHN "report card" on President Bush's administration, visit [www.generationgreen.org/2003-06\\_lead-story.htm](http://www.generationgreen.org/2003-06_lead-story.htm).

# Healthy Harvest

Fruits and vegetables are the staples of a healthy diet, right? Well, it's not always that simple. While an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, the health benefits of some fruits and vegetables are compromised by an alarming variety of pesticide residues. Organically grown produce can be a good solution, but is not always available or affordable.

Generation Green is part of the battle for pesticide tolerance policies that protect children. Until pesticide residue standards improve, we can protect our families by learning which fruits and vegetables have less pesticide residue and serving them in our family's meals. Toward that end, Generation Green's Executive Director, Rochelle Davis and David Joachim, an award-winning cookbook author, are writing a cookbook which will be published by Rodale Press in Spring, 2004. The cookbook, which will be called *Fresh Choices*, will feature individuals who fight to protect children from unnecessary toxic exposure, along with their favorite recipes using the fruits and vegetables that have the least amount of pesticide residues.

This month, we profile David Joachim himself.



David Joachim

## Writing What He Knows

Who could be a better choice to write a cookbook on fresh, healthy, environmentally responsible eating than David Joachim? Raised in New Jersey by parents who had a small organic farm, the father of two boys, and an experienced cookbook writer, Joachim brought much to the table.

And it was a large table indeed. "The issues are enormous. There are influences by manufacturers, farmers, politicians, grocery stores and consumers," he says. "We had to figure out which issues we could cover, then condense them and write about them in a positive way."

The goal, he said, was to have a practical book that could appeal to a wide audience and give the tools needed for cooking, eating and shopping with more awareness.

"We like to go pick apples, and the orchards in my area spray the apples. Knowing that, we wash them thoroughly. I'm not willing to let pesticides prevent me from having that family activity."

As important as health, though is flavor, Joachim notes. "Eating for health has to be part of a balanced dietary plan. You need to enjoy what you're eating or there's no incentive to follow a healthy path." ■

## Hot Greens with Ginger, Soy, and Sesame

Use beet greens, mustard greens, spinach, or your favorite cooking greens. These make a fantastic side dish for any Asian-flavored entrée. Or just enjoy them as a light snack with some steaming rice.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch (about 1 pound) beet greens or other cooking greens
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger root
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted



### DIRECTIONS

Cut the whole bunch of greens crosswise into three-inch lengths. If using beet greens or another green with sturdy stems, set the stems aside.

Heat the oil in a deep, wide sauté pan over medium heat. When hot, add the stems and cook, stirring now and then, until they are just beginning to get tender yet still have good crunch, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the greens, garlic, ginger, and red pepper flakes. Cook and stir until the greens just begin to wilt, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat and stir in the tamari or soy sauce and sesame oil. When thoroughly incorporated, divide the greens among plates and top with the sesame seeds.



Makes 4 small servings.

### HELPING HAND

To easily toast the sesame seeds, put them in the pan you'll be using and toast over medium heat until they smell fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Pour the seeds into a bowl then heat the oil in the pan and continue with the recipe.

To be notified when *Fresh Choices* is available for purchase, contact Rochelle Davis, executive director of Generation Green, by e-mail at [rochelle@generationgreen.org](mailto:rochelle@generationgreen.org).

# Keep Irradiated Food Off School Menus

The 2002 Farm Bill directed the Secretary of Agriculture to purchase irradiated food for the various nutrition programs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) runs, including the National School Lunch Program. As such, the USDA will begin offering irradiated meat to schools beginning in January 2004.

The USDA has received a flood of letters (many of them from Generation Green members) overwhelmingly in opposition to irradiated food in schools. Because the Farm Bill directs the USDA to make such food available, we *didn't* expect the USDA to continue any kind of ban on irradiated food.

However, we did expect—and continue to demand—to have more protections and cautions in place. Although the boxes of irradiated meat arriving at schools will be labeled, labeling in the cafeteria and parental notification are *not* required. Instead, the USDA will only “encourage” schools using irradiated meat to let parents know. That’s no way to protect the 27 million-plus students in the school lunch program. So, we need

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## Taking the Irradiation Issue to the States

Ultimately, as long as irradiated food is offered through the USDA, we will need to direct efforts to our individual states, as it is usually a state agency (often one connected to the education department for that state) that determines which foods will be bought through the USDA’s programs for school meals.

- >> States that will NOT purchase irradiated meat for their schools this year:  
AK, AR, CT, DC, IN, IA, LA, MA, MD, MI, NM, OK, SD, WI, WY
- >> States that WILL purchase irradiated meat for their schools this year:  
NJ
- >> States that are UNDECIDED on whether they will purchase irradiated meat for their schools this year:  
AL, HI, ID, IL, MO, MT, NE, NY, TN
- >> States that will let individual school districts decide:  
CA, CO, GA, KY, MN, NC, NH, PA, SC, TX, UT, VA



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1-800-652-0827

STAY INFORMED. GET INVOLVED. SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTHLY ACTION ALERT!