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Kiwi Cares: Pure Intentions

One organization believes it's better to be safe than sorry. Learn about its crusade to protect our children from environmental hazards.



After losing their daughter, Colette, to a nongenetic cancer, Jim and Nancy Chuda wanted to help other parents avoid similar tragedies. In 1992 they founded the nonprofit Children's Health Environmental Coalition (CHEC; www.chechnet.org), dedicated to educating people about simple changes they can make to their homes and life-styles to reduce children's-health risks such as asthma and neurological and reproductive-system damage.

Who: Founded by the Chudas, CHEC counts among its celebrity board members Olivia Newton John, Amy Brenneman and Laura Dern.

What: One of CHEC's initiatives is the Blue Butterfly Campaign (www.bluebutterfly.org), which identifies the following five steps that parents can take to create cleaner, healthier homes for their children:

- Avoid pesticides and insecticides.
- Employ nontoxic household cleaners and products.
- Clean up indoor air.
- Eat more organic foods.
- Use plastic products wisely.

How: CHEC spreads its message through celebrity spokespeople and its interactive website, which provides information on harmful household products and family-friendly replacements. It also works with legislators to encourage the creation of new laws

and regulations controlling products toxic to children.

Impact: The organization funds scientific research and promotes new governmental policies that protect children and educate families. Among the legislation it has helped pass are the Children's Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) of 1996, which Senator Barbara Boxer of California dedicated to Colette Chuda, and an amendment requiring both that the EPA distribute to parents pamphlets on the effects of pesticides and that schools give parents two days' notice before using such products. CHEC has also helped create educational videos and publications that are available to families at hospitals and on its website.

To participate: Sign CHEC's Keep Children Safe petition to Congress and donate online. To volunteer, email CHEC at info@chechnet.org.

—Jennifer Rudolph

My Body, My House is a book for children about the importance of a healthy home. After suffering from an illness brought on by environmental toxins, former interior designer and author Lisa Beres wanted to teach others about how to make healthy choices for their home. She carefully broaches this serious topic by keeping the story light-hearted and choosing bright and lively illustrations. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the CHEC. Find the book on www.greenest.com.