

## GRATIOT COUNTY

# New health study and map in the works for St. Louis

**By Linda Gittleman**

*For the Morning Sun*

The first ever health study in the St. Louis area has been conducted by Emory University.

The focus is on PBB — the worst food contamination in the history of the U.S.

Fire retardant was mixed with cattle feed in 1973, thereafter leaving its unhealthy foot prints in generations to come.

But PBB — manufactured at the St. Louis Velsicol Chemical plant — wasn't the only chemical made there. DDT, among others, was another major one, although production of that ceased in the

1960s.

Now, another study has been added, started by a hometown girl: Joanne Hall Scalf.

It's called the Pine River Superfund Voluntary Health Map, and it's open to all St. Louis residents and former residents as well as those who worked at the plant.

And, it will be a map when finished, indicating which locations had what kind of illnesses.

"Over the years, I have been hearing from many friends and relatives about their health issues and concerns," Scalf said.

"Many times most people would say that they had a strong belief that people from St. Louis

had more health issues (including cancers and other major issues) than other people they knew but they lacked any real data that would show that this was true or false.

"I began to wonder why people would think this and more importantly if this thought is so prevalent, then why has there not been a study devoted to the people of St. Louis?"

This led her to start gathering data, "in hopes that a time in the near future when a researcher might want to compile it and research it further."

Dr. Tom Corbett, one of the early whistle blowers of the PBB

disaster, provided her with lots of help, she said.

A little while later, Scalf, who now lives in Texas, was put together with Dr. John Clements, a sociology and environmental professor at Central Michigan University.

He and his graduate students are working on the project.

About 200 one-page questionnaires have been requested and sent out, and nearly 50 have been sent back so far.

For Clements, the project was right up his alley and he was interested in helping, he said.

He and his graduate students

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# Map

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have collected the information and have begun the mapping process.

Exposure to contaminants is one of the factors his students will look at as well as determining if the claim makes sense.

"Is there some correlation?" he said.

His goal is to be honest about what he's learned,

Clearly, some health problems may not be related to the chemicals.

They will want to compare cancer data, for example, with other communities of similar size, he said.

He also said he wants to be sure to do what the people of St. Louis want.

A bigger study - with more people and more data - may likely be warranted, Clements said.

This may be the first step in getting other agencies interested in studying the St. Louis health issues.

He hopes to have a final report to deliver to the Pine River Superfund Task Force at their April meeting.

More data is needed. Current and former St. Louis residents, as well as chemical plant workers, are asked to complete the one page form. Request a form by emailing ... [pineriversvhm@att.net](mailto:pineriversvhm@att.net).

Copies of the health questionnaire can also be picked up at the front desk at T.A. Cutler Memorial Library, 312 Michigan Ave, St Louis.

The library is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Mail completed forms to [pineriversvhm@att.net](mailto:pineriversvhm@att.net), 1717 Angel Parkway, Suite 107, Allen, TX, 75002 or Attn. Jim Hall / PRSVHM, PO Box 172, St. Louis, Mich. 48880.