



Southside sophomore Michael Tobin talks about the cancer scare. Listening, from left, are his father, Tim, sister Maria, and mother, Margaret.

### Southside: Rumors take hold at high school

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Winibold said she and her classmate have been talking about the growing number of cancer victims with leukemia in the area since their sister last fall. She said she was pleased to see that a letter had been written and that an investigation is under way.

"We need to get the ball rolling and get the rumors to rest," Winibold said.

The rumors attribute the cancer to contaminated drinking water and chemicals leaking from the nearby former American LaFrance plant. One student said the water in the school's fountain had been tested and found to be safe.

"People are saying the school is toxic," said Shaina Kuehner, a junior. "It's a pretty high number. It makes you wonder."

County Health Department officials said the water is not contaminated. The school's water supply is part of the same system that provides water to the entire city, officials said.

"If there was something wrong, they would have found it already,"

said freshman Tyler Thompson. "I've been drinking water and nobody's gotten sick with it."

Many variables affect whether a person will develop cancer, said nurse practitioner Catherine Brown.

She has been a school nurse in the district for 30 years. Some of those include genetic predisposition, pre-existing medical conditions, and environmental conditions, Brown said.

"One of my concerns is that people have to look at this logically and rationally," Brown said. She said she didn't have enough information to comment on whether an cancer case of 1,100 students is statistically high.

Of the 13 students, three students developed leukemia, one of which the error term of the disease, according to the American Medical Association.

Some of the most common cancers among teen males, only four out of 100,000 American men are diagnosed

with the cancer each year, the association said.

Students talked excitedly Thursday about pollution at nearby Miller's Pond, the contaminated site at American LaFrance, and a pool of water near the school that doesn't freeze.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation tested soil at the school two years ago after an oil spill appeared on Miller's Pond. The tests revealed that oil storage tanks

buried on school property were leaking. State environmental officials say that the contamination poses no public health risk and that no further investigation is warranted.

The former American LaFrance site, classified as hazardous by the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, is in the final stages of a voluntary cleanup. It poses a low-level threat of soil pollution, with low levels of lead, cadmium, chromium, and other pollutants, according to state Department of Environmental Conservation records.

A brownfield is a site that has actual or potential contamination and the potential for redevelopment.

Winibold said she and some students in her advanced placement English class have checked out records at the county. The pond is owned by the former American LaFrance property along the south edge of the school property.

There could be snow and ice everywhere, but it never freezes," Winibold said.

Most students are familiar with the pond, said Mike Tobin, one of the six current students at Southside who was diagnosed with cancer.

The 16-year-old sophomore is currently one of cancer survivors although he believes the drinking water is contaminated, he has stopped drinking it.

### INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY HOME PROGRAMS.

1. Basic needs of the homeless	\$175,000
2. Homeless shelter	\$1,000,000
3. Homeless shelter for the elderly	\$1,000,000
4. Homeless shelter for the disabled	\$1,000,000
5. Homeless shelter for the mentally ill	\$1,000,000
6. Homeless shelter for the substance abuse	\$1,000,000
7. Homeless shelter for the veterans	\$1,000,000
8. Homeless shelter for the women	\$1,000,000
9. Homeless shelter for the children	\$1,000,000
10. Homeless shelter for the families	\$1,000,000
11. Homeless shelter for the youth	\$1,000,000
12. Homeless shelter for the elderly	\$1,000,000
13. Homeless shelter for the disabled	\$1,000,000
14. Homeless shelter for the mentally ill	\$1,000,000
15. Homeless shelter for the substance abuse	\$1,000,000
16. Homeless shelter for the veterans	\$1,000,000
17. Homeless shelter for the women	\$1,000,000
18. Homeless shelter for the children	\$1,000,000
19. Homeless shelter for the families	\$1,000,000
20. Homeless shelter for the youth	\$1,000,000

### Cancer: State asked to investigate

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American LaFrance manufacturing facility that had undergone an environmental cleanup to remove soil contaminated with various chemicals, solvents, tars and other pollutants.

But if those contaminants are causing the cancer, Kump and others wonder why no teacher or other staff member at the school has been reported struck with cancer.

Kump said he has not seen whether residents living near the school also have high cancer rates. Those cases would be reported to the county health department, he said.

The parents of three of the 13 people with cancer and two Ulster County Council members sent a letter April 13 to school board President Deborah Pierce asking for help and answers.

Some students at Southside High, along with their parents, have questioned whether the cause of the cancer may be the school's location on and next to contaminated industrial site.

The school, at 777 S. Main St., Ulster, is built on a former industrial site adjacent to the former

according to Julie Paton, a registered nurse who is in charge of the current or former students.

"It is confirmed that these numbers are accurate. It would be unusual for a school of that size to have that many cancers of any kind," Hennessy said.

But Dr. Terry Lenhardt, the Ulster County Health Department's medical director, doesn't think the numbers are unusual.

"In my mind, six kids out of 1,100, that's not a high number," he said.

"We tried to be fearful," he said. "I'm normal. It doesn't imply that there's anything bad going on. If you were to ask me if I had kids at that school would I be surprised? My answer would be 'Not a bit.'"

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