

Editorial

Is there some link?

■ Our view: 13 Southside students suffering from cancer calls for a thorough investigation.

Some parents and children in Elmira are living a nightmare.

The youngsters have cancer. The cause is unknown, but many people are beginning to blame the children's one common denominator: Southside High School.

The finger-pointing began last week when three sets of parents and two City Council members wrote a letter to the Elmira school district demanding to know more about the ground beneath the school at 777 S. Main St.

Over the past week and a half, a lot of information has emerged about the school.

So far, we know:

■ Thirteen Southside High School students have been found to have cancer since 1997.

■ Southside High School was built on an industrial site that has seen factories come and go since 1887.

■ The ground deep beneath the high school is contaminated with oil and other chemicals. No chemicals have been discovered at the surface.

■ The school and county health officials have said that the school grounds are safe, the drinking water is not contaminated, and none of the chemicals beneath the surface can affect anyone at the school.

While some have claimed the Star-Gazette has sensationalized this story, we disagree. Part of our responsibility is to help separate fact from fiction, truth from rumor. Over the past week, rumors have run rampant. Some students at Southside High School have refused to drink the water and parents have begun to fear for their children's health.

Much still needs to be unearthed about Southside High School and why 13 students have cancer.

Is this a string of coincidences? Just bad luck? Contaminated water? Could something else have contributed to the teens having cancer in the past three years?

It's our duty to keep digging and let the community know what we've learned.

Blindly accusing Southside High School and the ground it is built on of causing cancer is irresponsible, especially when so much information must still be gathered.

Now is the time to let reason rise over emotion. Let's find answers before we cast blame. Let's approach this issue with our minds as well as our hearts.

Some answers will come slowly, and some may never come at all. But we will continue to cover this story.

And as part of the community, the Star-Gazette will continue to push for answers so that maybe someday, no one else will have to endure an unimaginable nightmare.

Clipped By:



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