

Cancer: State speeds up probe

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case, Smith said. The state Center for Environmental Health is also gathering information on the results of previous tests done at the site by the Elmira school district and the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Smith estimated that employees from six departments within the state health department are working on the case.

A representative from the state health department will bring a proposal for how the state intends to study the situation to a May 2 community meeting in Elmira, Smith said.

In addition, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will now assist the state health department with expertise and information on national studies and similar cases elsewhere, said Arthur Block, senior regional representative of the agency.

In the state health department, at least 100 cases statewide are being checked out at any one time. "Often the facts turn out to be different from what was originally reported to us, and there is no actual irregularity in the situation," Smith said.

State health department spokeswoman Claire Pospisil said the department has investigated a number of schools for health risks, and often the scope widens to include neighborhoods, family medical histories and parent occupations.

"Often you have to look at where these kids live," Pospisil said. "I have a feeling that could happen in this case."

At least one study has already checked some of the neighborhood. After an oily sheen appeared on Miller Pond in 1995, the Department of Environmental Conservation ordered tests that were conducted between 1996 and 1998. These showed petroleum contamination in the soil and groundwater from the school to the Parkside Drive area.

Traces of trichloroethane and trichloroethane, chemicals found in industrial solvents and paint, were found in a few samples of the groundwater, according to

the report.

Additional water and soil tests near South Main, O'Gorman, Morrow, Willys and East Miller streets did not detect any contamination.

Contaminated soil and water were discovered close to the surface in a few spots near Miller Pond and in the empty field between the houses on Parkside Drive and the railroad tracks.

The field, owned by Mark Twain Little League Inc., was once used as a gravel pit, according to a 1973 Soil Survey of Chemung County. The Department of Environmental Con-

servation report on the soil and water tests stated, "Inactive or abandoned gravel pits are often used for illegal dumping or burial of waste." The department tested the site to determine if the former gravel pit was the source of the petroleum contamination, but decided the pollution most likely came from under the school.

The field is now a mix of weeds, grassy spots, and piles of stones and slag. A path winds along the back of it next to the railroad tracks. Beer and soda cans as well as rusting barrels are scattered in the grass.

APRIL 2000 CELEBRATION SCHEDULE

- 8:00-9:00 A.M.**
Finger Lakes Wine Country Visitor Center
(in the Corning Museum of Glass)
Ribbon Cutting, Grand Opening and Refreshments.
- 9:00 A.M.-8:00 P.M.**
Corning Museum of Glass
Free Admission, Hot Glass Show Demonstrations, Live Fameworking, Ben Franklin, Treasure Hunt in the Innovation Center, Art Activity, and Refreshments.
- Corning Museum of Glass to Market Street
Shuttle bus rides.
- 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.**
Rockwell Museum
Free admission and fun activities in the Art Room. Be a trailblazer on the Art Trail with one of the new Art Packs. Hear tales that will entertain you at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- 9:30 A.M.**
Information Center of Corning
in the Baron Steuben
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Grand Opening
- 10:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.**
Science & Discovery Center
Hands-on children's activities in the Baron Steuben Building.
- Police Department and City Hall Tours

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