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Experts join panel

■ **Name:** Dr. Clark Heath.

■ **Current position:** Clinical professor of community health at Emory University School of Public Health in Atlanta, 1990 to present.

■ **Education:** Bachelor's degree, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, 1954; medical degree at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, 1958; eight years of professional training through the Harvard Service at Boston City Hospital and at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta.

■ **Experience:** Branch head, epidemiology program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, 1969 to 1980; director of Chronic Diseases Division, Center for Environmental Health, CDC, 1980 to 1982; Office of the Director, CDC, 1982 to 1985; vice president for Epidemiology and Surveillance Research, American Cancer Society, 1985 to 1996; associate chief of research, Radiation Effects Research Foundation (Hiroshima, Japan), National Academy of Sciences, 1996.

■ **Name:** John Van Benschoten

■ **Current position:** Associate professor, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1994 to present.

■ **Education:** Bachelor's in industrial economics, Union College, Schenectady, N.Y., 1966; master's in industrial engineering, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt., 1977; master's in environmental engineering, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass., 1985; doctorate in civil engineering, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass., 1988.

■ **Experience:** Water resources assistant planner, Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation, Montpelier, Vt., 1977 to 1982; research and teaching assistant, University of Massachusetts, 1982 to 1986; postdoctoral research associate, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, 1987 to 1988; professor at State University of New York at Buffalo, 1993 to present.

■ **Name:** A. Scott Weber

■ **Current position:** Director of the State University of New York at Buffalo Center for Hazardous Waste Management, executive director of the New York State Center for Hazardous Waste Management and professor of engineering at SUNY Buffalo.

■ **Education:** Bachelor's in civil engineering in 1977 and a master's in sanitary engineering in 1978, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; doctorate in civil engineering, University of California at Davis, 1983.

■ **Experience:** Project director of numerous brownfield and PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl-contaminated sites; editor of the book "Hazardous and Industrial Wastes," and author of numerous journal publications; winner of several state and national awards for his research in remediating contaminated water.

Experience of team eases minds

By MARGARET COSTELLO
Star-Gazette
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CONCERNS FROM SOUTHSIDE

They've been described as the "all-stars," or the dream team of environmental studies and cancer research.

They are the key players in the state's investigation of a possible cancer cluster at Southside High School, a probe that has strengthened the confidence of parents whose children have cancer.

The Southside Advisory Committee, made up of parents, environmental attorneys, and local health and environmental leaders, officially signed off on the team of experts during a meeting Monday night. The three-member team is being funded by a federal grant.

Dr. Robert Brown, manager of the Northeast Hazardous Substance Research Center of the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, N.J., pulled together the group to "review data generated from hundreds of soil, water and air samples taken at the school.

The group is comprised of:

■ A. Scott Weber, the director of the State University of New York at Buffalo Center for Hazardous Waste Management. He will coordinate the director of the New York State Center for Hazardous Waste Management. He will coordinate the group's review and assist in interpreting technical data from soil and air samples.

■ John Van Benschoten, an associate professor at SUNY Buffalo and its expert on environmental engineering. He will work with Weber on double-checking the state's soil and water samples.

■ Dr. Clark Heath, a world renowned epidemiologist and a clinical professor of community health at Emory University in Atlanta. He will examine information relating to South concerns.

Heath served as the vice president for Epidemiology and Surveillance Research with the American Cancer Society from 1985 to 1996. He also "served in various capacities with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta from 1965 to 1985, then helped develop programs in the office of the director at the CDC from 1985 to 1985.

— "He's the all-star," Craig Slater, co-chairman of the advisory committee and an environmental attorney hired by the city, said of Heath. "He's the guy you'd handpick if you could."

Those were reassuring words for Andy Patros, whose son, Tom, was found to have leukemia cancer as 1997, the same year he graduated from Southside.

"From what committee members say, it sounds like these people are beyond credible and very respected in their fields. It sounds great. It's just another layer of scrutiny. We just want it to be as thorough as possible."

The group will receive $44,660 from the federally funded Technical Outreach Services for Communities program. The program, administered by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, provides citizen review groups with independent technical information about work done by state agencies.

The school at 777 S. Main St. is built on a site contaminated for more than a century of heavy industry.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation began investigating the school grounds in May after a group of parents expressed concern about an unusual high rate of cancer among students and former students in Southside.

The state Department of Health reported that the rate of cancer among alumni was average or below what would be expected, except for the number of testicular cancer cases among students since 1997.

The health department's investigation is ongoing and will include a "cancer surveillance" component during a search for Southside alumni who have moved out of state. Within four months, the school district expects to send out a survey and medical release to all graduates of the school since 1979.

The technical team has reported that it will complete its review of the data by December 31, 2001. However, Weber noted in a Dec. 4 letter to Libritzi that the team's work "is somewhat open-ended" and that the team intends to work through Nov. 30, 2001, as new information or problems come to light.

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Clipped By:

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Tue, Apr 16, 2019

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