

Pollution in People: Michigan - Participants



Michigan Network for
CHILDREN'S
Environmental
HEALTH



Donele Wilkins, 48, is co-founder and Executive Director of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ), a non-profit organization that addresses urban environmental issues in Detroit. Ms. Wilkins is a public speaker on topics including environmental justice and community-driven sustainable development. She is a mom of two (including Payton, below), which motivates her to change conditions in her community. She was instrumental to DWEJ's success in shutting down Henry Ford Hospital's Incinerator. We found four phthalates and seven PBDEs in Donele's body, as well as bisphenol A in her urine. *"Industrial chemicals have no place in our bodies. Moreover, there are far too many people -- too often people of color and poor people -- who suffer disproportionately from environmental pollution. Now we know we're getting it from inside our homes as well as outside. We refuse to be guinea pigs in a massive, uncontrolled experiment, especially when a few people are making a lot of money off selling products that have these toxics in them."*



Payton Wilkins, 18, is a senior at Consortium College Preparatory Academy in Detroit, and his favorite subjects are literature and gym. He enjoys painting, and was a member of the youth team that painted the mural at the new Boll Family YMCA in downtown Detroit. Payton coordinates Youth on Patrol Against Pollution under Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (run by his mother). He aspires to become an entrepreneur and to develop and expand his artistic interests, which include acting. We found four phthalates and seven PBDEs in Payton's body, as well as bisphenol A in his urine. *"I just turned 18 and it's simply not fair that my body has already built up toxic chemicals. I want to live a healthy long life. I've got things to do and places to go. But what are my chances when I've got these chemicals that are known to be toxic in my body? It pisses me off even more to think that I've been soaking up chemicals from the incinerator all my life. What is all this going to do to me?"*



Laura Varon Brown, 46, developed and edits "Twist", a Sunday newsmagazine of the Detroit Free Press for and about women. Her prior work for the Free Press – where she has worked since 1990 – includes serving as Metro Editor. She has a certificate in Journalism Law from the Detroit College of Law. Above all, she believes that what matters most is motherhood. Ms. Varon Brown – of no relation to Rep. or Bryan Brown – lives in Bloomfield Township with her husband and three children. We found four phthalates and seven PBDEs in Laura's body, as well as bisphenol A in her urine. *"I came into the project a bit of a skeptic about toxic chemicals and the role they play in our every day products and environment. I am really hoping that the awareness this report brings will lead to better disclosure of what's in our containers, furniture and the goods we use every day. Environmental concerns span much deeper than recycling and the gas mileage. That was the biggest eye-opener for me."*



Terry Brown, 48, was elected State Representative from Michigan's 84th District in 2006. His prior work includes serving as principal/supervisor of a school for children with significant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral issues. Rep. Brown also worked for many years as a school social worker. He helped promote Michigan's use of renewable energy. He enjoys hockey, hunting, fishing, and scuba diving, and has served on the Huron Sheriff Department's rescue team. He lives in Pigeon with his wife Carol, their son Bryan Brown, and two older children. We found four phthalates and nine PBDEs in Terry's body, as well as bisphenol A in his urine. Given his high BDE-154 reading (which can indicate either BDE-154 or polybrominated biphenyl (PBB) 153), Terry is one of two project participants likely to have been exposed through eating food contaminated with PBB-153 added to feed grain in the early 1970s. *"Showing the prevalence of potential toxins in our bodies illustrates the importance of conducting high-quality research on chemicals before releasing them into our environment. Research and regulations need to work hand in hand to ensure that chemicals are used safely and effectively."*



Bryan Brown, 12, is an honors student in 7th grade in Pigeon, Michigan and the youngest of three siblings. He enjoys science class, reading, computer and video games, as well as team sports, boating, and swimming. Bryan's school stands out for having three large wind turbines that have already saved the school thousands of dollars. We found four phthalates and nine PBDEs in Bryan's body, as well as bisphenol A in his urine. Bryan and his father, Terry, are the only two participants in whom we found BDEs 85 and 138, indicating a common source of exposure. *"I feel lucky that I was able to participate in an important project like this. Most kids my age don't get to do something that could help so many people."*