

# Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Take the Sea Grant survey to help determine what pet owners and veterinary professionals know about proper disposal and effects of pet medications and care products on the environment.

## How pet products can hurt our environment

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Like those used by humans, pet products, including prescription medications, shampoos, parasite treatments and other products, are making their way into the environment with negative effects on wildlife.

The National Sea Grant program recently partnered with the American Veterinary Medicine Association to promote the reduction of improper disposal of pharmaceuticals and personal care products. As part of this project, Pennsylvania Sea Grant is working with partners at Oregon Sea Grant to better understand pet owner behavior and actions surrounding disposal. Oregon

Sea Grant has developed a survey to collect related data that will help guide education and outreach efforts to reduce environmental damage caused by pet medications and care products.

This national survey is designed to learn more about the practices and awareness of this issue among pet owners and veterinary professionals. You must be 18 years or older to take the online survey which will be available until Nov. 1. Find the survey at [www.paseagrant.org](http://www.paseagrant.org).

**ANNA McCARTNEY**, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at [axm40@psu.edu](mailto:axm40@psu.edu).



**Tools for Packing A Waste-free Lunch:**

- Durable lunchbox
- Reusable food containers
- Refillable drink bottle
- Stainless fork and spoon
- Cloth napkin

LAPTOP LUNCHES  
SOFTWARE FOR EVERWARE

[WWW.WASTEFREELUNCHES.ORG](http://WWW.WASTEFREELUNCHES.ORG)

More and more schools are discovering the benefits of cutting down on the waste they produce, particularly in the lunchroom. For more information, go to [www.wastefreelunches.org](http://www.wastefreelunches.org).

## Students urge people to reuse bags, bottles

Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School fifth-grade teacher Jane Ross shares advice from her students on how to encourage use of reusable bags, bottles and utensils.

Everyone should know that littering our Earth is bad for our lake. People just throw things away, and they get transferred into Lake Erie. These items can kill our fish! We should remember to reuse things. We need to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful! — **Dhurey Abdisalan**

I think we should reuse things because if we don't, they could end up in our lake. Trash can damage the lake and animals in it, and I don't want animals to get hurt. I love fishing, and

I don't want the fish to die! — **Riley Walker**

If you use non-reusable things, you are also wasting your money! — **Abdullah Haji**

People can use reusable bags, utensils and bottles; our landfills are getting filled with a lot of trash; this is slowly getting into our waterways. We don't want our water all dirty! — **Abiezer Aguilar**

People should reuse stuff like drinking water bottles, for example. They can also reuse eating utensils. You can use them at work and school, then take them home to be washed and reused. I think we should take good care of our environment! — **Latavius Collier**



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Fresh Face Forward is the social change campaign created by Mercyhurst Environmental Communication students to increase awareness about toxic ingredients and empower the college community to choose products that are safe for human health, wildlife and the environment. Working with their professors and with their partner PA Sea Grant, they have completed year one, and are continuing the campaign on their Erie campus, and extending it to the Penn State Behrend campus. Learn more and take the pledge to become toxin-free at [www.freshfaceforward.org](http://www.freshfaceforward.org).

# Take this personally

You can act to scrub chemicals from personal care products

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Why did Kaiser Permanente pull antibacterial soaps with triclosan from its 37 hospitals nationwide in 2010 and switch to traditional soaps and alcohol-based hand sanitizers?

The hospital chain phased out this toxic chemical because of its "precautionary approach" to safety and scientific evidence that triclosan is causing more harm than good. Signs have been mounting for years that triclosan and other chemicals in pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) harm humans, wildlife and the environment. (For more about the problems go to: [www.paseagrant.org/topics/toxins](http://www.paseagrant.org/topics/toxins).)

But that has not stopped manufacturers from using them. Nor has it changed the patterns of prescribing medications to consider the impact that PPCPs have on the environment and human health. While the 1972 Clean Water Act requires the EPA to regulate all pollutants, it would take an act of Congress to add these new toxins to the priority pollutant list to be regulated. Furthermore, the \$50 billion PCP industry in the United States is largely unregulated, so products you buy can contain chemicals that harm wildlife and that are linked to cancer, birth defects, infertility and other chronic diseases.

That's why Kaiser took voluntary steps and why Minnesota recently passed legislation banning triclosan in consumer soaps and why Vermont passed the Toxic-Free Families Act. Actions like these are the easiest, least-expensive way to protect people and the environment from the harm caused by PPCPs, but they are not enough. Every person must do his or her part to fix these problems.

And that's why after a Pennsylvania Sea Grant presentation at Mercyhurst University in 2013, students took action to change individual behavior that would have the most impact — eliminating unnecessary toxic chemicals from products they use. Together with their professor, Anne Zaphiris, and PA



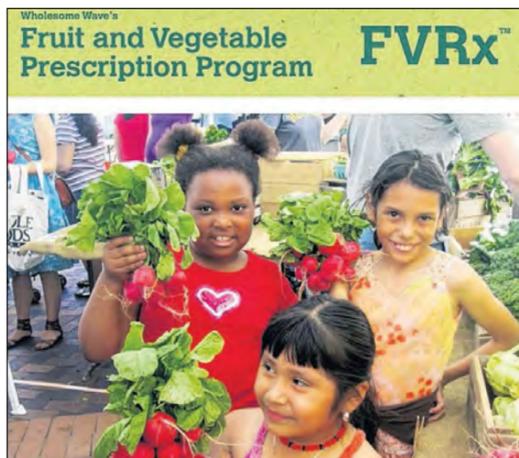
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Penn State Behrend students share information with Chancellor Donald Bix about the Fresh Face Forward campaign and a free app that takes the guesswork out of shopping for safe personal care products, [www.ewg.org/skindeep/app/](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/app/).



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Your knowledge and purchasing power can help remove dangerous toxins like triclosan from our products and environment.



WWW.WHOLESEMEWAVE.ORG

Ask your doctors if they consider environmental impact when prescribing. Eliminating our reliance on drugs as easy fixes for preventable illnesses would greatly reduce their use and be safer for the environment and people.

Sea Grant staff, Marti Martz and Anna McCartney, they completed year one of a social change campaign they created called Fresh Face Forward to educate the college community about the issues and ask them to change their purchasing habits.

The campaign has begun year two on the Mercyhurst campus and has been expanded to the Penn State Behrend campus. The group hopes to secure funding to bring the campaign to Sea Grant colleges and universities in the Great Lakes states

and then nationally.

There is proof that knowledge and these small decisions can create significant changes. When we don't buy products with toxic chemicals, companies are forced to provide safer choices. With pressure from consumer and environmental groups, Johnson & Johnson announced in 2012 that it would eliminate chemicals of concern from baby and adult products, including triclosan, parabens, phthalates and preservatives that release formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.

In September 2013, Procter & Gamble announced it would eliminate triclosan and the phthalate DEP from all products by 2014 and Walmart asked manufacturers to eliminate as many as 10 unsafe toxic chemicals from products sold in its stores. One month later, Target announced a new sustainability standard to evaluate and rank personal care and cleaning products based on ingredient safety and disclosure and environmental impact.

Still, many have yet to take any action: many chemical companies, drug companies and those that make the products; businesses that sell the products; health-care providers that prescribe and dispense the products; politicians who make the laws, and agencies that enforce those laws.

Don't wait. Become part of the solution. Read the labels and ask questions before making purchases or decisions about your health care. If we don't buy toxins, there's no need to worry about toxins on us or in the environment. If we insist, health-care providers will stop prescribing unnecessary medications and instead focus on prevention. Set an example for your family and friends. Share what you learned and your concern with elected representatives and others. Prevention really is the only strategy.

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Check out these websites to learn more:

- [www.paseagrant.org/toxins](http://www.paseagrant.org/toxins)
- [www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep)
- [www.unwantedmeds.org](http://www.unwantedmeds.org)
- [www.storyofcosmetics.org](http://www.storyofcosmetics.org)

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