

Good morning, I'm Catherine Sandy. I would like to thank the Colorado Brownfields Foundation, the EPA, CDPHE, Habitat for Humanity and the Development Research Partners for inviting me to speak here today. I'm President of ONEW: Overland Neighborhood Environmental Watch. We are the TAG recipient for the Shattuck Superfund Site OU#8 located at 1805 South Bannock Street, in Denver. I'm the former President of ONA: Overland Neighborhood Association. A position I held for five years.

The Remove Shattuck campaign was started by a group of women in 1989. There were two retirees, a nurse, a secretary, a massage therapist and a hair dresser. We quickly realized that our neighbors were ready, willing and able to be educated, informed and inspired. They were ready to protect and save our neighborhood; our little corner of the world in Overland. Having had a chance to experience the 1970's rebellions myself, my first instinct to start our campaign against Shattuck was protesting, everywhere. We were at the site, we stood enmasse along Evans Avenue, we went to the capital and walked along Lincoln Street. We even went downtown to the EPA offices. The next step was the media. That proved to be very powerful. We discovered that public exposure gets fairly quick responses to problems. It got to the point where my salon clients were even commenting on our TV appearances or quotes in the papers. We were, in fact, actually, educating the general populous as well. There were some neighbors reluctant to participate but they were never forced, only gently encouraged with evidence and the truth of the matter at stake. There were numerous public hearings, some organized by the community and some by the EPA that included our elected officials.

A new group called ONEW formed in 1996 when we received our first TAG funding from the EPA. TAG grants are \$50,000 per grant and are usually limited to that amount. To date, ONEW has received \$250,000 in grant money because we kept our investigation, knowledge and tenacity front and center.

Tenacity. That's a very important factor when a community takes on the "Big Boys". The government people are very quick to dismiss, deny and disqualify in the beginning. So as we became friendly with and got to know our government people, they would then mysteriously leave, being replaced by a new dismissing, denying and disqualifying government person, and we would have to start all over wooing and educating this new government person to the truth as we saw it and the plight of Overland. We discovered an important tool during this time. Even government people, if you feed them they will come. Having this happen to us several times, as you can imagine, became very frustrating. So frustrating for me that at one Public Hearing, a neighbor overheard and informed me that the government people were whispering about my need for anger Management classes.

For me it wasn't the need for anger management classes, it was for them to see and realize that this is what passion looks like, remember? I'm not mad. This is a critical issue and time for my neighborhood. How could I not be passionate about it. Shattuck is two blocks from my home. How could I not be passionate about it? My neighbors were worried about their children's health. How could I not be passionate about it? We were told not to eat the vegetables from our gardens. How could I not be passionate about it? Our neighbors could not sell their homes. How could I not be passionate about it?

With our TAG grant, we were able to hire numerous environmental firms and experts to review the EPA existing documentation concerning the site. Mistakes were uncovered which led the EPA to hire their own team of experts to review the Record of Decision for the site and eventually come to the same conclusion as we did back in 1991, that the only safe thing to do was to remove the contaminated soil, that the monolith was not protective of human health and the environment after all.

Overland Neighborhood became one of the first communities in the country to overturn a Record of Decision. Although officially, it is called a ROD amendment by the EPA, I still to this day try to encourage them to call it what it truly is: A ROD Reversal. Not an amendment, a tweak or a fix. It's OK to own the reality. Overland Neighborhood was almost left to be the reluctant owners of a sickening reality. In 1990, a government lawyer was quoted during the closed door meetings as saying that if the EPA allowed our community to have a say in the decision, then what would stop other communities across the country from doing the same thing. Well, as the self-described "mouth" of my neighborhood, this comment left me speechless for the first time since I could remember. (Or that anyone at the EPA could remember either...) There are currently 28,000 hazardous waste sites of concern across this country of ours. In every state and in every county. We are near saturation. The clean up burdens on "we the people" have increased from 50% to 70%. The system is flawed and making it right does truly begin with small communities and neighborhoods because we are always the ones first impacted by the proposed or actual dumping, burning or burying.

Because of our input, the EPA has recently tightened some of their clean-up standards at Shattuck. The ONEW Board has participated in two national TAG Conferences in the past three years and we have joined with TAG groups across the country to help write new guidance for community involvement at these sites across the country.

The most exciting part of these conferences is getting to meet other citizens like us who are dealing with hazardous waste in their own communities, who have similar issues with their government entities and who are putting enormous amounts of energy into cleaning up their neighborhoods.

The most heartening aspect of these conferences is the bonds that are formed and the national sense of community and commonality that emerges. We come away united, empowered and encouraged knowing that we are all working and headed toward a future of clean and safe neighborhoods across our entire country. How could I not be passionate about that?!