

Philanthropy Journal

OF NORTH CAROLINA

Up from the grassroots

Nonprofits work to clean up environmental racism

Since the term "environmental racism" was coined more than a decade ago by civil rights leaders in North Carolina, the issue has become popular with non-profit environmental groups, foundations and policy-makers nationwide. The challenge now, activists say, is finding solutions to the problem.

By BARBARA SOLOW

Therese Vick has no doubt that "environmental racism" exists. An organizer for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Vick

has spent the past year helping residents of poor, mostly black communities in Eastern North Carolina fight soil and water contamination they trace to large hog farms in the area.

The dispute over placement of the hog farms is one of a growing number of protests that have charged companies with targeting low-income and minority communities for pollution.

Since North Carolina civil rights leaders coined the term "environmental racism" more than a decade ago, the issue has gained increased attention from nonprofit environmental groups, foundations and government officials across the country.

ORGANIZING

But while identifying the problem has been a useful rallying point for communities, solutions still are a long way off.

What's needed, Vick and other organizers say, is stronger evidence that specific communities have been targeted, as well as more support from foundations and government officials for grassroots organizing.

NAMING THE PROBLEM

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is one of several nonprofits involved in efforts to docu-

ment ground and water pollution from intensive hog operations in parts of Bertie, Columbus, Halifax, Sampson and other Eastern North Carolina counties.

While residents believe companies have chosen poor, black communities as sites for hog farms, the companies involved have denied that race or income had anything to do with their decisions.

The dispute has gained the attention of national civil rights and envi-

Survey finds blacks and whites growing apart. Pages 3, 7.

ronmental groups.

In Bertie County, residents living near hog farms initially were divided over whether to raise the banner of environmental racism. "Some thought it would be divisive," Vick says. "Others felt it was a big stick".

The Durham-based Land Loss Prevention Project - which has been studying the possibility of filing lawsuits against hog farm owners in Eastern North Carolina - found some outside supporters also were uneasy about defining the issue in terms of race.

"We had questions like, are you

Look for RACISM, page 13

Slimming down United Way hits '93 target

A tough fundraising year in 1992 led North Carolina's United Way affiliates to shift their focus to the agencies they serve. That shift, and more modest campaign goals, allowed many affiliates to hit their goals in 1993.

By KATHERINE NOBLE

United Way affiliates in North Carolina set their fundraising sights low in 1993, and the strategy paid off. For the first time in two years, Tar Heel affiliates hit their mark.

Not all the totals are in, but most of the state's larger affiliates raised more money in 1993 than they did in 1992.

FUND RAISING

According to preliminary figures, giving to United Way totaled \$93.3 million in North Carolina last year, up from \$92.2 million in 1992. That year, giving fell more than \$3 million from the previous year.

The Aramony scandal, it seems, had a silver lining: Rather than focusing on fundraising goals, the scandal forced North Carolina United Way affiliates to spotlight the agencies they serve instead of fundraising goals and to set modest campaign goals. And in some cases,

Look for UNITED, page 18

The challenge of teaching children how to think is starting to produce educators who resemble entrepreneurs. Public schools in Charlotte, for example, are taking risks in curriculum, hiring and school programs. The results aren't in yet, but the progress is promising.

By TODD COHEN

Pete Stone was hired in 1992 to be principal of a new elementary school in Charlotte. He soon filled half the school's 60 staff jobs. Then he did something unusual: He gave his new employees the job of hiring their coworkers, including an assistant principal.

"If you're going to ask these people to be accountable, it's just common sense that they don't want to work with duds every day," says Stone, principal of Lake Wylie School. "They have a team of people and they're just going to pick the best people they can."

Stone is a risk-taker. He says he was asked to be precisely that by John Murphy, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools superintendent who recruited him. With Murphy's support, Stone has designed a school that asks teachers and students to make choices about how they teach and learn.

Stone belongs to a slim but growing corps of Tar Heel educators who are bucking an entrenched tradition of doing things the way they've always been done. While their tactics

Breaking the mold

School reforms taking hold in Charlotte by putting needs of children first



Charlotte elementary principal Pete Stone believes in giving students choices. Some of his students even have opted to help vacuum the school each day — learning community responsibility in the process.

Photo by Nancy Pierce

vary, these educators share the goal of adapting their schools and teaching methods to the needs of students. They aim to teach students to think for themselves, not simply require them to attend classes, to memorize and spit back information.

Akin to the

"total quality management" movement in business that gives decision-making authority to managers, the school "reform" movement asks administrators and teachers to be entrepreneurs and to put the customer - in this case, the student - first.

Pilot programs at high schools in Chapel Hill, Stokes County give teachers greater flexibility.

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These educators also understand that they will be held accountable for the risks they take through the performance of their students.

An ambitious undertaking is underway in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. Eighteen schools in that system are part of a national project, known as the

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NONPROFITS

Global remedy for family health

For 20 years, Family Health International has worked in developing countries to foster family planning to stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Now, it's also working in the U.S.

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FOUNDATIONS

Foundations cope with payout rule

As interest rates decline, foundations find their investments may not cover their federal obligation to pay out 5 percent of their assets each year.

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VOLUNTEERS

Middle-school plan hinges on volunteers

Gov. Jim Hunt's plan to provide after-school programs for teenagers will depend on a core of community volunteers.

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FUND RAISING

United Way head in Charlotte retiring

In 34 years with Charlotte's United Way, Don Sanders has built a legacy of connecting the United Way and the community. Now he's retiring.

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