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Steve Johnson o rwelk

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## Ecological activist joins landfill opposition

Author and ex-Pekinite will speak Oct. 10 to raise funds for group

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Monday, September 24, 2007

By TERRY BIBB  
of the Journal Star

**PEORIA** - As the fight over expansion of a hazardous waste landfill near Pottstown continues, Sandra Steingraber is in for the long haul.

"Obviously the siting of toxic waste over drinking water in the aquifer is an ongoing battle," she said. "I feel I have something to offer in the battle."

The former Pekinite, biologist, ecological activist and author will help Peoria Families Against Toxic Waste raise funds with a speech at 7 p.m. Oct. 10 at Universalist Unitarian Church. The local group of private citizens

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successfully opposed Peoria Disposal Company's proposed expansion of the hazardous waste landfill, although the company has launched a series of legal appeals.

"It's so unnecessary for Peoria to be the last dumping ground for the bad actors that are still out there," Steingraber said.

Currently a distinguished visiting scholar at Ithaca College in New York, the 48-year-old Steingraber has discussed environmental health in forums from "Good Morning America" to the United Nations. She may be best known as the author of "Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment," which she started at Harvard University and finished while living in her sister's basement in Pekin. Steingraber describes the book - which is being filmed as a documentary - as part environmental detective story, part love story about her feelings toward central Illinois.

It has been a long journey since she was diagnosed with bladder cancer while still a student at Illinois Wesleyan University. Personal research revealed that was a "quintessential environmental cancer," Steingraber said, adding she did not become an activist at the time. That became her life's work a few years later.

"Then my aunt went on to die of the same bladder cancer I had," Steingraber said. "The punch line is: I'm adopted. So I knew it wasn't shared genetic heritage."

She said the rest of the world is moving "in this amazing direction - away from toxic chemicals." She said Peoria doesn't have to be left behind, and she cited physicians and others who spoke out against the landfill as a key reason why.

"I'm just thrilled that the medical community is on the side of the angels here," she said.

Voluntary donations will be accepted at her speech. For more information, call 330-9733 or visit [www.notoxicwaste.org](http://www.notoxicwaste.org).

Terry Bibo can be reached at [tbibo@pjstar.com](mailto:tbibo@pjstar.com) or 686-3189.



Have a thought on this issue? Share it by leaving a message at (309) 687-8439 or e-mailing [youpage@pjstar.com](mailto:youpage@pjstar.com). Comments may appear in the Journal Star's **YOUPage** on Friday.

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Peorian  
September 24, 2007 - 05:54  
Subject:

I don't want to hear any of you people complain when these companies like Cat and Keystone move their operations to other states or countries. Becuase you people are making it impossible for them to do business.

[Reply](#)

Reply to Peorian  
cgiselle12  
September 24, 2007 - 08:52  
Subject:

Sorry Peorian, but even Cat is moving away from using toxic chemicals.

Keystone is a dinosaur, yes, but their headquarters aren't even here - they are run out of Houston (I think) or another Texas city.

Cat isn't going anywhere - they are heavily invested in the Peoria Community. Soon, they won't need this landfill at all. Their South Carolina site is already completely green, recycling and reusing all of their hazardous materials.

The entire world is moving away from the use of toxic substances, and quickly. Most Peorians know this and are moving with society.

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