

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS"

<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

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## GIHN New Member

**David C. Straus, Ph.D.**, lives in Lubbock, Texas. He is a professor of Immunology and Molecular Microbiology at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. He has been involved in this issue for more than 20 years and has published numerous peer-reviewed research papers on the microbiology of indoor air and sick building syndrome.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Straus.

## GIHN's New Video on the Global Burden of Indoor Air Contaminants

Check out GIHN's [new video](#) on the Global Burden of Indoor Air Contaminants. This new video highlights some of the information included in the new section of our position statement.

## Vocal Cord Dysfunction Linked to Water-Damaged Buildings

The vocal cords are open (abducted) during normal breathing. Vocal cord dysfunction (VCD) describes a condition in which the vocal cords close (adduct) during breathing. This abnormal movement of the vocal cords results in intermittent obstruction of the upper airway. Symptoms of VCD include episodes of shortness of breath, cough, noisy breathing (stridor or wheeze), throat or chest tightness, and hoarseness. Although the symptoms may mimic asthma, they are typically unresponsive to asthma medications and instead may respond to relaxation.

A study recently published in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice* by Dr. Kristin J. Cummings and colleagues investigates the relationship between exposure to water-damaged buildings and VCD. The authors describe the evaluation of two office buildings where occupants reported respiratory problems. The evaluation included interviews with managers, a maintenance officer, a remediation specialist who had evaluated the two buildings, employees, and consulting physicians. In addition, the authors reviewed workers' medical records and reports of building evaluations.

Two building occupants experienced cough, chest tightness, shortness of breath, wheezing, and hoarseness when in the buildings. Clinical evaluation included laryngoscopy, which demonstrated abnormal closure (adduction) of the vocal cords during breathing in both cases. They were diagnosed with VCD. Co-workers developed upper and lower respiratory symptoms; their diagnoses included sinusitis and asthma, consistent with recognized effects of exposure to indoor dampness. Building evaluations documented water damage and mold growth. The building occupants with VCD continued to have symptoms in the buildings despite remediation efforts.

[A Novel Trigger of Vocal Cord Dysfunction](#)

See *Leaky Condos...financial assistance* on page 2

## Leaky Condos and Getting Financial Assistance (Canada)

Leaky condos have an impact on the lives of homeowners who sadly are troubled by the significant financial expenses associated with their restorations. "Leaky Condos" are defined by breakdowns of building enclosures (envelope), leading to water entering the envelopes resulting in rot, deterioration, decay and mold. It wasn't until the late 80's when the government started to regulate the requirement for airtight building systems, that major water damage complications became apparent.

The harm brought on by the rotting and molds are substantial, and effect condos, town homes, detached homes, and even some high rise buildings. The significant financial costs associated to "building envelop repair" have enormous effects on the lives of homeowners who are victims of leaky condos.

### Financial Assistance

I have great news for all of you who are dealing with this issue. A completely **forgivable loan/Grant** is **available** for qualified home owners.

The loan does not require to be repaid should you agree to continue to own and live in this house throughout the earning time period, and this can be up to 5 years (the loan forgiveness period).

The amount you might acquire is dependent on the cost of required repairs and the area in which you reside. The highest amount you might acquire will depend on the three geographic zones:

Southern areas of Canada	\$16,000
Northern areas	\$19,000
Far northern areas	\$24,000

### Financial Assistance from CMHC

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) offers financial assistance to low-income homeowners for mandatory home repairs that will preserve the quality of affordable housing. The program helps people who live in substandard dwellings and cannot afford to pay for necessary repairs to their home.



*Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation*

## Leaky Condos and Getting Financial Assistance (Canada)...continued

CMHC delivers renovation programs in Prince Edward Island, where the province cost-shares on a 75% federal / 25% provincial basis and in Yukon Territory.

In other jurisdictions, Provinces and Territories may choose to design and deliver renovation programs that are cost-shared with the federal government. Information on Provincially/Territorially designed and delivered housing programs are provided under Provincial and Territorial Affordable Housing Links and Agreements.

### Who Can Apply

Homeowners can qualify for financial assistance if your property is eligible and if your total household income is at or below the Income Threshold set by CMHC.

### Qualified Properties

Your property could be eligible for Homeowner [Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program](#) (RRAP) if your home is:

- Valued below a specific amount;
- A minimum of 5 years old; and
- Substandard and needs crucial repairs in one of the following areas: heating system, structural, electrical, plumbing and fire safety.

To read the entire article:

[Leaky Condos and Getting Financial Assistance](#)

See *Formaldehyde Making Teachers Ill* on page 3

## Formaldehyde Making Teachers and Students Ill

A comprehensive report on air quality in the new Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School will be released Thursday to the Tri-County regional school board.

The consultant's report was prepared for the Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Department.

Many people claim the \$20-million school has been making staff and students sick.

Yarmouth MLA Zach Churchill said Wednesday that delays in getting Yarmouth's new high school built resulted in worrying levels of formaldehyde being left in the school. As a result, 50 or more staff members have reported being made sick, as well as many students, he said.

He urged the province to come forward and give information to people.

**"High levels of formaldehyde combined with poor ventilation is a dangerous mix," Churchill said in a news release.**

**Some teachers are refusing to work in the school and must be placed elsewhere, according to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. And a number of students walked away from their classes Wednesday to protest the conditions.**

Churchill said Jennex needs to face facts.

"There's a problem. People are getting sick and the minister should stop trying to play politics with this and just actually get the job done and fix it because we can't have students and staff ... go into a building that's going to make them ill," he said.

"No one's making up the fact that a lot of people are sick. No one's making up the fact that symptoms these people have experienced are linked to the building."

[Report on air quality at high school to be released](#)



*Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School  
in Nova Scotia, Canada*

## Callaway Mayor Dies after Mold Exposure

Robert Thompson had been mayor of Callaway for only about 30 days when he fell ill and died.

In the months to follow, Thompson's sudden death rippled out and fueled emotional City Commission meetings.

Reeda M. Thompson told The News Herald shortly after her husband's death that doctors at Bay Medical Center said he died from aspergillus, a genus of mold consisting of several hundred species, also known as black mold. The mold did severe damage to her husband's physical appearance and mental faculties before eventually causing his death, she added.

**Medical examiner reports confirmed "black mold" as a contributing factor in Robert Thompson's death.**

Thompson had been hospitalized after complaining of flu-like symptoms. The mayor had been treated for sinus problems four times before he lost 16 pounds in four days, and his white blood cells increased, according to Reeda Thompson.

The mayor had been investigating a complaint in Callaway Point where a resident wanted a ditch by the bay to be cleaned.

"From that point his health went down, down, down," Reeda Thompson told The News Herald earlier this year. "The doctors said they'd never seen such a bad case of mold. The way he died, nobody should."

[Callaway Mayor Dies after Mold Exposure](#)

See *Member Profile: Stephanie Cranford* on page 4

## Member Profile: Stephanie Cranford

As long as I can remember, I had always wanted to be a veterinarian. In 2000, at age 29, I finally got a chance to go to Auburn University. In January 2001, I started working at Scott-Ritchey Research Center which is part of the college of veterinary medicine. I loved my job, and I just knew I was where I was supposed to be!

I had been an avid weight trainer since the age of 14 and loved to run. Life was good!

In the fall of 2002, I started to have odd things happening. Never having problem skin in the past, it was odd when I developed skin lesions (which still happens when I am exposed to mold). I was having headaches, breathing problems and cognitive issues in one of my classes. Then I developed a severe problem with my vision and became a disabled student. Fatigue and weakness began to plague me and my days at the gym became fewer.

After finding Dr. Ritchie Shoemaker's website [chronicneurotoxins.com](http://chronicneurotoxins.com), things began to make sense. I was dismissed from more doctors' offices than I can remember after they realized I was connecting my illness with a prominent university. I hit a dead end at every turn.

Only by the grace of God did I graduate with my Bachelor's of Science degree in zoology in 2003. My health was steadily declining, but I was stubborn enough that I was going to press through no matter what so I applied to vet school that fall even though I really knew I shouldn't be in those buildings. I just wanted to finish what I started and live my dream.

Then I hit the wall. I had an incident at work that changed it all. After a strange headache and an episode that left the right side of my body unable to function normally again, I retracted my vet school application. One of the hardest things I've ever done!

Thankfully, my boss worked around my limitations, but by the spring of 2004, I had to quit work. By the time I quit, I didn't think I would live to see the end of 2004 because my health was rapidly declining. I had to move in with my parents because I could not care for myself at that point.



*Stephanie Cranford with one of the baby goats*

## Member Profile: Stephanie Cranford (cont'd)

I found an integrative clinic that diagnosed me with hypothyroidism, adrenal exhaustion, many food allergies and heavy metal toxicity. I was put on detox remedies, meds and supplements which were a fantastic start, but I still had a long way to go!

Fast forward to 2009.

I began to work a few hours a week at a local health food store to help pay for supplements, and I really wanted to help others. If it weren't for natural medicine and my faith in the good Lord above, I don't think I would be here. Two serious mold exposures later left me unable to work since June of this past year, and I have missed it terribly.

In an effort to bring encouragement to others like ourselves and bring awareness to the dangers of mold and the prevalence of Lyme disease, my friend and I have recently started a local support group for those living with environmental illnesses.

Stephanie lives in Enterprise, Alabama, with her husband David, step-children and their dog, cats and goats.

## U.S. Department of Labor Sues Employer, Ordering Reinstatement of Whistle-Blower Fired for Mold Exposure Complaint

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has sued National Council of La Raza Action Fund Inc., successor to Democracia USA, a nonprofit community engagement and Hispanic voter registration organization in Orlando, for allegedly terminating an employee who raised health concerns about potential exposure to mold and other environmental factors in his workplace. The lawsuit follows an investigation by the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration that found that the company unlawfully and intentionally terminated the worker for engaging in activity protected by Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

The suit seeks to have the employee reinstated and paid back wages, interest, and compensatory and punitive damages, along with expunging adverse information in the employee's personnel records. Finally, it seeks to bar the employer from commission of future violations of the OSH Act by a permanent injunction.

"Every American worker has the right to raise health concerns regarding potential exposures to environmental hazards, such as mold, without fearing retaliation," said Cindy Coe, OSHA's regional administrator in Atlanta. "We will continue to ensure that these basic worker rights are protected and will prosecute every employer found to have violated them."

In mid-September 2009, the employee began reporting concerns to management about potential exposure to mold and other environmental factors in the workplace. In November 2009, an air quality test was performed that showed the presence of mold in the workplace. The office was closed for several months. After it reopened, the employee filed a health complaint with the OSHA Tampa Area Office. OSHA conducted an inspection and issued a citation against the employer for violation of OSHA's housekeeping standard. Upon receipt of the OSHA citation, the employee was informed that his employment was terminated. The employee then filed a whistle-blower complaint with OSHA.

[DOL Sues Employer](#)



*U.S. DOL Sues Employer, Ordering Reinstatement of Whistle-Blower Fired for Mold Exposure Complaint*

## Secondhand Smoke Study Released for Floyd County

**A report released Thursday shows high levels of indoor air pollution in workplaces in Floyd County, Kentucky, that allow smoking, compared to those that don't.**

The air quality test results are from the University of Kentucky. They were released by officials with Floyd County Health Department during a press conference at Jenny Wiley State Park.

The results showed that in the city of Prestonsburg, which enacted a smoke-free ordinance in 2009, the levels of air pollution from second hand smoke are nearly 13 times lower than the rest of the county where there is no law.

"We always find where there's smoke, there's pollution," Smoke-Free Kentucky's Betsy Janes said.

The report also indicated that the level of fine particle air pollution outside the city limits of Prestonsburg was 3.3 times higher than the national standard.

The Smoke-Free Kentucky Campaign aims to get a statewide law passed to ban smoking in all Kentucky workplaces this year. Currently, 36 communities in Kentucky have a smoke-free ordinance in place, like the city of Prestonsburg. That covers approximately a third of Kentucky residents.

[Secondhand Smoke Study Released for Floyd County](#)

See *3 Months after Hurricane Sandy* on page 6



### 3 Months after Hurricane Sandy, Residents Still Waiting for Relief

Devon Lawrence neatly stacked bricks on the gas burner of his kitchen stove and turned up the blue flame, creating a sort of radiator that warmed the ice-cold room.

His two-story house in the Far Rockaway section of Queens hasn't had working heat since Superstorm Sandy's floodwaters destroyed the oil burner in the basement. **Now mold is growing upstairs because the house has been cold and damp for so long.**

Lawrence wakes early every morning to heat the bricks and light a kerosene space heater while his 75-year-old mother sits in bed in a hat and gloves.

"That way she doesn't freeze," said Lawrence, a former Army medic who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. "Even the dog is cold."

Three months after Sandy struck, thousands of storm victims in New York and New Jersey are stuck in limbo. Waiting for the heat to come on, for insurance money to come through, for loans to be approved. Waiting for their upended lives to get back to normal.

The Oct. 29 storm damaged or destroyed 305,000 housing units and disrupted more than 265,000 businesses in New York state. About 14,000 housing units have been repaired so far through New York City's Rapid Repairs program. In New Jersey, 346,000 housing units were destroyed or damaged, and 190,000 businesses affected. Nearly 18,000 households have received aid for repairs from FEMA.

**"This is a war zone down here still," said Donna Graziano, who has been running a 24-hour relief hub near the beach on Staten Island in a tiny white tent heated by a generator. "This looks no better than it did three months ago."**

[3 Months after Hurricane Sandy](#)

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**Next Newsletter: March 1, 2013**



*Hurricane Sandy damage*

### Man Faces Large Penalties in Asbestos Case

A Lumberton man faces up to 30 years in federal prison and a \$1.5 million fine after a jury Friday found him guilty of conspiring with another contractor to illegally remove and dispose of asbestos. The men removed a boiler and pipes insulated with the toxic substance to dodge the expense of proper abatement.

Gene Cornell Smith, 43, also was found guilty of five Clean Air Act charges.

"There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. Its unsafe disposal endangers human health," said David G. McLeod Jr., special agent in charge of EPA's criminal enforcement program in Pennsylvania. "Today's guilty verdict demonstrates that anyone who tries to save money by breaking the law will pay the consequences."

[Burlco Man Faces Large Penalties in Asbestos Case](#)

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#### Quick Links:

**Website:** <http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

**Members:**  
<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/members.html>

**Position Statement:**  
[http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN\\_position statement Revised 12 17 2012.pdf](http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN_position_statement_Revised_12_17_2012.pdf)

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