

Cancer cluster families speak out

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Whether they lost a son, daughter, grandson or loved one to cancer, the Sandusky County families that packed into Fremont Ross High School's gym Monday night say they just want answers to what caused the release of toxins into their soil, drinking water and living spaces.

The majority of residents who showed up for the Eastern Sandusky County Cancer Cluster meeting were from Clyde, but Steve Keller and his wife, Nancy, said they live in Oak Harbor and were there on behalf of their late grandson.

The Kellers' grandson, Kole, died from cancer at the age of 6. Like the other families at Monday's meeting, the Kellers said they're still looking for answers.

"We don't want any of you to go through what we went through with our grandson," Nancy Keller said.

Attorney Alan Mortensen is representing the families that appeared at Monday's cancer cluster meeting in a class action lawsuit against Whirlpool Corp. Mortensen asked the audience if there were any official representatives from the company, which employs at least 3,000 people at its Clyde plant, but no one responded.

Mortensen reviewed the extended struggle the families had gone through in trying to get answers from government agencies as to why their children were developing cancer and other illnesses related to what they believe were chemicals dumped at Whirlpool Park and 13 other dump sites in Clyde and surrounding areas.

He noted that in 2009, parents were told by Ohio State University researchers there was a 95 percent possibility that the cancer cluster was caused by external forces.

"Having this many children with cancer in a small town like Clyde, this just doesn't happen," Mortensen said.

Mortensen and other speakers at Monday's meeting went to great lengths to point out that they attempted to seek answers through state and federal agencies before resorting to legal action.

He said he felt that government agencies, particularly the state's health department, had let residents down with their inaction in investigating the causes of the cancer cluster.

The attorney said it wasn't his intention or the families' to make Clyde a ghost town or put the Whirlpool plant out of business.

Clyde resident Dave Hisey stood with his daughter, Sierra, and asked the audience to visualize 40 beds with sick children behind him on the gymnasium floor. Hisey said some of the beds would be empty now, with some of the children succumbing to cancer.

He said he and other parents who joined the class action lawsuit weren't money grubbers.

"We work hard. We give back. We're just looking for answers," Hisey said.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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