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## Local Pesticide Update

by Gwen Stahnke, Area Agronomist, TRU GREEN

On March 19th at 9:30 a.m., the League of Women Voters of Barrington, Illinois, held a panel discussion on the use of pesticides in the environment. The panel was prompted by the concern over the proposed Wauconda legislation dealing with the posting of signs and pesticide usage. At this point, it is a search for facts about pesticides being used and their safety. The panel consisted of Ms. Judy Beck, the Community Relations Co-ordinator of the U.S. EPA Super Fund in Illinois and Wisconsin, Ms. Sheri Roethlis Blass, Agronomist for Tempo 21 in Wheeling, Illinois, and Board member of the McHenry Defenders, and Mr. Lou Marchi, a retired chemist. Each panel member was given a half hour to present their viewpoints.

Judy Beck gave an overview of the EPA since its founding in 1970 during the Agronomic boom. She also spoke about what the Super Fund is, does, and some of the proposed investigations into ground water areas.

Sheri Blass spoke on the responsible use of pesticides and pointed out how many of the actual facts have been overpowered by the public's fear of pesticides and emotional issues. She handed out four informative pieces of literature on lawn care and the types of chemicals which are commonly used. An emphasis was placed on how within the last 45 years of our life spans have increased by 25% and crop production has increased. Part of this is because of the wise use of pesticides within our environment. In looking at a specific example of home lawns, it was estimated that 15 to 20% of all lawns used pesticides, and that if no pesticides were used, in 5 to 7 years, weeds and insects could spread over most of the lawns.

The final speaker, Mr. Lou Marchi, has been in the chemical industry for 54 years. He began his update on pesticides by defining pesticides as economic poisons. Examples were given of studies showing that each cigarette smoked shortens a life by 8.3 minutes, and how painters breathing paint fumes every day lived 11 years less than other people. He charged the EPA with the task of doing studies on the effects of pesticides shortening our lives.

There was a brief discussion afterwards, but no official debate. From the questions asked by the 25 people in attendance, there is a genuine concern and a need for knowledge on the part of the public about pesticides. There are people who have pesticide or petrochemical sensitivities which we need to be aware of and work with them, but it should be done in a feasible manner. Thus far, the lawn care companies and pest control operators who are already required to be licensed by the state, but are fairly visible to the public, have been the target of legislation. However, the private homeowner can apply these chemicals with no training and no license at all. The Wauconda legislation does not touch on this subject.

The surrounding suburbs, the state, and the nation are watching the outcome of the Wauconda issue very closely. Similar issues are currently in question in Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Maryland and other states. The MGCSA has supported the PPPF in the legislative battle against the Wauconda ordinance, and can give further support by being aware of the issues in your community and promoting public knowledge on the safe use of pesticides on your golf course or home lawn care.

**[The Wauconda hearing date is June 21st].**