

My name is Rose Saltalamacchia, I live at 176 Claremont Ave. I grew up here, left while I studied sociology and environmental studies in college, and since graduating and volunteering for a year, I've moved back to Verona.

Verona Mayor, Council Members and Town Manager:

Many Verona residents have raised serious concerns regarding the use of pesticides in the past. Our playing fields can be effectively maintained without lawn pesticides: None are used at Verona Park or at our four public elementary schools.

But since 2010 synthetic pesticides are still being applied on Verona public fields and our middle and high schools. These pesticides include chemicals rated by the EPA to have the highest levels of toxicity. These chemicals have been linked in scientific studies to an increased risk of cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, birth defects, and reproductive problems. Pesticides are not safe; in fact it is a violation of U.S. Federal law to claim pesticides are safe even when used as directed.

Closing the fields during pesticide applications does not solve the problem. Research shows that more than 95 % of applied pesticides miss their target, reaching nearby people, wildlife, waterways, soil and air instead. Pesticides can easily be tracked inside homes and schools and become sources of repeated exposure. They can also leach into groundwater supplies. Verona gets its water from wells.

The December 2012 report from the American Academy of Pediatrics outlines the harmful effects of pesticides on children and calls for the use of the least toxic methods of pest control, which rely on alternative, yet effective, practices such as aerating the soil, overseeding, and adding compost rather than using chemicals.

This problem is so serious that many states and towns have already banned pesticides at schools and public fields, except for in the case of public health emergencies. Here in New Jersey, the majority of the legislature (which includes over 60 bipartisan legislators) signed on to co-sponsor the Safe Playing Fields Act. This legislation would prohibit the use of most lawn pesticides on public, private school and recreational fields. Toxic conventional synthetic pesticides should be allowed only in case of an immediate threat to public health. Not for the sake of cosmetic appearances.

A similar legislation was adopted in New York and Connecticut. The Essex County Environmental Commission and the Verona Environmental Commission recently passed resolutions urging New Jersey legislators to pass the Safe Playing Fields Act.

But we cannot just sit and wait for this legislation to pass. That is why the Verona Environmental commission invited Verona residents to sign a petition during this year's Fair In The Square and over 200 people signed it, including myself. I would like to give you a copy of the petition and signatures. The petition reads:

**We, the undersigned Verona residents, respectfully request the Verona Board of Education and the Verona Township Council to prohibit the use of toxic synthetic lawn pesticides where children play on school grounds and public sport fields in Verona Township.**

PAGE 1