

Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children

c/o Judge Baker Children's Center
53 Parker Hill Avenue, Boston, MA 02120-3225
617-278-4282 ~ 617-232-7343 (fax)
www.commercialexploitation.org

David Messersmith, President
Chris Branscome, Director of Marketing
US Youth Soccer
1717 Firman Drive, Suite 900
Richardson, TX 75081

Dear Mr. Messersmith and Mr. Branscome,

We are writing to express our concern over the corporate sponsorship agreement between TruGreen/ChemLawn and US Youth Soccer (USYS). We feel strongly that the harm to children and families from this agreement outweighs any financial benefit for USYS.

As part of this promotion, TruGreen/ChemLawn sent a mailer addressed to the “family of” children who are members of US Youth Soccer - presumably after getting each child’s home address from USYS. The mailing, which features pictures of a young boy playing soccer and a soccer ball, features the US Youth Soccer logo and mentions five times that TruGreen/ChemLawn will donate a percentage of each purchase to USYS.

Children are more likely to read a mailing that has their name listed in the addressee line. In addition, pictures of soccer and US Youth Soccer logo are likely to pique the interest of young soccer players. Clearly, TruGreen/ChemLawn wants to enlist children as allies to ask or nag their parents for lawn services so that any parent who chooses not hire ChemLawn will be viewed by their children as not caring about youth soccer. To put it simply, TruGreen/Chem/Lawn marketers want to make it as hard as possible for parents to say no.

And why would parents want to say no to TruGreen/ChemLawn’s services? Because like so much that is marketed to or through children, ChemLawn’s pesticides can be harmful to them. Studies have linked lawn pesticides to birth defects, liver and kidney damage, and neurological disorders.^[i] Young children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to the toxic effects of lawn chemicals^[ii]; the use of pesticides has been linked to an increased risk of childhood illnesses including non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, brain cancer, and leukemia.^[iii] Of the three active ingredients in ChemLawn’s popular Tri-Power system, two (MCPA and Mecoprop-P) are possibly carcinogenic; the third (Dicamba) is classified by the Pesticide Action Network as a developmental and reproductive toxin.^[iv]

Children’s love of soccer should not be exploited to market toxic products. With this in mind, we recommend the US Youth Soccer do the following:

- 1) Protect children’s health by not renewing their sponsorship agreement with ChemLawn when the current agreement expires in December, 2004.
- 2) Protect children’s privacy by refusing to share their contact information with TruGreen/ChemLawn and other corporate sponsors.
- 3) Refrain from working with corporate partners whose products and/or practices may cause harm to children.

Sincerely,

Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children (www.commercialexploitation.org)
Action Coalition for Media Education (www.acmecoalition.org)
Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment (www.peaceeducators.org)
Dads and Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org)
Family and Home Network (www.FamilyAndHome.org)
Kids Can Make a Difference (www.kidscanmakeadifference.org)
The Media Center at Judge Baker Children's Center (www.jbcc.harvard.edu)
The Motherhood Project (www.americanvalues.org)
School Mediation Associates (www.schoolmediation.com)
Teacher's Resisting Unhealthy Entertainment (www.truceteachers.org)
Beyond Pesticides (www.beyondpesticides.org)
California Safe Schools (www.calisafe.org)
Children's Health Environmental Coalition (www.chechnet.org)
Clean Water Action (www.cleanwateraction.org)
Coalition for Environmentally Safe Schools
Commercial Alert (www.commercialalert.org)
Environment and Human Health, Inc (www.ehhi.org)
Generation Green (www.generationgreen.org)
The Green Decade Coalition/Newton (www.greendecade.org)
HealthLink (www.healthlink.org)
Healthy Schools Network, Inc. (www.healthyschools.org)
Healthy Kids: The Key to Basics (www.healthy-kids.info)
Jesse's Project (www.headlice.org/jesseproject)
Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association (www.masspta.org)
Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition (www.mbcc.org)
Maryland Pesticide Network (www.mdpestnet.org)
Natural Landscapes Project (www.naturallandscapes.org)
New Jersey Environmental Federation (<http://www.cleanwateraction.org/njef>)
Toxics Action Center (www.toxicsaction.org)
Vermont Public Interest Research Group (www.vpirg.org)

[i] K. Machera. Common Birth Defects Increase After Pesticide Exposure. *Bulletin of Environmental Contamination Toxicology*, 54:363-369, 1995; Beyond Pesticides, Health Effects of 36 Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides, updated 2002.

[ii] US EPA, Office of the Administrator, Environmental Health Threats to Children, EPA 175-F-96-001, September 1996

[iii] Zahm, S.H., Ward, M.H., Pesticides and Childhood Cancer, *Environmental Health Perspective*. 106 Suppl 3: 893-908 1998

[iv] http://www.pesticideinfo.org/Detail_Product.jsp?REG_NR=00022800301&DIST_NR=071902