

# FOR THE RECORD

## A healthy effort

Sometimes it seems the environmental movement suffers from the amount of attention focused on the arcane rules and regulations that envelop it. With all the talk about Superfund, spills and storage tanks, it's easy to forget that public health issues are even involved.

That perception could be changing. This month, officials at Milwaukee's Sixteenth Street Community Health Center announced that \$500,000 in federal, state and local funding have been provided for a new environmental health program at the center. The biggest portion of the funding is coming from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Justice in Washington, D.C.

According to John Bartkowski, chief executive officer of the Sixteenth Street Center, the program's goal is to "learn what is out there that is potentially hazardous and what to do about it."

The use of computer technology, including the Internet, is to play a key role in the program. The Internet will provide access to a number of government-sponsored databases, including the Toxic Release Inventory collected by the EPA. That information will be used to help develop a computer mapping system that will be used to track environmental hazards by census tract.

In addition, outreach workers funded by the program will mount a door-to-door effort to identify lead and asbestos hazards in homes within a two-square-mile area around the center. Once identified, workers will provide residents with information to help them reduce the risks of those hazards.

By assembling thorough data, the center will have the opportunity to identify those who are at the greatest risk of environmental exposure, Bartkowski said. The data also will improve the ability of the center's physicians to diagnose the symptoms of environmental illnesses.

"The environmental causes of symptoms are apt to be the last thing a physician would think of," Bartkowski said.

The Sixteenth Street Community Health Center is at 1032 S. 16th St., Milwaukee. The telephone number is 672-1353.

—Mike Dries