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## **Environmental Resource Council taking shape**

By Krista Duhon  
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"Miami Moving Forward," the long-range planning effort of the city of Miami, has spawned a project which organizers say will be a resource of reliable environmental information concerning Miami and Ottawa County.

Susan Waldron, public health educator for the Ottawa County Health Department, is assembling a group of individuals who together will become the Miami Environmental Resource Council — a group of "key people" she says will work together to dispel the myths and validate the facts about the Tar Creek Superfund Site and its effects on Miami and the surrounding area.

"This is not an advocacy group," Waldron said. "This is about gathering, validating and publishing data with identified sources."

It is Waldron's hope the council's findings will become a resource for the city's decision makers and a place where they can retrieve accurate information researched thoroughly by people who seek answers from "the people who know the answers."

"It is hard to make an informed decision if you don't have all the facts you need," Waldron said. "We want to provide that service and we want to get factual information out into the public."

So far, Waldron has enlisted the help of area Native American tribes, Eagle Picher, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Ottawa County Health Department and the city of Miami, but says she is still looking for people who can provide a resource.

"This could be a labor intensive job," Waldron said. "We need people who will research, make phone calls, find information, document resources — it is scientific method, not opinion."

Initially, the council will address their own questions.

"The issue of the lead on the school grounds and the conflict between teachers and administration over lead testing results on campus could very well be one of those issues we begin with," Waldron said. "We may ask 'Was the testing done according to guidelines?' 'Were there any mistakes made?' But, we will also look at the source of the complaint to see what prompted their actions. Did the complainants go too far? And, if so, we need to find out why."

According to Waldron, Miami needs to have "one voice."

"If we argue with each other over things that may or may not be true, we will never move forward," Waldron said. "And, if we continue to argue, we will still be arguing when EPA has moved on and is no longer interested in helping Miami. We need to come together."

Recruiting continues for the council which meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m. in the Civic Center.

"The resource council wants all the things the city wants ... economic development, beautification, we want our city to grow," Waldron said. "Now is the time for action — while we still have some funds and a chance to voice our needs."

For more information, contact Waldron at 540-2481.