



## Children and Toxic Chemicals

By Joyce Stein, RN, BSN

Do you know what chemicals / products are used in the manufacturing process for this rubber duck? This was the focus of Michigan's Network for Children's Environmental Health on Earth Day this past April. Individual states are taking the initiative to expose the usage of harmful chemicals in toys and other children's products. Michigan is one of those states taking the initiative to promote legislation that will require disclosure by manufacturing companies regarding the chemicals used in the manufacturing of toys sold in that state. (*Michigan's Safe Children's Product Act* )

Advocacy groups such as Michigan's Network for Children's Environmental Health welcome the participation of nurses to help advocate with legislators on health issues. Besides networking with advocacy groups, the internet can be a valuable resource for tracking your state legislative bills. Your state government website can link you to your legislators, legislative bills being introduced and dates of committee hearings being held to discuss health legislation. On the Federal level NANN now has an Advocacy link on their website to help NANN members stay informed on Federal health legislation.

In Michigan, besides promoting the *Safe Children's Product Act* on Earth Day the Michigan Network for Children's Health promoted 2 other pieces of legislation. Approximately 80 people were mobilized to meet with individual legislators and attend a committee hearing on testimony regarding legislation to protect children from environmental hazards. Th 3 Michigan bills are:

**HB 4763 – 4769:** The Children's Safe Products Act would require manufacturers of children's products to be part of a database disclosing the presence of any chemicals of "highest concern" in the products they manufacture for sale in Michigan.

**HB 4699:** A bill to phase out the use of deca-BDE as a flame retardant in mattresses, residential furniture, televisions and computers.

**HB 4402:** A bill to phase out the use of lindane for the treatment of lice except by a physician in his or her office.

It was a very productive day to inform legislators on the importance of protecting our children and the environment. Legislators need to hear what nurses have to say. I encourage all of us to continue to stay informed and be involved.