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## Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning earns national EPA award

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The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and its partners received an award this week from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that recognizes improvements in a community's health and its sense of justice.

The EPA announced that the coalition was one of five national winners of the 2009 Environmental Justice Achievement Award.

"It recognizes an incredible win for this community," said Bryan Hetherington, chief counsel at Empire Justice Center, one of the partners. "Almost 1,000 fewer kids are lead poisoned than there were eight years ago."

In 2000, of the 1,293 children in the county affected by lead poisoning, almost 1,180 were in the city, according to data from the Monroe County Department of Health. In some city schools, one-half of the first-graders were lead poisoned, Hetherington said.

In 2008, there were 363 affected children in the county, 322 of them in the city.

"We're not all the way there yet," Hetherington said.

The award does not come with any money. "We hope to parlay this success into funding," he said. "We need to get the rest of the way there, so that every kid gets to show up at school with all that his or her creator endowed that child with, that their brains are in full working order."

Effectiveness is only one measure for the award. Partnerships, innovation and community involvement also are considered. The award also recognizes collaboration that addresses environmental justice issues or uses the goals of environmental justice to have a positive effect on their community.

The coalition, which has influenced major lead-related public policy, also involves the Monroe County Health Department, the city of Rochester, the University of Rochester and the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency.

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