

The Mahfood Group LLC

By Janice Lane Palko

When it was discovered this past winter that many of the toys imported from China were contaminated with lead, the public was outraged and rightly so. But there may be an ever greater threat lurking closer to home. In fact, the soil on which our homes rest could be cause for concern.

“Many residential developments, schools and playgrounds have been built on land formerly used for farming,” said John J. Mahfood, president of The Mahfood Group, an environmental consulting firm headquartered in Bridgeville. “Historically, when land is converted from agricultural to residential use, it’s common to find traces of pesticides, herbicides, lead and arsenic in the soil.” These chemicals should be addressed by environmental professionals but are most often overlooked by homeowners and land developers. Such oversights can lead to hidden health risks.

Exposure to these chemicals can be hazardous to anyone, but especially children. Children are more susceptible to these soil-related issues, as their bodies are smaller and still developing. Also, children tend to spend a significant amount of recreation time outdoors, resulting in recurrent exposure to potentially contaminated soil.

Older homes not associated with farmland may be at risk as well. “Who really knows what the previous owner did or dumped on the property? Everyone knows about the dangers of interior lead-based paint, but if the previous owner used lead-based exterior paint, there may be some residue in the soil,” Mahfood said.

The Mahfood Group’s Healthy Roots Project promotes education of this under-the-radar topic and offers solutions for homeowners and builders. The Mahfood Group’s soil quality assessment and remediation services can limit chemical exposure and create peace of mind. “We can do pre-build analysis before a residence is constructed, and we can also do post-build on older homes. Obviously, remediation work is easier to address and less costly to do before a structure is built on the soil,” Mahfood said.

In addition to the Healthy Roots Project, which was initiated in 2007, The Mahfood Group offers a variety of environmental and management services for clients in a wide variety of industry segments. It is The Mahfood Group’s mission to bring together the many environmental disciplines to perform “Green Development.”

For more information on The Mahfood Group and the Healthy Roots Project, visit the website at www.themahfoodgroup.com or call 412-221-5056. ▲