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[A Chemical Reaction: Launch One in Your Town](#)

Fri, Feb 26, 2010

[A Chemical Reaction Movie](#)



Thanks to our partnership with [Seventh Generation](#), an overall growing awareness of the dangers of pesticides, and the onset of the lawn and garden season, the traffic to our web site and this blog is at an all-time high. The most common question right now to my personal Inbox is “How do we get the movie to play in our town?”

That answer is simple, really: Make it happen!

SafeLawns.org is a small organization and we don't have the staff to organize screenings by ourselves, so we rely on individuals and groups from cities and towns and across North America to help us get the movie out there. We also don't yet have a so-called “distribution deal” with a studio and we've decided to not wait around for that to happen. So far the pull from motivated anti-pesticide advocates has been amazing, if not overwhelming, and we're having a blast with the ride. So if you want to bring the film, A Chemical Reaction, to your town, here's a checklist:

THE BASICS

- 1) Pick a date. Try to avoid major competing events in the same town. Perhaps, however, you can find a compatible event such as a flower show where people are already congregating for a similar

reason.

2) Pick a day and time. There's lots of debate on this one about what's better: weeknights, weekends, or weekend afternoons. The general consensus is that Wednesday and Thursday evenings around 7 are great — except for people with very young children. Weekend nights can run into social conflicts. Sunday afternoons have been really popular. One note: children really seem to like the movie and come away full of questions about how their own lawns and parks are treated, or not, with chemicals.

3) Who are the other potential stakeholders? In other words, who is interested in helping promote the movie? Look for: garden clubs, church groups, watershed associations, conservation groups, universities, Cooperative Extensions, organic food stores and co-ops etc. Parent-teacher associations are excellent. These are the people who are really motivated to make the world a better place for kids. It's a good idea to find at least a couple of collaborators right from the start; others will join in later.

4) Pick a venue. So far we've shown the film everywhere from the massive Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, to a church basement in Concord, N.H., and everywhere in between. Basically anywhere a DVD can be played, the movie can be screened. As filmmakers, we love theaters. Nothing beats it. But college auditoriums work great and are often less expensive. Community halls are fine, though the PA and lighting can sometimes be challenging.

5) Assess your equipment. In 25 or so screenings, we've already had a few horror stories about DVD players that didn't work, or PA systems that sounded muffled, or even lights that couldn't be shut off due to timers. Try to test all this in advance of the big night.

THE PROMOTION

This is always tougher than people think. Almost universally, excited local folks think that drawing hundreds of people to a movie is going to be a piece of cake. It's not, ever. Here are a few keys:

1) The Initial Notice. Get the notice of the film screening to the local magazines and newspapers absolutely as soon as possible for their calendars of events. Many of these folks have long lead times.

2) Who Knows Who? Many communities have local gardening writers or radio hosts who are accessible. Are there other television hosts or newspaper reporters who might cover the arrival of the movie in advance? Prior coverage is more essential than post coverage and a well-timed article or TV piece can literally put dozens if not hundreds of extra eyeballs on the screen.

3) Social Networking. These days Facebook, Twitter and all the on-line stuff really does work. Old-fashioned networking is critical, too. Plan a girls' night out prior to the movie with a group of a half dozen friends. Post a notice wherever people congregate in your town.

4) Posters and Postcards. We will provide electronic support with images that can be customized for your use. Larger posters in key areas are great, but creating something that can hang on the refrigerator is essential, too.

5) An Email Campaign and Web Sites. All of your stakeholders know people and probably have lists. Leverage all these. Ask people to post the event on their web sites and blogs. A good rule of thumb is to email people three times: one month out, one week out and two days out.

6) Mailing Lists. A direct-mail campaign for a one-time movie event can be cost prohibitive, but take a look at any mailing lists that exist within your circle of stakeholders. You'll probably find a few people worth buying a stamp for.

7) Door Hangers. If there is a neighborhood where you suspect chemicals are being used and abused, consider a door hanger campaign asking: "Is Your Lawn Safe for Your Children?" with a notice of the movie. They may not come to the film, but they'll see the message. Note: Check with your town hall to see if door hangers are legal; some municipalities have ordinances against these.

MAKING IT UNIQUE

It's fine to have a screening for 20 people and call it good. There's nothing inherently wrong with that at all. To create a buzz in your town that could lead to real change — a bylaw, an ordinance or just a change in your neighbors' behavior with regard to pesticides — then it's a good idea to turn the movie screening into a must-see event. Here's how:

1) Find Local Sponsors. In Burlington, Vt., the local organizers signed on Ben & Jerry's, Seventh Generation, Gardeners Supply and Green Mountain Coffee as sponsors — which gave them a budget and access to mailing lists instantly. While not every town has iconic sponsor potential like

Burlington, most towns do have businesses who are socially and environmentally conscious.

2) Hold a Networking Reception. For an hour prior to the film, invite your sponsors and stakeholders to set up tables. Invite local restaurants and food stores to set up booths. INVITE THE MAYOR, the town manager, the local elected officials. This is essential. Get a few key folks to commit early so you can use their names to draw others.

3) Plan a Panel Discussion. After the film, when the audience is still captive, pick three or four articulate members of the stakeholder community to talk about the issues just presented in the film. Remember, this isn't just about lawn pesticides. The film covers community action, the Precautionary Principle, state pre-emption laws, homeowners' rights, health and the environment. Ideal panelists include: doctors, elected officials, lawn care professionals, local activists. The panel can be as big a draw, if not more, than the movie.

THE FINANCES

A "home" screening for up to 20 people costs \$30. Other fee structures depending on audience size can be found at <http://www.safelawns.org/chemical-reaction/>. If you would like to have activist/film producer Paul Tukey or the film's director, [Brett Plymale](#), in attendance, we do charge an honorarium plus expenses to cover our travel, lodging and meals.

In some cases for state "premieres" of the film, we will work partnerships with groups that involves a split of revenue after expenses. Simply email me if you'd like to begin talking about something like this. In general, for a premiere type event, we're usually hoping for an audience of 200 more more. And whether your event is large or small, we will post the event on our web site, send along handouts and help you promote it as best we can.

Showing the film is an amazing tool. So, as I said already . . . if you're motivated, make it happen!

Share and Enjoy:



This post was written by:

[Paul Tukey](#) - who has written 347 posts on [Safelawns Daily Post and Q&A Blog](#).

Contact the author

One Response to “A Chemical Reaction: Launch One in Your Town”



Alyssa Owens Says:

[February 27th, 2010 at 1:46 pm](#)

Thanks for providing the information about A Chemcial Reaction dvd's; great timing! I wish I had known about the rentals a year ago. It is more and more important to get out there and inform. Anyone who visits this site should make it a goal to educate. By acting on a local, smaller scale, we can begin the process and make it easier for lawmakers to help ban Cosmetic Lawn Chemicals.

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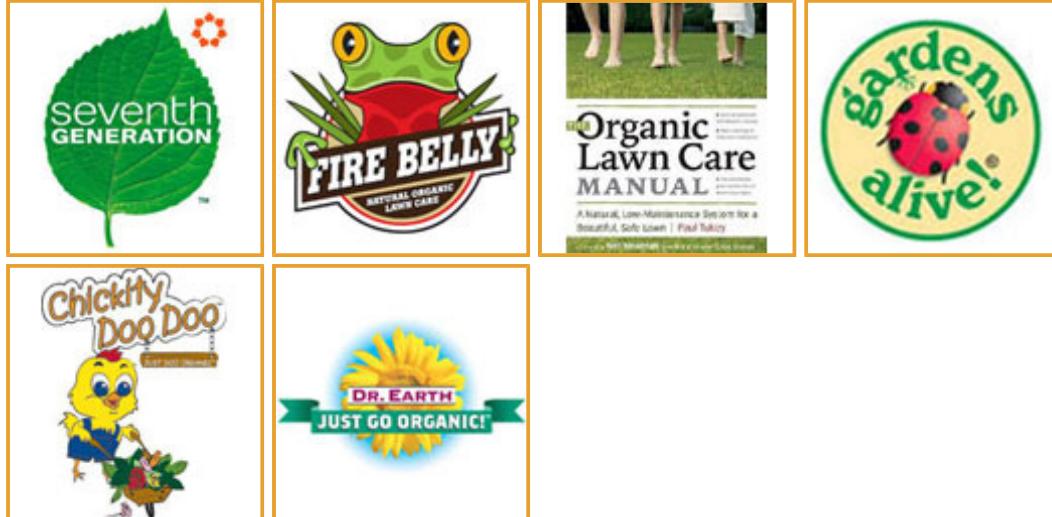
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