

Thee Newspaper



Gocelin Lopez, 5, swings near Crestwood water tower. For years, the village boasted that it had the cheapest water rates in Cook County.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

POISON IN THE WELL

Crestwood officials cut corners, suppling residents with tainted

By Michael Hawthorne
Staff Reporter

Like every town across the nation, south suburban Crestwood tucks a notice into utility bills each summer reassuring residents their drinking water is safe. Town leaders also trumpet the claim in their monthly newsletter, while boasting they offer the cheapest water rates in the county.

But those pronouncements hide a troubling reality: For more than two decades, the 11,000 or so residents in this working class community unknowingly drank tap water contaminated with toxic chemicals linked to cancer and other health problems, a Newspaper investigation found.

As village officials were building a national reputation for pinching pennies, and sending out fliers proclaiming Crestwood water was “Good to taste but not to waste!,” state and village records obtained by the newspaper show they secretly were drawing water from a contaminated well, apparently to save money.

Officials kept using the well even though state environmental officials told them at least 22 years ago that dangerous chemi-

cals related to a dry-cleaning solvent had oozed into the water, records show.

The village avoided scrutiny by telling state regulators in 1986 that they would get all of their tap water from Lake Michigan, and would use the well only in an emergency. But records show Crestwood kept drawing well water on a routine basis—relying on it for up to 20 percent of the village’s water supply some months.

The well wasn’t shut off for good until December 2007, after the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency tested the water for the first time in more than 20 years.

The agency found not only that the well was still contaminated but that Crestwood had been piping the water, untreated, to residents.

Since then, the EPA has cited Crestwood twice for violating environmental laws, yet has failed to notify people who drank the well water for years. The agency continues to investigate, and Illinois

“
YOU WOULD EXPECT THEM TO TELL THEIR CONSTITUENTS WHAT’S IN THE WATER THEY’RE DRINKING.
— SENATE PRESIDENT
”

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9/11 Defense secretary overrides agreement for 9/11

Deal would have spared 3 defendants of the death penalty

By Ellen Knickmeyer
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Friday overrode a plea agreement reached earlier this week for the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and two other defendants, reinstating them as death-penalty cases.

The move comes two days after the military commission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, announced that the official appointed to oversee the war court, retired Brig. Gen. Susan Escallier, had approved plea deals with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and two accused accomplices, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi, in the attacks.

Letters sent to families of the nearly 3,000 people killed in the al-Qaida attacks said the plea agreement stipulated the three would serve life sentences at most.

Austin wrote in an order released Friday night that “in light of the significance of the decision,” he had decided that the authority to make a decision on accepting the plea agreements was his. He nullified Escallier’s approval.

Some families of the attack’s victims condemned the deal for cutting off any possibility of full trials and possible death penalties. Republicans were quick to fault the Biden administration for the deal, although the White House said after it was announced it had no knowledge of it.

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a member of the Armed Services Committee, earlier Friday had condemned the plea deal on social media as “disgraceful.” Cotton said he had introduced legislation that would mandate the 9/11 defendants face trial and the possibility of

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BUISNESS: WALMART

Walmart shifts to a local scope

Giant retailer announces initiative to focus on locally grown produce

By Bruce Kirby
Business Writer

Wal-Mart Stores announced a program on Thursday that would focus on sustainable agriculture among its suppliers, as it tries to expand its efforts to improve environmental efficiency among its suppliers.

The program is intended to put more locally grown food in Wal-Mart stores in the United States, invest in training and infrastructure for small and medium-size farmers, particularly in emerging markets, and begin to measure the efficiency of large suppliers in growing and getting their produce to market.

Given that Wal-Mart is the world’s largest grocer, with one of the biggest supply chains, any changes that it makes would have wide implications.



Jack Sinclair, Walmart Executive Vice President for U.S. Grocery, holds a pepper grown by Mike Pirrone Produce of Capac, Mich., at a Walmart.

Wal-Mart’s decision five years ago to set sustainability goals that, among other things, increased its reliance on renewable energy and reduced packaging waste among its supplies, sent broad ripples through product manufacturers. Large companies like Procter & Gamble redesigned packages that are now carried by other retailers, while Wal-Mart’s measurements of environmental efficiency among its suppliers helped define how they needed to change.

“No other retailer has the ability to make more of a difference than Wal-Mart,” the retailer’s president and chief executive, Michael T. Duke, said in remarks prepared for a meeting Thursday morning. “Grocery is more than half of Wal-Mart’s busi-

ness. Yet only four of our 39 public sustainability goals address food.”

Wal-Mart said it expected to meet the goals by the end of 2018.

In the United States, Wal-Mart plans to double the percentage of locally grown produce, to 9 percent. Wal-Mart defines local produce as that grown and sold in the same state. Still, the program is far less ambitious than in some other countries — in Canada, for instance, Wal-Mart expects to buy 30 percent of produce locally by the end of 2019, and, when local produce is available, increase that to 100 percent.

In emerging markets, Wal-Mart has pledged to sell \$1 billion of food from small and medium farmers (which it defines as farmers with fewer than

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JAMES EARL JONES

Hailed actor dies at age 93

Voice of Darth Vader starred on stage and screen for 6 decades, earning many awards

By Robert D. McFadden
New York Times News Service

James Earl Jones, a stuttering farm child who became a voice of rolling thunder as one of America’s most versatile actors in a stage, film and television career that plumbed race relations, Shakespeare’s rhapsodic tragedies and the faceless menace of Darth Vader, died on Monday at his home in Dutchess County, N.Y. He was 93.

The office of his agent, Barry McPherson, confirmed the death in a statement.

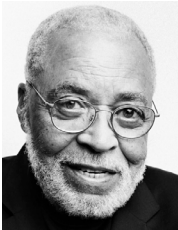
From destitute days working in a diner and living in a \$19-a-month cold-water flat, Jones climbed to Broadway and Hollywood stardom with talent, drive and remarkable vocal cords. He was abandoned as a child by his parents, raised by a racist grandmother and mute for years in his stutterer’s shame, but he learned to speak again with a herculean will. All had much to do with his success.

So did plays by Howard Sackler and August Wilson that let a young actor explore racial hatred in the national experience; television soap

operas that boldly cast a Black man as a doctor in the 1960s; and a decision by George Lucas, the creator of “Star Wars,” to put an anonymous, rumbling African American voice behind the grotesque mask of the galactic villain Vader.

The rest was accomplished by Jones himself: a prodigious body of work that encompassed scores of plays, nearly 90 television network dramas and episodic series, and some 120 movies. They included his voice work, much of it uncredited, in the original “Star Wars” trilogy, in the credited voice-over of Mufasa in “The Lion King,” Disney’s 1994 animated musical film, and in his reprise of the role in Jon Favreau’s computer-animated remake in 2019.

Jones was no matinee idol, like



James Earl Jones refused many stereotypical roles. (Jesse Dittmar/Getty Images)

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