

Bottled water presents health, environmental, pocketbook risks

■ MAX HAYS

Staff Reporter

It is a common misconception that bottled water is clean and safe when compared to water that comes from the tap. In fact, one fourth of the time, bottled water is just tap water in a bottle. If the label of the bottle says the water is "from a municipal source" or "from a community water system" then the bottled water you paid for is no more than tap water. It may not even be as clean as West Linn's water and costs nearly 4,000 times the price.

Bottled water can also be a health risk. In a recent study by an environmental advocacy group, 38 different chemicals were found in the ten bottled water brands they tested. Some contained caffeine, fertilizer and even the radioactive element strontium. The plastic bottles also pose a health risk. The plastic contains chemicals called phthalates that can disrupt testosterone and other hormones.

According to the National Resource Defense Council a study found that bottled water stored for ten weeks contained phthalates, leading researchers to believe that the chemicals came from the plastic container. There are regulations for phthalates in tap water, but strangely there are none for

bottled water. Even though some of these chemicals are found in tap water, they should not be in water that we are often paying several dollars for.

The best health,

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Richard Craghead, custodian

environmental and money-saving option might be to purchase stainless steel water bottles or water bottles that are bisphenol (BPA) free and refill them using West Linn tap water, unfiltered or filtered according to Jim Hartmann, environmental science teacher. He does caution, however, that you know where your water is coming from as Wilsonville residents are drinking water taken from the Willamette River which prior to treatment contains a long list of

chemicals and pollutants.

In West Linn, the tap water comes from the Clackamas River. If people knew about where their tap water was coming from, they would be more willing to drink water from the tap as opposed to bottled water which could be more harmful

to them and to the environment according to Hartmann.

Although water bottles are recyclable, they often find their way into the landfill. In 2006, the state of California

alone had 18 million gallons of water shipped in from Fiji, creating 2,500 tons of global warming pollution. In 2005, nearly two million tons of plastic water bottles were thrown into landfills instead of being recycled.

At WLHS, only one eighth of water bottles are recycled according to Richard Craghead, custodian. The majority of the water bottles that are thrown away are

found on the athletic fields and in the gyms, or in other places where there are no bins for recycling such as in the halls.

Although the school has recycling bins in most classrooms, there is always more that can be done to improve the amount of water bottles that are recycled according to William Ray, Head Custodian.

"There needs to be a real awareness about where to recycle and what goes in the recycling," Craghead said. In order to recycle water bottles, they must be cleaned out, the neck of the bottle must be smaller than the body of the water bottle and the cap must be removed and thrown away.

If there were more recycling bins on the fields and in the gym's, it would help encourage students to use these recycling bins and reduce the amount of water bottles that find the trash.

War over water? How water prices might start looking like gas prices

■ CHRISTOPHER ERBIN

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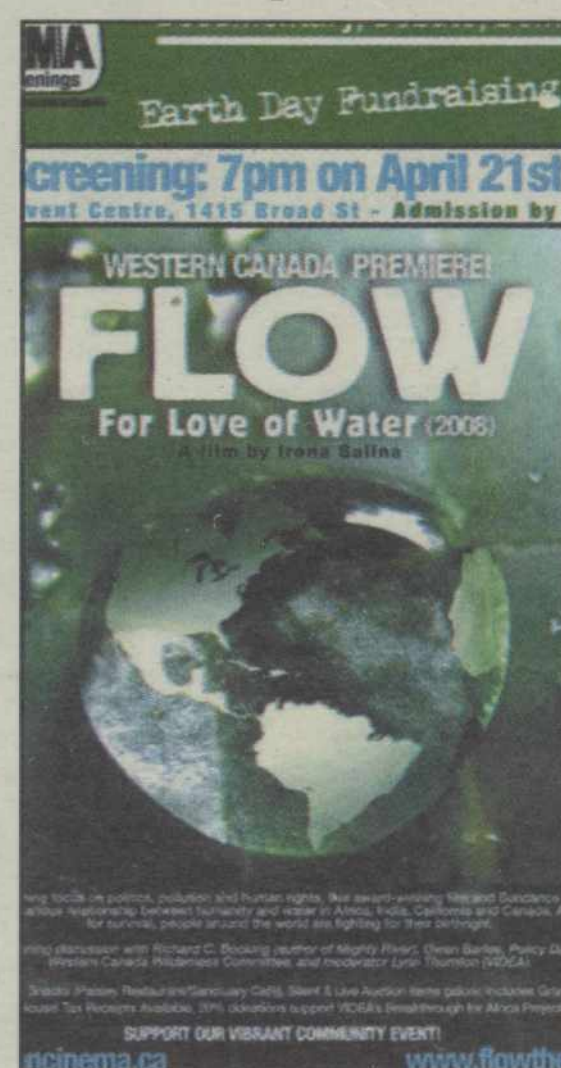
Gas prices are down at the moment, but prices on a much more vital resource are soaring upward. As if we didn't have enough to worry about, it has become evident to research experts around the world that the global supply of clean water is quickly running out, and soon, even the wealthiest countries such as the United States, will be paying ridiculous amounts of money for a resource we simply cannot live without.

"Flow" is a documentary film that was screened in Portland during the first two weeks of October. Multiple classes took field trips to see the film to educate students on the world's dwindling clean water supply. Among the classes that viewed the film were Jim Hartmann's AP Environmental Science and Jonathan Davies' biology classes.

In short, the documentary is an investigation into what experts label to be the most important political and environmental issue of the 21st Century—the World Water Crisis. The film builds a case on the growing problem of the world's dwindling fresh water supply with an

unflinching focus on politics, pollution, human rights, and the emergence of a possible world water cartel.

The film opens with a



shot of various Middle East water pools, billboard images for polluted water, and information which relates that water-borne diseases kill more people annually than any of the hundreds of wars being fought around the world. The film goes on to explain that these extreme water hazards are not only affecting developing countries, but also the more predominant world powers, including the U.S.

"Flow" makes it clear that the war for water has already begun in many third world countries. The film examines the bitter, conflicts that erupt when major corporations have tried to privatize water in parts of Bolivia, South Africa and other countries.

While "Flow" identifies many concerns about the dwindling water supply, there is one subject matter that especially relates to WLHS students. One of the most intriguing aspects of the film is the concerns about bottled water, one of the most profitable global products. It is a liquid that turns out to be less regulated and possibly less safe than what comes through the tap. In addition, we're told, society could provide pure water for everyone on the planet for what we pay for the bottled kind. It's something to think about, as is this entire film.

Beyond identifying the problem, "Flow" also gives viewers a look at the people and institutions providing practical solutions to the water crisis and those developing new technologies, which are fast becoming blueprints for a successful global and economic turnaround.

