

Harry J. Baker Community Service Award
Sigma Lambda Gamma – Delta Chapter (UIUC)
M. D. Pelmore and Ebby Cook

[M.D. PELMORE]

Good evening everybody. My name is M.D. Pelmore and (let Ebby introduce himself) and we are members of the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign. That is the campaign that has been working to get the toxic waste site at the corner of 5th & Hill Streets cleaned up for four years.

The past four years have been a real challenge. We took on Ameren when they didn't want to start the clean-up until 2012. We took on the Illinois EPA when they didn't want to force Ameren to do more testing in our neighborhood and we took on the City of Champaign when one of their ordinances was going to let Ameren off the hook for cleaning up their toxic groundwater.

While these challenges were difficult we turned each one of them into a victory. But we couldn't have done it without the help of some wonderful individuals and groups who have really helped us in the fight to protect our neighborhood from toxic waste. Tonight we will be giving an award to a very special group of young people who did just that.

[EBBY COOK]

The 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign first got involved with the Sigma Lambda Gamma – Delta Chapter sorority about a year ago when our good friend and canvasser, Andy Bloeser, spoke with RAH- BEE- YA a member of SLG who took an interest in the campaign. Rabiya spoke with her sisters and they decided to have a meeting with the campaign to figure out how they could help. At this meeting M. D., myself and other members of the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign told SLG how Ameren was trying to get out of cleaning up the toxic waste they were responsible for and how the Illinois EPA was working to protect Ameren's wallet instead of protecting us. The SLG women were outraged and at the end of that meeting decided that they would do whatever they could to help out.

Since that meeting, these young people have held fundraisers that helped pay for the materials that we use to educate people about the campaign, helped us gather petition signatures that called for the repeal of the City of Champaign's groundwater ordinance, and brought 15 of their members out on a cold, snowy day to go door-to-door to turn people out for a very important City Council meeting.

[M.D. PELMORE]

Personally I have been impressed with these young women. They have all taken a real interest in our struggle. Along the way they have asked some great questions, learned a lot and really hit the ground running to help us out.

[EBBY COOK]

I remember when we had a really big meeting with the City Council where we were trying to get them to repeal an ordinance that let Ameren leave their toxic groundwater in our neighborhood. SLG not only helped gather petitions for that meeting and help us turn people out to it, but when I walked through the doors into the council chambers, there was a wall of young women standing there to support us.

These women have shown that they are dedicated and really care. It is for these reasons that tonight we show our heartfelt thanks to the Sigma Lambda Gamma – Delta Chapter by honoring them with the Champaign County Health Care Consumers' Harry J. Baker Community Service Award. Let's give these young women a round of applause!