

VICTORIA DI IORIO

BRINGS HEALTHY LIVING HOME

*Meet this expert at the
forefront of the nontoxic
living movement*

TWO RECENT NEWS STORIES offer evidence that healthy homes and environments are starting to nudge into mainstream level awareness. On Monday, December 9, WABC-TV in New York ran a segment on the fact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) just banned the use of two ubiquitous cancer-causing solvents that activists have targeted for ages. One, trichloroethylene, or TCE, is a cancer-causing chemical that is common in manufacturing and can be found globally in the environment. The other banned chemical is perchloroethylene, or PCE, a solvent used in industries such as dry cleaning, manufacturing, and automobile repair.

In a Wall Street Journal article by Saabira Chaudhuri released on December 14, the issue of endocrine disruptors was covered. From the article: "After months of trying to get pregnant, Kirstie Phillips threw out all her scented candles. She also trashed her body wash, moisturizer, and the scented plug-ins she used in her Suffield, Conn., home.

Phillips, a 30-year-old nurse anesthetist, had always taken for granted that she would conceive easily... [these] endocrine disruptors mimic or block the hormones responsible for many of the body's essential functions, including reproduction. They can be found in everything from plastic packaging and toys to sofa covers and cosmetics."

ENTER THE HEALTHY HOME
INITIATIVE, LLC

Inverness resident Victoria Di Iorio has been in the business of identifying, researching, and consulting others about creating non-toxic environments, particularly in one's home, for more than



The Chang's Healthy Home was covered in the July/August 2021 QB.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF DREAM TEAM PHOTOGRAPHY

Rich and Leeann Chang and children.

15 years. The founder and principal of the Healthy Home Initiative is a passionate speaker and leader for the environmental movement, and many say she is at its forefront.

In 2009, she spearheaded the nation's first Health House™ in partnership with the American Lung Association and Health Child Healthy World. In 2010, she founded the Healthy Home Initiative to create real-life education models to educate, engage, and empower architects, builders, interior designers, and individuals to create healthy environments where children and families can flourish.

Her work has been featured in local and national media outlets. Di Iorio is recognized as an expert in sustainability and green technologies relating to environmental health. Committed to inspiring change through the power of education and applicable solutions, she lives with her husband Anthony and their two children in a Healthy Home by DIOR Builders.

IT STARTS AT HOME

Di Iorio grew up in Tucson, Arizona, noting two major influences in her life; her mother who took an all-natural approach to living and emphasized caring for the earth. Recycling was second nature at home and in the desert, water conservation is di rigueur. Perhaps her first "ah-ha" moment about real food was at school. "It was the time when all the school kids had rolled fruit snacks in their

lunchboxes," she said. "So, I asked my mom to buy some, and after reading the list of ingredients, she said no. Instead, she bought a food dehydrator and made them from real fruit. Ironically, the students then wanted to trade their rolled fruit snacks for mine!"

The next major influential moment occurred while she was pregnant with their daughter. Her husband Anthony became chronically ill and eventually, after much time and lack of remedy, Di Iorio realized it was the toxins in building products causing the illness. (Learn more in his sidebar.)

The third life-changing moment was when Di Iorio learned about Nancy and Jim Chuda's story. "Victoria was searching for better building products and encouraging DIOR Builders to go green," Nancy Chuda told us. "She was also looking for a charity that she could help. That's when she stumbled upon Healthy Child Healthy World and read our story about losing our only daughter due to a rare form a cancer thought to be caused by a pregnant mother's exposure to pesticides. Victoria became a national spokesperson for our charity, Healthy Child Healthy World."

"The Chuda's story shook me to my core," Di Iorio said. "I was very emotional about it, and I realized that this was the charity I wanted to work with. The next day I picked up the phone and called the organization and asked, 'How do we



Victoria Di Iorio and Mariel Hemingway

change the world?"

Today, Di Iorio consults with professionals involved in home building, design, and their sources of materials as well as individuals just wanting to create a healthier environment. The 8th Healthy Home National Showcase coming up in Tucson, Arizona, is in Fall 2025, and the 50 projects she's consulted on in numerous states, have been driven by the homeowner and for some, the builders. We asked several of those clients to share Di Iorio's knowledge and leadership in the pages ahead.



Anthony Di Iorio, DIOR Builders

Anthony Di Iorio Shares His Groundbreaking Journey to Healthy Home Building

DIOR Builders is our family owned, small business company building luxury custom homes. It was founded by my father Peter Di Iorio and was incorporated 45 years ago in 1979. I grew up in the family business helping from when I was young doing whatever was needed from cleaning job sites to landscaping. After graduating from DePaul University in Chicago with a degree in Business Administration, I began working full-time in 1998 in charge of Project and Job Site Management.

I have always been around construction materials; however, I began experiencing negative symptoms in January 2004 at age 30 with repeated bouts of what I thought were allergies but were the result of continuous jobsite material exposure. Throughout the course of Victoria's pregnancy with our first child (Madelyn), I was frequently sick with no resolution from doctors and urgent care visits.

A LIFECHANGING, PIVOTAL MOMENT

One day in late 2004 after opening all the windows to air out a home that was under construction—after the painting and wood flooring was newly finished—I ran back to my car with my eyes burning and full of tears from the fumes in the house.

That was the day when Victoria realized it was the building materials that were making me sick. It took a couple more days for me to admit that she was right, but it was clear to me as I was out of commission with flu-like symptoms again (after being in this house). She already had begun researching what could be causing my reaction.

When we finally built the first Healthy Home in 2009, it was very difficult to find any healthy version of all the materials that goes into a house. Every year since, the options and availability along with the innovation of new product materials coinciding with the green movement and consumer awareness has grown tremendously. It is now easy to find healthier products at every step of the way. With that said, Victoria's research has revealed that "green" products do not equal "healthy" products.

PROFESSIONALS AND HOMEOWNERS TALK ABOUT VICTORIA DI IORIO'S HEALTHY HOME INITIATIVE

NANCY AND JAMES CHUDA

Healthy Child Healthy World Founders

Nancy: Victoria has been an instrumental advocate and leader in the healthy home environment. We met Victoria in 2005 after the completion of our legendary Green Home designed by my husband, architect James Chuda. The Green Home under the "H" of the Hollywood Sign became a designer showcase after it was chosen by Los Angeles Magazine as its Green Design Home of the Year.

Victoria had become a national spokesperson for our charity, Healthy Child Healthy World, and was in the process of completing the first Chicago based Green Home which she undertook from start to finish. Her vision and dedication are to be admired. The values she shares have influenced the mainstream building environment to become more concerned about products that are safer for children and their families.

FRANKIE & CERISA

Greater Chicago Area Residents

Frankie: Kathy Di Iorio called me and said, "You have to see this home." I wasn't looking to buy, but when she showed me all the features such as the denim and cotton insulation, the HEPA filters, the Cambria quartz countertops and naturally anti-microbial knobs, I was sold.

I've been a touring musician for 48 years and living out of hotels, which have terrible air quality, so all the features of the home really spoke to me; the HVAC system is my favorite. The air quality in the home is unbelievable. I also love what we call "the blue room" because it has American Clay walls.

Cerisa: Victoria was extremely helpful in educating us about all the features that create a healthy environment and how to maintain those standards. We

loved the furniture she had chosen for the home, and she helped us obtain the furniture from the vendors that met the strict criteria. Victoria's knowledge about how to create a healthy home is incredible.

The air quality has made a significant difference in our health and well-being. Whenever we go out of town and come back home, we always take a deep breath and say how happy we are to be home and back in our good air.

HEIDI HETZEL

Chicago Resident

Exposure to toxic chemicals years ago severely compromised my health, and led me to adapt to a nontoxic lifestyle, sourcing clean materials with minimal off-gassing.

Years ago, I was exposed to TCE (trichloroethylene) vapor while working for a company that photographed clothing and furniture catalogs. At the time digital [media] was not the norm and I was around very large development tanks housing toxic chemicals and printing materials. I collapsed several years later and became quite ill.

In December 2024, the EPA banned TCE, a cancer-causing chemical that can be found in manufacturing, water sources, and various consumer and commercial uses, including dry cleaning fluids, and automobile repair.

Victoria's vision as founder of the Healthy Home Initiative stems from her desire to educate the public about all aspects of implementing a healthier lifestyle, from the benefits of pasture-raised meat and dairy, organic fruits and vegetables, nontoxic cookware, and water purification, to purchasing GREENGARD Gold Certified products such as mattresses, crib sets, and furniture.

I have learned from her the importance of doing homework on products.

Always read labels, they provide crucial information about a product's content, quality, and safety. If in doubt, contact the company. Products that claim to be nontoxic and sustainable are not necessarily so, and it is imperative that we hold ourselves to a standard that supports human health and the health of our planet.

REBECCA KEITH, MD, OB/GYN

Northwestern Medicine

Victoria is part of the Vanguard of the movement to eliminate environmental hazards in the places we reside. She was researching solutions for healthier homes long before environmental and airborne toxins even started to be discussed seriously in either the medical community or in the public sphere. Her passion for preserving the health of her clients and educating the public has been the fuel for her uphill fight against big business building methods and public ignorance or apathy surrounding such an important health concern. I have always been impressed with Victoria's innovative and creative process that produces beauty within the walls of her homes whilst simultaneously ensuring the health and safety of her clients with what she uses in and behind those beautiful walls. My only regret is that she is still too much of a well-kept secret and that her home-building methods are not yet industry standards as they should be for the health of our communities.

JIM SCHUELLER

Wilmette Resident

Owner, Bloomfield Development Company

I was introduced to Healthy Home and its possibilities for enhancing the wellbeing of my clients through Victoria, my wife's cousin. As owner of Bloomfield Development, a busy custom homebuilder in Chicago and the suburbs, I was excited to work together with Victoria and the Healthy Home Team from the ground up on a new construction single family home in Lincoln Park.

Victoria and I worked together from the very beginning on the Healthy Home we built for my clients in Lincoln Park. She helped me, the architect, and the clients design the home and keep us focused on choosing the brands and materials that would result in a healthier indoor environment.

In my opinion as a homebuilder, Victoria is one of the most knowledgeable people that I know when it comes to building materials and their effects on indoor air quality. She is a great resource.

In our Healthy Home project, Victoria guided us on using a healthier alternative to traditional spray foam insulation. We instead used a product called Hempcrete, which is all natural, non-toxic, and fire resistant. We also used Zero VOC and/or water-based paints, stains, and sealers throughout.

KEDRA PAI

Inverness, Illinois & Boca Raton, Florida

Owner, Dell Anno Home Design & Kedra Chalen Design

I first heard of the concept for a Healthy Home from Victoria and became instantly intrigued. As someone who is on construction sites daily, I was very aware of how I felt the instant I walked onto a site that was not deemed healthy. I have struggled for the past 20 years feeling terrible on job sites.

I have taken a lot of what Victoria has taught me and implemented it on my job sites daily. I continually encourage my clients that small changes make large impacts. Some of my favorite tips that Victoria taught me were to always open the windows in your home every week, even in the winter

months, because it greatly improves the indoor air quality. I no longer allow my contractors to make material cuts on sites. If they are cutting wood or tile, it needs to be done in the garage or outside. One of the most important tips is to not allow anyone to use spray foam insulation in your home. If not installed correctly, it could be dangerous to your health. My favorite tip, as someone who owns cabinet companies, is to make sure my cabinets are CARB II compliant, and finishes are non-toxic so my employees, my clients, and I can breathe easy.

LEEANN CHANG


Modern Healthy Home Barrington

We had been friends with Victoria and Anthony for many years. At the time, we were living in a Mid-century home that we loved and envisioned as our forever home. Building a house—let alone a healthy one—never crossed our minds. When our young daughter began experiencing health issues, it became clear that our older house, with its fumes and hidden mold spores, was aggravating her condition. That prompted us to start searching for a new place to live. As we explored our options, I discovered I had a heightened sensitivity to many of the newer homes and recently renovated properties. Being in them often triggered symptoms like watery eyes, a runny nose, and occasional headaches.

Victoria met with us to discuss our vision for the new home and asked about our priorities. She explained that some people opt to start small, incorporating just one or two healthy finishes, while others, like us, choose to take a comprehensive approach and use healthy products throughout the entire home. Now, we breathe easier, knowing our home is free of toxins and harmful materials. None of this would have been possible without Victoria's exceptional knowledge and expertise.

From cabinets and paint that leave no smell or VOCs behind, to the 100% natural mattresses we sleep on, our home was thoughtfully designed from top to bottom with Victoria's expertise. She ensured that every detail was both healthy and efficient, from the windows and their precise installation to our highly efficient HVAC system. Our new home is twice the size of our old one, but costs only a quarter as much to heat and cool.

Sustainability was also a key focus. We prioritized using local materials whenever possible and chose elements like remnant countertops that were not only stunning, but also economical.

As a mom, I'm especially grateful for the HEPA air filter that Victoria insisted we include. With seasonal allergies, asthma, and pets in our household, it has been a game-changer. I recommend this to anyone building or upgrading their home. Since moving in, we've seen incredible improvements in our family's health. Healthy Home Initiative is not just a company, it is an investment in your family's future health and wellness. 

Victoria Di Iorio may be reached at
victoria@healthyhomeinitiative.com