

## **Utah's Salt Lake County creates new YouTube cartoon for children on lead poisoning**

A couple years ago, Randy Jepperson, Housing Director of Salt Lake County in Utah, came into a conversation with his 14-year-old granddaughter, on the topic of radon gas. He was pleased to listen to the extent of her knowledge on the harmful gas and the fact that she had learned about it from an expert who spoke about it at her local junior high school.

“I just thought about how powerful it was to have a child tell a parent ‘Here’s why we need to pay attention to this [radon gas],” said Jepperson.

Seeing an opportunity to further instill similar teachings to children on the topic of hazardous lead, Jepperson contacted Jonny Vasic, Executive Director of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment, to help him develop the animated short film known as “Leady Lucy: The Neighborhood Superhero.”

The video, which predominantly targets children 3-6 years of age, follows the plot of a local boy by the name of Jose, as he embarks on the educational journey of learning about lead poisoning provided by his friend, Leady Lucy, who informs him of the harmful effects lead poisoning can have on the brain, how to prevent these effects and where to find more information on the issue.

Utilizing his prior experience developing films in Hollywood, Vasic directed, adapted, and produced the video in its entirety over the course of a year with the help of other creators, voice actors and actresses all within a budget of \$5,000 provided by grants from HUD and the CDC.

The creators of the film hope to further expand Leady Lucy’s community reach by placing her in workbook handouts to distribute to schools and advertising mediums such as posters, billboards and more as efforts to further educate the public on the issue during National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week and beyond.

On top of developing the video for educational purposes, the Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment witnessed a 20% uptick in web applications for their newsletter that is released on a weekly basis after releasing the film in March.

The creators hope programs alike will be inspired by Leady Lucy to create their own content that seeks to reach children on a variety of different issues.

“We’re just proud of it [the video] and hope other groups and agencies can use it as a tool to help kids not get lead poisoning and help their programs remediate lead out of their homes,” said Vasic. “We hope it goes far and wide and gets used as an important tool in a fun way.”

YouTube link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNUUxaCw47g>

UPHE link to video: <https://www.uphe.org/programs/lead-safe-housing-program/>