EAST LIVERPOOL - It appears that a summer health study will take place for some volunteer Tri-State area residents.

Erin Haynes, an assistant professor and University of Cincinnati public health researcher, met with some concerned city residents during an information session Friday afternoon.

Approximately 25 people attended the hour-long event at City Hall.

For years now, some East End residents and others have expressed concerns about the air quality in and around the East End community.

Haynes was invited to speak by East End resident Alonzo Spencer and Save our County, Inc.

Specifically, Haynes said she is a "manganese researcher" and interested in comparing a study group in and around East Liverpool with a group currently under study in Marietta. She plans to compare and contrast the data with a control group in Cambridge.

"Trained and hired researchers collect dust and soil in and around the homes, and participants in the pilot study get reimbursed for their time, and the children get a certificate," Haynes told those gathered.

East Liverpool has manganese amounts 30-times higher than in Marietta, Haynes maintained. "It certainly warrants a study," she said.

The study could be opened up to other metals and possible areas of concern, Haynes said.

To compare the local data with Marietta, Haynes said 50 to 100 children would need to participate in the pilot study. The 7 to 9-year-old children will need to be born in the area and lifelong residents.

Blood and hair samples will likely be collected, and the study pays $150 for a baby tooth. Teeth are collected and sent to Australia where a researcher analyzes the material for manganese concentrations.

Haynes said she is not out to stop any business or industry and is not primarily concerned with the source. Instead, Haynes said, "The study will look at what this does to you."

Potentially, other toxins like levels of lead, chromium and cadmium could also be studied.

One audience member said she had a child with a compromised immune system and wondered if he could be included in the study. Haynes said probably, but it would depend on other health factors.

The conversation led Haynes to make a list of other area health concerns. Audience members mentioned thyroid disorders, respiratory ailments, multiple sclerosis and various types of cancers.

The idea of adding Newell and Chester children to the mix was offered along with children from Wellsville and Midland. The exact area and scope was not determined, but Haynes said she will take the data back with her for consideration.

Two school board members, Dick Wolf and Larry Walton, attended the meeting. The only city official in attendance was city council member Sherrie Curtis.

Wolf took notice of that fact and said, "This room should be filled with health department members and city officials," and added that the absence was "distressing."

Kent State University - East Liverpool students attended the meeting with two local professors. Several students asked questions and seemed interested in teaming up with Haynes.

"As students, we've been looking into this for a while now, and we are concerned about children in the neighborhoods," Megan Rodgers said. A senior, Rodgers is a biology and pre-med student at Kent State.

Orchard Grove Avenue resident Mike Walton mentioned the cancer studies and reminded those gathered that studies show East Liverpool has the highest cancer rate risk within the county and the state.
"East Liverpool has a problem," Walton said, adding that Haynes' study may shed some light on the topic.

"I don't think people in the area are aware of the seriousness of all these toxins," Walton added.

Haynes said she will take the information from Friday's session to form a grant proposal request.

"If we leave here with one thing, I hope that it's that we are all in this together," Spencer said at the end of Friday's meeting.