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Kane's legacy may be progress of Nyanza study

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ASHLAND – Kevin Kane was willing to ask difficult questions at a time when many didn't want them asked.

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But, it was Kane's questions about a possible link between a local Superfund site and cancer among area residents that helped launch a new study into the former Nyanza dye factory.

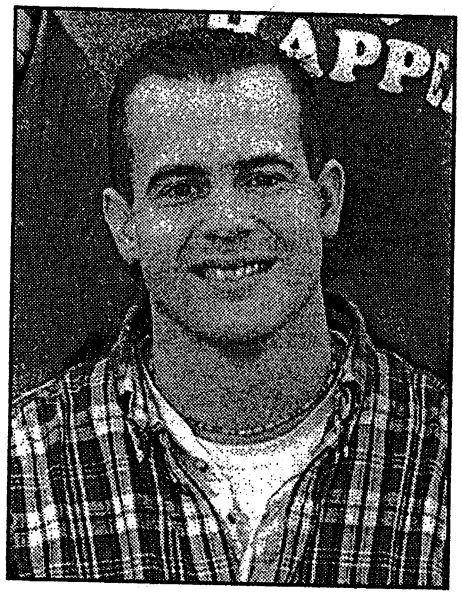
Yesterday, just hours after Kane succumbed to his own battle with cancer, state and local officials vowed to keep asking the tough questions until answers surfaced.

"He provided a strong lesson to the rest of us about how to approach adversity," said Sen. David Magnani, D-Framingham. "He was a very bright and likable guy with a tremendous energy about him."

Magnani, who has known the Kane family for at least 30 years, said Kevin was one of the primary reasons a new study was opened, to look at possible effects of Nyanza.

"I think we're going to keep up with this until we get a fair and honest resolution," Magnani said. "There will definitely be a focus on this issue."

Rep. John Stefanini, D-Framingham, agrees.



NEWS FILE PHOTO

Ashland resident Kevin Kane died from cancer some believe can be traced to the Nyanza Superfund site. Kane pushed to reopen a study of possible cancer links to the site.

tinue the study until it is finished," said Shapiro, who also serves as chairman of the Board of Health.

Like Shapiro, Selectman John Kirwan said there are definitely enough residents in town who want to see the study through to the end.

"I would imagine that they would not want to see all of his (Kevin's) efforts be in vain ," Kirwan said. "I

"His passion and dedication to seeking the truth has inspired us to continue to ask the tough questions," said Stefanini, who was one of the lawmakers Kane initially approached in seeking answers to his questions about Nyanza. "It was his dedication and tenacity that refocused us to look at exploring the reality of this. He certainly was a catalyst for reopening dialogue."

In March, members of Kane's family, along with more than a dozen concerned residents, formed the local Citizen's Advisory Committee, with the help of state and local health officials. The group is looking for former residents who lived and played near the Nyanza site to help state officials in a study of the Superfunds possible health effects.

A fellow member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, Arthur Shapiro said there is certainly enough interest and momentum with this new study for it to come to fruition.

"I'm certainly committed to con-

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tion from 1965 to 1978. Four years after it closed, the site was added to the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund cleanup priority list.

know personally, I'd like to see some of these questions answered."

Aided in part by the state's cancer registry and findings from the local advisory committee, officials will try to determine if there are links between Nyanza and what some view as alarming numbers of cases of cancer among current and former residents.

Many residents believe the cancer stems from contaminants on the 34-acre former Nyanza site.

There is also a push to get a definitive answer as to whether land surrounding Nyanza is now deemed safe.

For decades, the land and surrounding areas were contaminated with mercury, lead, arsenic and a host of other materials used by several dye and chemical factories dating as far back as 1917.

In 1994, a six-year study found no conclusive link between the former dye factory and clusters of bladder and kidney cancer among Ashland residents.

The Nyanza plant was in opera

Since then, more than $36 million has been spent on cleaning up and testing the site, and an additional $10 million has been set aside for dredging contaminated soil from wetlands on the site next year.