

Marcie McGovern

Marcie McGovern is fighting for her life. She was injured by toxic mold while employed at a Target Store in Grapevine, Texas.

Marcie worked as an Assets Protection Specialist catching criminals. She became noticeably ill starting in 2003, not knowing at the time what was causing her illness. Some of the symptoms that Marcie experienced at this time were: nose and throat burning, upper respiratory infections, digestive problems, skin rash, hair loss, weight loss, short term memory loss (brain fog), voice disturbance and raspiness after being in the building for a couple of hours. Marcie states that her voice would return to normal on her days off from work, and upon re-entering the building at work she would experience the symptoms again. To Marcie, because of the brain fog, she did not connect her illness to the building as she did not know there was mold at that time.

Marcie's family physician was very confused about why she kept getting upper respiratory infections and the doctor noticed that she was bruising easily. Marcie was put on several rounds of antibiotics, steroids and B12 Shots due to the continued hair loss, weight loss, and continued bruising. She was tested for leukemia, which turned out to be negative.

In January 2004, a remodeling crew came into the Target building where Marcie was working. When they started to open up wall cavities in a large room and food court area adjacent to her office, everyone noticed a very strong smell of mold in the building. Still not thinking mold can hurt you, and not knowing anything about mold, and noticing that no one on the remodeling crew was wearing protective gear, face masks, gloves, etc, Marcie continued to work in that environment.

Every time Marcie re-entered the building through the automatic doors, the overwhelming smell of mold would rush into her face. Whatever was going into the back of Marcie's nose, would eventually end up in her throat and she would swallow, sometimes getting choked. Since Marcie thought it was her upper respiratory problems, she didn't think anything of it.

On February 3, 2004, which was a Tuesday, Marcie went to work early as she usually did, and her boss at the time told her there was an awful smell in the APS office. He explained that he did not know where the smell was coming from, but it was very strong. He stated it was even making him sick, and he left work. Marcie had been off two days prior to that day, February 1 and 2, in which her voice had returned to normal. On Tuesday, February 3, 2004, around 3:30 p.m., her former boss called her on the phone wanting to see how things were going (at this time Marcie was doing an internal investigation and was spending a lot of time in the office). Her boss had said to Marcie that her voice sounded terrible, and she said to him, yes, but she didn't know what was going on. After this phone call from her boss, she had gone on the floor for a break, getting ready to go outside, and noticed that the huge wooden doors that the remodeling crew had built to keep the remodeling work from the public's view were standing open. Also, the back door next to her office to the food court was propped open. She heard the remodeling crew complaining of not being able to breath, then she walked outside and noticed one remodeling crew, male, over to the side of the front door, spitting stuff out of his mouth. Another member of the remodeling crew had actually thrown up.

Still not connecting that mold was a problem, because nothing was being said, she went outside and took her break. Feeling a little better, she went back inside to go back to work in her office. Later on this same day, February 3, 2004, Marcie's boss had called her again to see how the investigation was going, but this time he had called her on her personal cell phone at about 8:15 pm. At this time, Marcie could barely speak. She made a comment to him right then and there that she was going to investigate that smell and had started to move things in the office. Keep in mind the office is approximately 8' by 10'. She went to this large double door metal cabinet, where they had kept handcuffs, radios, chargers, and infrared ink. When Marcie had moved the cabinet away from the wall, Marcie saw a large portion of the wall had mold of different colors growing on the outside of the wall. The wall was warped out from being wet. Marcie told her boss, that it looked like Stachybotrys. Her boss said to her, "What's that"? Marcie had explained to him that she had seen a new show a couple of years prior, which was either Dateline, Nightline or 20/20, one of those programs, and really was not paying much attention to it, but remembered that word Stachybotrys (she had a thing about remembering hard words and how to pronounce them). What was on this wall had looked like what Marcie had seen on one of those shows.

Marcie's boss asked her, "What is that kind of Stachbotrys mold (of course he mispronounced it)? She said to him she was not sure but she thought it was also called "Black Toxic Mold". Marcie's boss told her to immediately go outside of the building through the back door which was all ready open due to the workers going in and out, and to the main remodel trailer, telling her which one it was, where the head of the remodel crew was. She knocked on the door to tell him to come to the head APS office to come to look at the mold. The head foreman starting laughing, and at this time her boss on the telephone, in which Marcie had put him on speaker phone, he bopped his head out the door and she explained to him that she had found mold growing on the outside of the wall in the APS office and could he please come take a look at it. The foreman laughed and stated there's mold all over the place. He told her he would be there in 15 minutes and went back into his trailer. With her boss still on the phone, Marcie walked back into the store, into her office, and waited. At 8:30 pm, Marcie told her former boss that he was still not there. Her boss said let me let you off the phone so she could do what she needed to do, then to call her boss back to tell him what the foreman had said about what he saw on the wall. At about 8:40 pm, Marcie had walked into the food court area and noticed some of the remodel crew workers scraping mold out of the wall cavity. Marcie went up to one of the workers and said, "Where is the foreman (which she had stated his name), and they said, I don't know".

At 8:45 pm, according to Marcie's APS Core Roles, one of her jobs was to gather and communicate information and document certain things, including safety or health hazards. Marcie then took a Polaroid camera, starting taking photos of mold that was left on the wall in the food court wall cavities with a new blue wrapped drywall leaning up against the moldy wall, and other photos in the area. Then she took the photos of the mold growing on the wall of her office. She took pictures of mold embedded into the crevices of the ceiling tiles next to the return air vent in her office above her desk. Remember that Marcie's office had its own independent HVAC system from the store, and they had control over it due to the expensive camera system in the office. Plus the store's HVAC system was running all the time, and Marcie did not know that was the wrong thing to do. Marcie took two identical sets of photos, put evidence labels on the back and one of the assistant managers was a witness to the photos being taken by Marcie (which

was documented on the evidence label). Not knowing what to do, and keeping in mind Marcie thought to protect Target Corporation, she took two bulk samples. Marcie did not know the proper way of taking the samples, but what she did was took a Target legal size envelope, pushed the edges of the envelope so it would open to make a scoop, scraped some mold off the wall directly into the envelope. The envelopes were sealed, doing this procedure twice. After filling the envelopes, Marcie signed her name, date and time across the seal of the flap. She then encased the envelopes in plastic. Marcie worried that she left both sets on the desk, and waited until 11:30 pm. Still waiting for the foreman to show up, she called her boss to tell him that the foreman never showed up and stated the time. Her boss said go ahead and go home, your off tomorrow and get some rest, you sound terrible. Marcie started to leave, she locked her office, and left the two sets of evidence on the desk, then got worried that the remodel crew would destroy both sets, still thinking of protecting Target. With the amount of customers, which Target calls guests, that she had heard complain about the smell, she was trying to protect Target, that is all she thought of. Marcie turned around, unlocked the APS office, took one set of photos and one bulk sample, taking it with her. She informed her boss of this by telephone the next day, because she was off this day. Target always says, "If you don't document it, it never happened".

On the way home, which was 18 miles, Marcie thought she had a runny nose and reached up with her right hand wiping her nose, blood was pouring out of her nose. On February 4, 2004, her regular day off, she went to the library, feeling real sick, and did some research on toxic mold because she didn't know anything. She wanted this information to tell her doctor, and she wanted to know if this mold could be making her sick. After she got out of the library with printed material on mold, she went by her family physician's office, talked to the nurse, and told her she thought she might know why she might be sick and could you please give this information to the doctor and let Marcie know what he thinks. The nurse had copied the Polaroid pictures of the mold, and Marcie had the sample with her, the nurse also took the printed copies of the material. Marcie had asked the nurse if she wanted to keep the bulk sample of the mold in case the doctor wanted to see it. She told Marcie no, you keep it so that it won't get lost. Marcie, then went home and went to bed. Whatever she ate, came up, and she experienced bloody diarrhea.

Severe headaches were continuous 24/7 since 2003 and were more severe in nature after the airborne mold was inhaled.

When Marcie returned to work on February 5, 2004, her boss informed her that the store manager wanted to see her in his office. She went to the manager's office, and her boss sat down in the chair. The manager proceeded to yell at her, "Who the hell do you think you were, taking samples and photos of the mold." Marcie had explained to him that was part of her job description. When she had informed him that she went to her doctor's the day before, he was furious. She also told him she talked to her vet about the mold and her neighbor/landlord, and the manager just blew up with anger. The manger told her she was not allowed to talk to anyone, her doctor, the vet, or any employees, or anyone at all about the mold, that it is Target's business, no one else's, do you understand. Marcie also informed him that not only was she sick, but also other team members and he said he did not give a damn, it's Target's business and on one else's, after all this is your job we are talking about, do you value your job. About that time, Marcie had received a call from her doctor on her cell phone while in the manager's office, the nurse

explained to Marcie the doctor had informed her that most definitely the cause of her illness was work related because of the mold, and because it was a worker's comp case, he could not see her as a patient. Marcie told the nurse that she did not fill out a worker's comp claim because she had just found the mold, and she looked up at this time seeing the store manager was shaking his head no at her. She thanked the nurse and got off the phone with her immediately. There was more said in the office, but Marcie does not want to make this too detailed. The store manager told Marcie she was not going to fill out a worker's comp claim, and she was no longer allowed back in her office without prior management approval. The store manager changed the locks on her office door. Marcie says she knows you're probably wondering, why wasn't her boss sick and there was also another APS team member called Target Protection Specialist, but they had only worked for Target for 3 months, prior to finding the mold. Marcie's boss and the TPS employee (Marcie was his supervisor) were allowed back into the office.

To make a long story short, another APS boss, with Marcie's boss present told Marcie to report the store manager to the integrity hot line for Target Corp, which is supposed to remain anonymous. Shortly after that, she found out everyone had known about the call to the integrity hot line.

Over the course of weeks of being harassed, every day Marcie had worked, being asked for the second bulk sample, because the first bulk sample was accidentally destroyed. This happened several times. Marcie knew not to give it to them. Marcie had received two final warnings back to back, which is unheard of, for performance. Before this started, Marcie had frequently received awards for her work. Marcie had a wall of awards in her office from Regional, District and a Specialty Division, MIT. The back-to-back warnings started after she told her store manager and her boss that she called the health department, and she inquired about mold, asking if it could make you sick, and they told her yes it could make you very sick. Marcie told the health department only her first name and that she worked in a retail store, what her job was, and what she found.

Sometime in the mid or latter part of April, that store manager was transferred to another Texas store. A new store manager came in, a lovely man. Marcie got along great with him, and he was very impressed with Marcie.

On or about May 26, 2004, Marcie was standing outside on the sidewalk taking a break, the new store manager walked out of the store to go to lunch. Marcie told him to have a nice lunch, he turned and came back to Marcie and said, by the way, I found some mold test results in my office for you. Marcie said to him, no I think you are mistaken, that she was told the sample was destroyed and she had the other one, there was no testing done, and he said no I am pretty sure it's test results and would show her when he got back from lunch. He had told her that he found them hidden in a draw in the old manager's office.

Later in the day, after Marcie had received the results, the District Manager for APS had shown up at Marcie's store. He said that he had made a call to the corporate office and said she could fill out a worker's comp claim. One of the female managers filled out the paper work and the drug test sheet in turn Marcie took it to their health clinic that they use for worker's comp claims. All that was done was a drug test, which Marcie passed, the nurse took her temperature, pulse, and

blood pressure and did nothing else. The doctor came in and proceeded to verbally assault Marcie, saying "Mold Can't Make You Sick", but seems how this is a worker's comp claim, I have to put something down, what do you think, hmmm, fatigue, that sounds about as good as any, and wrote fatigue down on the report. Marcie left the office crying. When the store manager returned to the store after his lunch, Marcie had followed him back to his office, he pulled out of his desk an inner company envelope, in the envelope were two copies of the test results done in March of 2004 and with a face letter from Target Environmental Services dated April 1, 2004. It said on the envelope: To the store manager and Marcie McGovern. Marcie's boss came into the room at that time and sat there with the envelope holding it while the new store manager called the Corporate Office to see if Marcie could have a copy. She turned to her boss and asked him who it was addressed to, and he said "To the Store Manager (the old store manager) and Marcie McGovern and there were two copies. Marcie said to her boss to hand her a copy, and it stated on the front page it was Stachybotrys. There is a lot more to the story. On January 21, 2005, halfway through Marcie's shift, nine days after she contacted OSHA and they refused to come in while Marcie was there, she was sent home halfway through her shift being told she was a liability to the company and to leave immediately.

An environmental study had been done on the store on January 10-12 of 2005, after the so-called remediation had been done. They found five of the HVAC return units had high levels of biological contaminants. This report was dated January 21, 2005--the same day Marcie was sent home. Marcie had called Washington D.C. OSHA office after she was sent home. She talked to two different offices, and they contacted Marcie on April 15, 2005. They went into the store on April 18 and 19, a year and four months after the so-called remediation and after five of the HVAC return units had shown high levels of biological contaminants. Everything was still in the same condition, but because Target had bids in for the work, a year and four months later, OSHA did not fine them.

February 25, 2005, Marcie visited Dr. William Rea and was thoroughly examined by him with his assistant present. Marcie's landlords were also in the room. Marcie knew she was extremely ill but could not afford to be treated by Dr. Rea because he did not accept insurance and she did not have any income. Marcie's family physician sent her to Tarrant County Infectious Disease, and she saw a doctor there. The doctor ran blood tests.

On the following visit, Marcie was shocked, as well as the doctor when he came in the room with her results of the blood tests, the Ig panel. He stated that her results are frighteningly low, and she asked him if it was from the mold exposure. He stated, I am not sure, I don't know everything, I am not God. He said he only treats infections, and he does not know anything about mold.

Marcie started IVIG infusions in March 2005, at every four weeks at 30 grams. Marcie's last infusion was January 3, 2007, at 72 grams and had blood work. She was supposed to go up to 78 grams every four weeks. Marcie's next infusion would have been January 31, 2007, but the Target Plan Administrator canceled her Cobra insurance on January 17, 2007, so she had to stop her infusion treatments at that time. Sub Classes 1 and 3 are way below normal limits, and Sub Classes 2 and 4 are now at the lowest number you can go on the limits. Marcie has gone from a

size 14 and very muscular, to wearing her granddaughter's size 5 hand me downs. At 5' 9", Marcie is very thin.

Marcie got accepted for Social Security disability in June 2006 but did not start receiving payments until August 2006. With the back Social Security money, Marcie went to see Dr. Alfred Johnson, in Richardson, Texas. Wonderful doctor. He did a long history and ordered some tests. The CAT scan showed hundreds of granulomatosis lesions in her lungs and on her internal organs. Dr. Johnson did an ELISA test for trichothecenes. The results were 2.50 ppb in her urine. A Specific IgG, and was tested for 28 different types of mold and came back positive with 14 different antibodies of mold, some as high as 82.75 which was *Aspergillus flavus*. Then Dr. Johnson started skin testing and neurological tests which showed brain damage. Because of loss of consciousness and seriousness risk to Marcie's health, they had to stop the testing. Marcie stated that it felt like she was being sedated for surgery. The nurse that was doing the testing said that she would lose all cognitive function, then within 30-40 seconds go unconscious and have to be given injections to be brought out and sometimes would have to be given more than one injection. Marcie was started on an antifungal and supplements and with the 72 grams of the immunoglobulins she was starting to feel a lot better. After Target canceled her Cobra coverage, Marcie couldn't afford to continue the IVIG treatments. (Later, she was able to start the treatments again and had worked out a payment plan with the clinic.)

The main thing that Marcie wants everyone to know is that she has always taken pride in her strength and her independence. Marcie has never been one to ask for help, even when she was homeless when her daughter was little. Marcie was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1989 and never missed a day of work from it. She has had three back surgeries. The first one almost killed her, and she had to learn how to walk all over again. She was working four jobs at one time before the first back injury. In 1996, to her surprise (and her neurologist's), a brain tumor was found in her right posterior fossa of her brain. Not only did Marcie ace the surgery, she was only in the hospital for 3 1/2 days and went back to work in 5 1/2 weeks even though the insurance company insisted she could take 8 1/2 weeks or longer if she needed. Marcie said she was fine and went back to work catching criminals. Marcie had a strong passion for her job and never ever would have believed something as small and microscopic as a mold spore could do this to a human body. Had it not happened to Marcie, she states she would have never believed it.

Marcie's passion is to help other mold victims, and because of her strong will and faith in God, she believes this happened to her so she could learn from it and help others. She spends an enormous amount of time on the phone providing information, advice and comfort to others who are ill or have lost their homes because of mold.

**Note: In case any of you are wondering what happened to the second bulk sample, Marcie did have it tested by an IAQ Consultant. The test came back positive for *Stachybotrys*, *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium*.

2010 update: Marcie is continuing to receive regular IVIG infusion treatments and is staying strong in her fight against the damage to her health. In 2011, she had to stop the infusion treatments due to lack of funds.

2013 update: Marcie recently saw Dr. Alfred Johnson for additional blood tests which showed that her immune deficiencies had become much worse. She now has multiple immune deficiencies (IgG, IgA and IgD). Dr. Johnson is conducting more tests to determine why Marcie's body has stopped making B-cells and not producing antibodies. She also has an unknown growth on her right humerus (upper right arm) and will be seeing a specialist.

Marcie is a fighter. She is very strong-willed and continues to remain positive as she battles this illness.