



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Fall 2008

www.gasp-pgh.org

In this issue


Reducing Diesel Pollution in Clairton	1
Diesel Campaign Reaches Into the Community	2
Women in Action	3
2008 Good Government Awards	4
Grassroots Outreach in 2008	5
Do You Have Historical Photos of GASP in Action?	5
Spotlight on GASP Staff	6
Bring the GASPer to Your Class	6
GASP & Good Friends	7
Join GASP Today	7
GASP Online	9

Reducing Diesel Pollution in Clairton

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

A new effort is underway to reduce toxic diesel pollution from municipal vehicles in the Clairton community. This project is a collaborative effort between the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution, led by GASP and Clean Water Action, the Allegheny County Health Department's Air Quality Program, and the City of Clairton. The



are aware, the Liberty/Clairton region is the most heavily polluted area of the country for fine particulates, so any effort to reduce the amount of particles in the air is important and welcome. We commend the Allegheny County Health Department and Board of Health for their leadership in reducing toxic diesel emissions in the county and we praise Clairton for their willingness to participate in the project. 

project, which will retrofit more than twenty on- and off-road vehicles and equipment owned by Clairton, is funded by the County's Clean Air Fund. The goal is to retrofit each diesel vehicle or piece of diesel equipment with the best emission reduction technology available. It will include retrofitting such vehicles as dump trucks, ambulances, and backhoes.

This endeavor is part of a larger effort to retrofit all municipally-owned diesel vehicles in the Liberty/Clairton section of Allegheny County. In addition to creating healthier work environments for the operators of these vehicles, this project will help to reduce fine particulates throughout the community, which is critical for the region. As most of you

Funding for School Bus Retrofits

The Allegheny County Health Department is offering school districts funding to retrofit diesel school buses with devices that not only cut tailpipe emissions but also reduce the air pollution that seeps inside a bus. The retrofit program is open to all public school districts in the county that operate their own fleet or use a school bus contractor. Districts with a large number of lower-income students qualify for full funding and will not be required to pay 25% of their retrofit costs. For more information visit www.achd.net or call Tom Lattner at 412-578-7986.

Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a nonprofit citizens group in southwestern Pennsylvania working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP has been a diligent watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy maker on many environmental issues, with a focus on air quality in the Pittsburgh region.

Diesel Campaign Reaches Into the Community

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

New website for the Diesel Campaign

The Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution is proud to announce the launch of our new website and blog. This site is intended to provide current information on our diesel campaign, diesel technology, legislation, and what you can do to help. Our front page will feature news stories about diesel emissions reduction efforts. Dig deeper into our site and you'll find our campaign materials, description of our projects, and diesel resources from our organization and others. To find out more, visit: <http://pghdieselcleanup.wordpress.com>

**The Allegheny County Partnership
To Reduce Diesel Pollution**



New Signs Remind Drivers to Stop Idling

Many school districts in Allegheny County have taken advantage of the Allegheny County Health Department's offer to provide them with free signage that reminds school bus drivers, parents, teachers, students and the general community that unnecessary idling by on-road diesel vehicles is illegal. Contact Tom Lattner (ACHD) at tlattner@achd.net or 412-578-7986 for more information and to request a sign for your school.



Opportunities to learn about air quality and volunteer your time

Whether it's your school's Parent Teacher Organization, the local Rotary Club, or your church group, GASP welcomes opportunities to come and speak with the organizations you're involved with. We can present on a variety of issues including causes and health effects of air pollution, diesel pollution (including school bus idling and the "no idling" regulation—see above), and energy efficiency.

Are you a high school teacher or college instructor looking for opportunities for your students? Please contact us, we are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers who want to assist with everything from working events, to conducting research, and preparing mailings. Even volunteering for a short amount of time is greatly appreciated.

The **Hotline** is the quarterly newsletter of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc.

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GASP Mission Statement

GASP will act to obtain for the residents of southwestern Pennsylvania clean air, water, and land in order to create the healthy, sustainable environment and quality of life to which we are entitled.

Methods of Achieving Mission

GASP is a citizens' group based in Southwestern PA which focuses on Allegheny County environmental issues. When pertinent to these concerns, we participate in state and national environmental decisions.

We believe in the public's right to receive accurate and thorough information on these issues and to actively participate in the decision making process.

To achieve our environmental goals on behalf of our membership, GASP will advocate, educate, serve as an environmental watchdog, mobilize action, and litigate when necessary.

We will work both independently and in cooperation with like-minded individuals and groups as determined by the Board of Directors.

We will uphold GASP's reputation for scientific integrity, honesty, and responsible involvement.

Women in action

We are working hard to make our communities healthier

by Teresa Heinz, The Heinz Endowments and the Heinz Family Philanthropies

Reprinted with permission from The Heinz Endowments. Originally published on Wednesday, September 24, 2008 in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Teresa Heinz is the chairman of The Heinz Endowments and the Heinz Family Philanthropies (www.heinz.org).

On one of my trips home to Pittsburgh several years ago, I saw that there had been a great deal of news coverage given to a small event that took place in a suburban school parking lot.

The participants performed an unsophisticated scientific experiment known as the “white hanky” test. A senior scientist with a local environmental group and the owner of a school bus company held a white handkerchief against the tailpipe of a 6-year-old bus with its engine in idle. Within seconds, the diesel exhaust turned the handkerchief black.

The men then moved to the tailpipe of another bus that had been retrofitted to filter most of the pollutants -- which are linked to a range of serious health problems from asthma to cancer -- and the handkerchief remained white. Students clapped, cameras clicked and Plum School District officials announced the receipt of a federal grant that would allow them to buy filters for the district’s older buses.

For two young women who head local environmental nonprofits and who helped plan that event, the actions of Plum officials and similar efforts in three other school districts were commendable but fell far short of a comprehensive response to Western Pennsylvania’s serious diesel-emission problem.

Inspired by last year’s Women’s Health & Environment Conference and the Rachel Carson Centennial Birthday celebration that followed, Kathy Lawson, Western Pennsylvania director of Clean Water Action, and Rachel Filippini, the executive director of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, partnered with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and bus company owners to create the Healthy School Bus Fund. The project’s first-stage goal is to eliminate diesel pollution from the district’s 350-bus fleet. Eventually, the two women want to package the novel process and take it to the other school districts in Allegheny County.

Women for a Healthy Environment

Want to become involved in Women for a Healthy Environment? Visit www.womenforahealthyenvironment.org and sign-up to receive emails announcing events, news and other items of interest.

Women’s Health and Environment Conference Toolkit

The toolkit provided at Pittsburgh’s 2007 Women’s Health and Environment Conference is available online at www.womenshealthandenvironment.org. The toolkit is filled with information and resources to help you make healthy lifestyle choices and be an advocate for your health.

Rachel and Kathy have been persistent and convincing, with the result that the first 20 retrofitted school buses in Pittsburgh are scheduled to make their rounds by the end of October. These two were among the 2,000 women who took to heart two key messages from last year’s conference.

The first was that even though many of the environmental hazards that threaten human health are so massive and complex that they’ll require nations to solve them, the power of one or 10 or 50 people taking action in local communities can significantly improve health.

The other message is that women are uniquely positioned to lead these efforts. Women are instinctive nurturers and care givers, and they exercise more emotional intelligence than many men in protecting the health of families and communities.

Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam refers to the historical role of women as the shapers of civil society and the managers of the myriad ways in which people interact. It has been my experience that we women are willing to take the time to connect the dots -- whether it be connecting to inform one another, to build community or to nurture the planet as it is presented to us in our own backyards.

While I expected participants at last year’s event to respond with action, nothing prepared me for the passionate response of a core group that emerged.

With a charter membership of 30, Women for a Healthy Environment will be formally announced

continued on page 4

Women in Action
continued from page 3

at tomorrow's conference, but women representing all dimensions of Western Pennsylvania—nonprofit leaders, business executives, foundation officers and community organizers among them—already have been changing personal habits, such as organizing mothers in low-income neighborhoods to exchange information on organic foods and other parenting tips. They have been hosting community forums on environmental health issues and planning new advocacy projects.


Aside from Rachel Filippini of the Healthy School Bus Fund, other members include Kathy Purcell, executive director of the Pittsburgh affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, who has committed her organization to educate women, especially those living in rural areas, on environmental factors connected to breast cancer.

Another is LaVerne Baker Hotep, director of community arts and education of the Center for Victims of Violence and Crimes. She is directing a project to identify environmental contributors to violence and crime in our region,

with the goal of sharing the information with women in high-risk communities.

I could go on with the list of activities under way and those planned in response to this year's conference agenda, which centers on environmental factors affecting air, water, food and the personal care products we use every day.

But the bigger insight is that Pittsburgh history may be coming full circle. In the 1890s, as Pittsburgh industry was ramping up to turn the city's water and air into a toxic soup of pollution, a group of activist women formed the Ladies Health Protection Association. Even though they couldn't vote or attend public meetings, they demonstrated and agitated to force the men running the city to enact the nation's first smoke abatement ordinance.

Today, Women for a Healthy Environment continue that activist fight for a healthier community, one jar of organic baby food at a time, one white hanky-tested school bus at a time, one rural public education session at a time. 

2008 Good Government Awards

Join with GASP and other recipients of this year's League of Women Voters 2008 Good Government Award to celebrate civic leadership in Allegheny County.



2008 Good Government Award Dinner at the Sheraton Station Square, Thursday, October 30

Celebrating Civic Leadership

For tickets to the dinner, contact League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh:
<http://palwv.org/pittsburgh>
412.261.4284, info@pgh.lwv.org

2008 Award Recipients:

- Carol R. Brown
- The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime/ CVVC
- *Group Against Smog and Pollution/GASP*
- Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
- Southwestern PA Program for Deliberative Democracy

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EGGS & DICE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSAMOND PURCELL



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Grassroots Outreach in 2008

by Fran Harkins, GASP Outreach Coordinator

In 2008 GASP has actively engaged in community outreach. Staff members, a GASP intern, and volunteers worked together to acquaint Pittsburgh residents with our air quality and what GASP is doing to improve it.

With the May 1, 2008 release of the American Lung Association's State of the Air Report's finding that the Pittsburgh/New Castle area ranks highest in the nation in short-term fine particulate pollution, Lee Szymkiewicz and Sarah Obernauer, our GASP summer intern, artfully re-designed our tri-fold presentation board to focus on fine particulates and their dangerous health effects.



PHOTO: FRAN HARKINS

To assist Fran Harkins, GASP's Outreach Coordinator, volunteers pitched in at events. Kavita Thakur, Kayla Clem, and Tom Potance, in addition to GASP staff and interns, gave generously of their time. Our thanks go to the Allegheny County Health Department for providing educational literature on diesel idling regulations. Since early May, GASP has traveled to health fairs, eco-festivals and school, hospital, library- and church-sponsored events and community days in McKeesport, Dormont, Hazelwood, Turtle Creek, Shaler, Squirrel Hill, the Northside, Elrama, two events in Homestead and more.

To improve the awareness of the benefits of physical fitness, healthy food choices and health problems posed by environmental contaminants, schools and corporations are increasingly sponsoring health and wellness fairs. GASP has participated in health fairs at MARC USA, Goodwill Industries, Shadyside Hospital, the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Technical Institute, and the Freedom Area School District.

With individuals in attendance who are already sensitive to environmental concerns, green fairs and eco-fests provide great venues both to teach and to learn. GASP has done educational outreach at the Rachel Carson Homestead, the Carnegie Science Center's Green Fair, Point Park University's Green Fair, the Phipps' May Market, the East End Food Coop, the Westmoreland Conservancy's "Conservation Connection at the Zoo," and the fascinating Allegheny River Stewardship Project "Fishing Days" in Springdale's charming Cheswick Park.

Entering its 40th year of working for clean air in Western Pennsylvania, GASP continues its strong commitment to engage citizens on a grassroots level.



PHOTO: FRAN HARKINS

Do You Have Historical Photos of GASP in Action?

James Longhurst, a GASP Advisory Board member and environmental historian, has signed a contract with the University Press of New England and Tufts University's "Civil Society series" to publish his book titled "Citizen Environmentalists." The book is based upon his case study of the early years of GASP, though it also covers similar developments elsewhere in the nation.

Dr. Longhurst has collected images from the archival depositories (University of Pittsburgh's archives, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and others) but is still looking for GASP photos to include in the book and to go on the cover. In particular, he is looking for high-quality photos of GASP volunteers in action from 1969-1975 -- at meetings, at hearings, at fundraisers, speaking, etc. He would particularly like pictures with rough dates and names and descriptions of the activity going on. If you can help, please contact Dr. Longhurst directly:

James Longhurst
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University of Wisconsin -- La Crosse
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La Crosse WI 54601
longhurs.jame@uwlax.edu
608-785-8344

Spotlight on GASP Staff

In mid-August 2008, Joseph Osborne joined GASP as our new Legal Director. Joe replaces Mike Parker who accepted a position as legal counsel with the Allegheny County Health Department.

Joe comes to us via Indiana and Boston. He originally heard of GASP some 6 years ago as a student at Indiana University. He was involved with local environmental groups like Hoosier Environmental Council and the Indiana Forest Alliance and GASP would occasionally come up in conversations. After receiving his BA in Political Science, Joe attended law school at Boston College, where he served a stint as editor-in-chief of the Boston University Public Interest Law Journal, which he describes as “a privilege, a lot of work, and a lot of fun.” He received his JD this past spring.

While in Boston, Joe’s fiancée came across a GASP job announcement on the internet. He recalled the name and that the group had a good reputation. Joe said that some their Pittsburgh friends were encouraging them to move here anyway and kept talking up the merits of the city, so a job at GASP seemed like a perfect opportunity.

Joe finds his new job interesting so far as he oversees GASP participation in lawsuits and keeps an eye on local events and issues where GASP may get involved, such as proposed permits, regulatory changes, and citizen complaints. He says, “The job duties are a bit varied, and I like the novelty.” “After about 4 hours of squinting at regulations, it’s nice to be able to change gears and work on something else.”


Outside of work, Joe has an avid interest in biking. He worked at the Bloomington Bike Project as a student, which he describes as being similar to Pittsburgh’s Free Ride, which provides used bikes to the local community and helps with bike repair. Although he describes his bike mechanic skills as “pretty mediocre,” Joe said he enjoys such work, especially teaching others how to work on their bikes. Joe also dabbles in music making and can play drums, bass, guitar and ukulele. He’s “not serious about it” but says “it’s always fun to sit around with friends and play music,” although he’s not sure how his new neighbors will feel about it!

Joe loves watching movies, saying “I’ll sit through just about any movie, no matter how bad it is.... something about the medium allows me to get completely absorbed.” Favorites include Jimmy Stewart, Clint Eastwood, Alfred Hitchcock, and Sergio Leone. Joe and his fiancée of 8 years are expecting a baby boy this fall, though, so it may be a while before he can actively pursue all these interests again. Now that they no longer live in “a tiny Boston apartment” and have a decent-sized yard, Joe also looks forward to adopting a dog.



When asked if he had any stories to tell, Joe related that during his final semester of law school he was selected for the Boston College Environmental Law Teaching Program:

“That’s a program run by Zyg Plater, a law professor at Boston College (who has a lot of environmental history himself -- he argued the snail darter case before the US Supreme Court and was actively involved in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez spill, so he was a great guy to learn from). The program gives law students the opportunity to teach an undergraduate environmental law course. Only 6 students were selected from Boston-area law schools (Boston University, Boston College, and Harvard) to teach a course, so it was an honor to be selected.”

GASP is happy to have Joe Osborne as our Legal Director and wish him best of luck in his new job and life in the ‘burgh. 

Attention Teachers: Bring the GASPer To YOUR class!

The GASPer Air Monitor is available for use during the 2008-09 school year. The monitor measures ozone, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and ELF radiation. Included, is the use of our hand-held particulate monitor as well. Make air tangible to your students! For more information or to sign up for the program contact Lee Szymkiewicz at lee@gasp-pgh.org or 412-325-7382.



GASP & Good Friends

by Lee Szymkiewicz, GASP Education Coordinator

GASP recently held its 39th annual fall fundraising event. GASP and Good Friends took place on Saturday, September 27th at the Riverview Park Chapel Shelter, a wonderful newly renovated space.

The day was packed full of entertainment. The afternoon was kicked off by Janelle Burdell, an accomplished drummer, who got the crowd into the action. She connected the concept of rhythm with the environment as about fifteen of our guests drummed along (pictured below). Healthy Home Resources presented an interactive puppet show that educated children about asthma, lead and healthy living. The Pennsylvania Wildlife Center brought along a skunk and a screech owl for an animal meet-and-greet. Guests also had the opportunity to share their favorite nature story with the Allegheny Front radio show. Last but not least, the day finished up with the musical talents of Jack Knight and the *Unsung Heroes*.

And as always there were a wide array of items in our silent auction/raffle. Thanks to everyone who attended and many thanks to the companies and individuals who donated to the event!



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

Raffle Donors

Andy Warhol Museum	Marla Ferency
Breathe Yoga Studio	Melissa & Lew McCabe
Carnegie Science Center	National Aviary
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh	Phipps Conservatory
City Theatre	Pittsburgh Brewing Co.
Dance Alloy Theater	Pittsburgh Filmmakers
E House Company	Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theater
Evelyn Castillo	Pittsburgh Opera
Gemini Children's Theater	Pittsburgh Symphony
George Mendel	Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
Heinz History Center	
Janis Johnson	Vivienne Shaffer
Laurel Caverns	Seven Springs
Joanne Lightner	Square Cafe
Lincoln Caverns	Venture Outdoors

Event Sponsors

Citizen Power
United Jewish Federation Environmental Committee

Food Donors

Allegro Hearth Bakery	Janis & Jonas Johnson
Maren Cooke	Prantl's Bakery
East End Food Co-op	Smallman St. Deli
Rachel Filippini	Sue Seppi
Giant Eagle	Trader Joe's
Karen Grzywinski	

Join GASP Today!

- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
- \$60 Grassroots Contributors (includes recycled tote)
- \$100 Grassroots Patrons (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$250 Clean Air Defenders (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$500 Clean Air Protectors (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$ ___ Other

Call GASP at (412) 325-7382 to learn about automatic monthly giving, deducted directly from your checking account or charged to your credit card. An easy, hassle-free way to support GASP all year round!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

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I want my entire donation to go to GASP. Please don't send the tote and/or umbrella

Check Visa Mastercard American Express

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ Amount \$ _____

Signature _____

All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The official registration and financial information of GASP may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Photo Highlights from the GASP Fall Fundraiser

Read about it on page 7!



Top left: GASP Board member Kate St. John viewing a screech owl



Top right: Guests enjoying a wide variety of fall flavors.

Right: Jack Knight and the Unsung Heroes

All photos taken by Maren Cooke



GASP Online

GASPalerts

GASPalerts is GASP's mailing list — an announcement list for GASP members and friends who want to be updated on GASP's activities and local air quality issues. Join the list to get event notices, GASP in the News links and more! Look for the sign-up link on GASP's website at <http://www.gasp-pgh.org>



Online newsletter

You can read this newsletter online as a PDF file (requires Adobe Acrobat reader), and help us save paper. Email the editor at hotline@gasp-pgh.org if you'd prefer to receive a downloadable PDF link via email when the next issue of the Hotline is published.

Website

As always, visit our website at <http://www.gasp-pgh.org> to get updates on GASP activities and local air quality news.

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