



# **2nd ANNUAL METRO EAST AIR & HEALTH FORUM HIGHLIGHTS HEALTH IMPACTS OF POOR AIR QUALITY, UNITES REGIONAL LEADERS IN THE FIGHT FOR CLEANER AIR**

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Four Metro East communities also recognized for their efforts to improve regional and local air quality

COLLINSVILLE, Ill., Nov. 2, 2012 . . . As the St. Louis region continues to struggle with air pollution concerns, municipal leaders and representatives from some of the area's key civic, healthcare and environmental organizations gathered at the Metro East Park and Recreation District office in Collinsville, Ill., today to discuss the impacts of poor air quality on health and highlight solutions designed to help area residents breathe easier. Titled "The Air We Breathe," the 2nd annual Metro East Air & Health Forum showcased the key organizations and municipalities in the region that have emerged as leaders in their efforts to improve regional and local air quality through various sustainable initiatives.

The event kicked off with a special keynote address from Peter M. Iwanowicz, Assistant Vice President of the American Lung Association, who discussed the health impacts of air pollution and the benefits of the Clean Air Act. The keynote address was followed by a discussion of the science behind ozone, led by Southern Illinois University Geography professor Dr. Mark Hildebrandt. Mike Coulson of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments was also on hand to provide a summary of the 2012 ozone season in the

Metro East. Additional topics addressed at the event included the use of charging stations and other energy-efficiency efforts; Madison County's Sustainability Plan; cleaner fuel alternatives and biking and walking connectivity in the Metro East.

The forum was highlighted by a special presentation of Care for Air awards to four Metro East communities by the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership, recognizing the steps being taken by each to help improve air quality in their respective areas and region-wide. Those honored were the Cities of Alton and Belleville, Ill., the Village of Glen Carbon, Ill., and America's Central Port.

Efforts being taken by the City of Alton, which helped earn the municipality recognition, include its status as a Sierra Club Cool City and its formal signing of the Illinois Cool City Local Sustainability Protection Agreement, which outlines various goals and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.

Other steps being taken by the City of Alton include the implementation of a no-idling policy by the police department; the installation of an electric vehicle charging station at City Hall; the purchase of two hybrid city vehicles; the negotiation of 100 percent renewable energy into the city electric contract through municipal electric aggregation and the implementation of a city-wide recycling program for residents. Alton has also calculated its energy use and has taken numerous steps to become more energy-efficient, including upgrading street lights and lighting at its public works building. In addition, the city has received a grant to build a modern and regional transportation facility that will integrate high-speed rail, public transportation, motor vehicle transportation and bike and walking trails.

The City of Belleville was recognized for being the first city in St. Clair County to become a Sierra Club Cool City. Belleville also signed the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, helping the city secure an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant to retrofit several facilities with more efficient lighting, windows and insulation. The city also actively encourages redevelopment designed to increase walkability in the downtown area and near transit stations, and has plans to add a fleet of bicycles to each city building to encouraging cycling between buildings instead of driving to reduce emissions. In addition, single-stream recycling is offered to all city residents, and the Belleville Parks Department has installed six no-idling signs in key areas.

In Glen Carbon, a landscape waste/open burning ban has been in effect for several years, and this past July, the Village authorized an official Sierra Club Cool Cities Committee by Ordinance. The Village was also recognized for its implementation of community-based electricity aggregation and the negotiation of 100 percent renewable energy into the Village electrical contract; the completion of a greenhouse gas inventory

to assess the Village's total emissions and the development of an action plan designed to reduce emissions; special improvements to street lighting and walking and biking trails designed to encourage people to drive less, as well as other improvements to the Village's recycling equipment.

America's Central Port garnered recognition for its "Green Port" project, which features a variety of innovative practices designed to improve regional and local air quality. These practices include: the development of a comprehensive waste management program at the Port and an E-cycle drop-off site for the Tri-Cities area; the formation of a renewable energy program, which includes a wind assessment and solar installation project, as well as a Port-wide energy retrofit assessment targeting lighting and HVAC improvements; the establishment of a Plug-in Electric Vehicle (PEV) site at the Port's newest Madison County Transit Park and Ride Lot; the pursuit of diesel emission reduction grants and the implementation of no-idling zones throughout the Port District; participation in the RideFinders regional carpool and vanpool program; conducting a commuter audit and maintaining a continued leadership role in the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

"With air quality continuing to be such a concern in the Metro East and across the entire St. Louis region, our goal in hosting the 2nd annual Metro East Air & Health Forum was to demonstrate the many ways poor air quality can affect the health of area residents, and to bring together the many organizations and municipalities in the region that are leading the charge in helping to improve air quality conditions," said Amy Funk, Air Project Specialist with University of Illinois and representative of the Metro East Community Air Project. "We thank everyone for their attendance and for their commitment to helping area residents breathe easier. We also congratulate the municipalities that were the recipients of our first-ever Care for Air awards. The many steps they are taking are going a long way towards improving our region's air quality, and we hope their efforts spark other communities to embark on similar initiatives."

To learn more about the 2nd annual Metro East Air & Health Forum, call 618-514-7854, or visit [www.meairproject.org](http://www.meairproject.org).