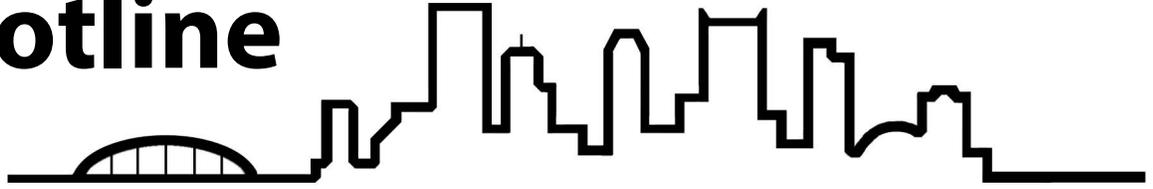




# Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Spring 2017

[www.gasp-pgh.org](http://www.gasp-pgh.org)

## In this issue

Cuts to EPA Budget Will Significantly Impact Southwestern PA	1
GASP's 2016 Year in Review	2
Pittsburgh Public School Buses Get Cleaner, But More Work Is Needed	4
GASP Air Quality Camp	5
Spotlight on a GASP Board Member	6
Remembering Marilyn Skolnick	7
Save the Date: Making the Connection and GASP-toberfest	8

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.

## Cuts to EPA Budget Will Significantly Impact Southwestern PA

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

The Trump administration has proposed cutting the EPA's budget by 31%, down to \$5.7 billion, and there will be 3200 fewer positions at the agency. *Some programs will be cut by 90% or more, or even wiped out completely.* Many of these programs have greatly benefited Southwestern Pennsylvania. Since we still have levels of air pollution that are higher than most other places in the country, we stand to be affected in a disproportionate manner. Here's a look at some of the programs on the chopping block, and how those programs have benefited our region in the past.

Over the last eight years, Pennsylvania has been awarded more than \$12 million in Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) funding, allowing a variety of fleets, including construction, ports, rail, and public buses to be partially replaced or retrofit with diesel emissions reduction equipment. Many of these projects cleaned up the oldest and dirtiest diesel vehicles and equipment being used right here in Allegheny County, but much more work still needs to be done. *The current budget proposal would cut Diesel Emission Reduction Act funding 100%.*

Allegheny County Health Department's Air Pollution Control Program receives significant funding from the EPA to assist them in planning, developing, establishing, improving, and maintaining adequate programs for the prevention and control of air pollution or implementation of national primary and secondary air quality standards. Allegheny County has also recently received additional grant funding from EPA to

purchase equipment for a variety of air monitoring activities, including a monitoring site to study NO2 concentrations near heavily trafficked roads and to assess the pollutant's impact on vulnerable and susceptible populations. *This critical funding could be cut by 30%.*

The Targeted Air Shed Grant is another EPA program at risk of being eliminated. This program's main goal is to reduce air pollution in the nation's areas with the highest levels of ozone and PM2.5 ambient air concentrations, like Allegheny County. Past funding, matched with U.S. Steel funding, allowed Clairton Coke Works to replace an old quench tower with a state of the art, low emissions quench tower, resulting in much less PM2.5 pollution. *The current budget proposal would completely eliminate the Targeted Air Shed Grant program.*

The proposed cuts affect many more important programs. Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in America, and Western Pennsylvania has levels of radon far above the national average. *Funding for state radon programs in Trump's proposal would be completely eliminated. Programs for lead, brownfield remediation, compliance monitoring, and civil enforcement—all cut.*

To learn more about all of the proposed reductions, please see the at PA Environment Digest at:

<https://tinyurl.com/paenviro-epa>

The cuts to these programs would be

continued on page 3

# GASP's 2016 Year in Review

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Membership and foundation support of GASP allows us to do the important watchdog, advocacy, and education work for which we are well known. With your support we were able to accomplish quite a bit in 2016. Here are some highlights:

GASP staff provided written and/or oral testimony on a dozen different permits, regulations, or contracts—see table 1.

We also collected and reviewed annual compliance certifications for all major sources in the 12-county southwest PA region. We continue to collect compliance certifications as they are issued to identify violators promptly. And, as reported back in the fall, we researched and reported on a backlog of Title V permits in southwestern Pennsylvania. See more about this project here: <http://tinyurl.com/majorsources2016>

We added new information to our Air Permits Clearinghouse (<http://gasp-pgh.org/projects/air-permits/>), making all operating permits for major and synthetic minor sources located in a 12-county region readily accessible to the public for the first time. See the map on page 3.

Date	Agency accepting comments	Subject
1.13.16	ACHD	Written/oral comments on Article XI – need to extend appeal period from 10 to 30 days
1.15.16	ACHD	Written comments on McConway and Torley installation permits
5.23.16	Pittsburgh Public Schools	Written/oral comments on School bus contracts
6.23.16	ACHD	Written comments on 2017 Air Monitoring Plan
6.24.16	Port Authority of Allegheny County	Oral testimony on using less polluting buses
7.18.16	PA DEP	Written comments on 2016 Air Monitoring Network
8.1.16	ACHD	Written/oral comments on Cheswick Generating Station draft Title V permit
10.10.16	ACHD	Written comments on Clairton's Installation permit for a Coal Tar Processing and Loading Facility
10.31.16	ACHD	Written comments on Cheswick Generating Station RACT determination and Written/oral comments on ATI Allegheny Ludlum Title V permit
11.2.16	ACHD	Oral comments on Allegheny Ludlum permit, permit backlog, and Article XI at BoH mtg.
12.12.16	ACHD	Written comments on Changes to Article XI on Hearings and Appeals
12.15.16	PA DEP	Written comments on Vista Metals Operating Permit

Table 1: GASP's legal testimony submitted in 2016.

The **Hotline** is the semiannual newsletter of the Group Against Smog and Pollution.

GASP  
1133 S. Braddock Ave., Suite 1A  
Pittsburgh, PA 15218

(412) 924-0604

[www.gasp-pgh.org](http://www.gasp-pgh.org)  
[info@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:info@gasp-pgh.org)

Twitter/Facebook: GASPPgh



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### GASP Mission Statement

The Group Against Smog and Pollution works to improve air quality to ensure human, environmental, and economic health.

### Methods of Achieving Mission

GASP is a citizens' group based in Southwestern PA which focuses on environmental issues in the surrounding region. 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.

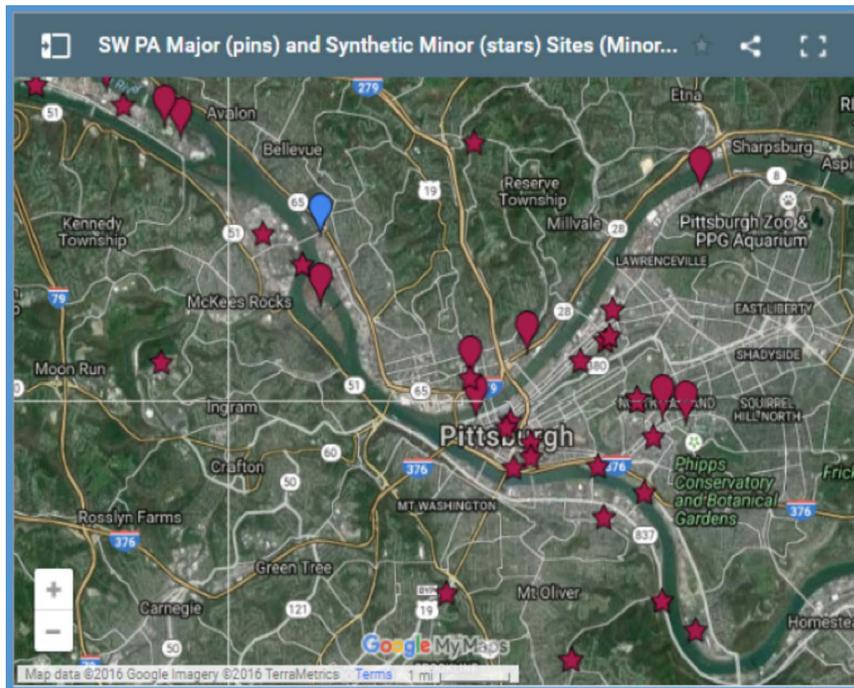
## 2016 Year in Review continued from page 2

In terms of education, seven additional schools have begun or are committed to beginning the EPA School Flag Program this school year. This includes:

- West Mifflin High School in the West Mifflin School District
- Carnegie Elementary School in the Carlynton School District
- Gill Hall Elementary School in the West Jefferson Hills School District
- Boyce Elementary School, Fort Couch Middle School, and Upper St. Clair High School all in the Upper St. Clair School District
- South Side High School in the South Side Area School District

We also gave presentations to a wide variety of audiences or staffed an educational table at a number of community events throughout the year. This included:

- Into Pittsburgh
- Healthy Communities Conference
- Point Park University Multimedia workshop
- Managing Environmental Nonprofits at University of Pittsburgh
- Allegheny County Clean Air Now annual meeting
- Penn State students touring Braddock
- Osher course at Carnegie Mellon University
- Clairton Education Center
- Various Lichen walks
- STEM Youth Career Exploration
- Ozone Garden planting at Winchester Thurston



GASP's Air Permit Clearinghouse map shows the locations of facilities in southwestern PA which have Title V Operating Permits. Links to these permits are on the GASP website at <http://gasp-pgh.org/projects/air-permits/>

- Assemble Learning Party
- Air Monitoring education at Christ The Divine Teacher school
- Resilience Fair
- Homewood Health Expo
- Bio-Blitz at Phipps Conservatory
- Earth Day
- American Lung Association Expo
- Green and Innovation Festival



## EPA Budget Cuts continued from page 1

harmful to our nation's citizens and especially to residents of areas with high levels of air pollution, like Allegheny County. According to the EPA, in 2020, the Clean Air Act Amendments will prevent around 240,000 early deaths. Most of the economic benefits (about 85 percent) are attributable to reductions in premature mortality associated with reductions in ambient particulate matter. The benefits to society exceed the compliance cost of the amendments by a factor of more than 30 to 1.

In 2015, for 2/3 of the days, the Pittsburgh region's air quality was not considered good by EPA's standards for ozone and

particulate matter. Allegheny County residents have a cancer risk from air pollution up to 20 times higher than residents of surrounding rural areas. And from 2013 to 2015, 10 of Allegheny County's 14 PM2.5 monitors registered annual concentrations that placed the readings in the worst 25% in the country. *Any cuts to EPA's important work will affect Allegheny County residents significantly.*

*Editor's note: As we go to press, the EPA budget information in this article is accurate, but this information may change by the time you read this. Check the GASP website at [www.gasp-pgh.org](http://www.gasp-pgh.org) for updates.*

# Pittsburgh Public School Buses Get Cleaner, But More Work Is Needed

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Last summer, Pittsburgh Public Schools and the bus companies that provide student transportation to them finalized their Pupil Transportation Agreement. Part of the contract included the language below, which in simplified terms means all contracted school buses must either be newer, clean running models, or if older be equipped with emission reduction technology that reduces toxic diesel emissions by some 90 percent.

A recent Right-to-Know request conducted by GASP revealed that approximately 92% of the buses being utilized are 2007 model year (this is the year EPA required 100% of the manufactured on-road diesel vehicles to come equipped with diesel particulate filters) or newer or have been retrofit with emission reduction technology. This is a significant improvement over 2015 numbers, provided by the school district, which indicated only 45% of the buses were new or retrofit.

We are pleased that Pittsburgh Public Schools and the various companies that serve them took our calls to clean up the buses seriously by agreeing to include this practical and important language in the contracts, and we are happy with the progress that has been made. *However, we think it is necessary for the remaining twenty or so buses to be replaced or retrofit in the immediate future.* These remaining older buses are considerably dirtier than newer/retrofit buses and no student should have to ride them. These contracts went into effect at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, so all buses should be compliant by now.

Diesel exhaust poses one of the greatest cancer risks of any toxic outdoor air pollutant in the region. Diesel particles are

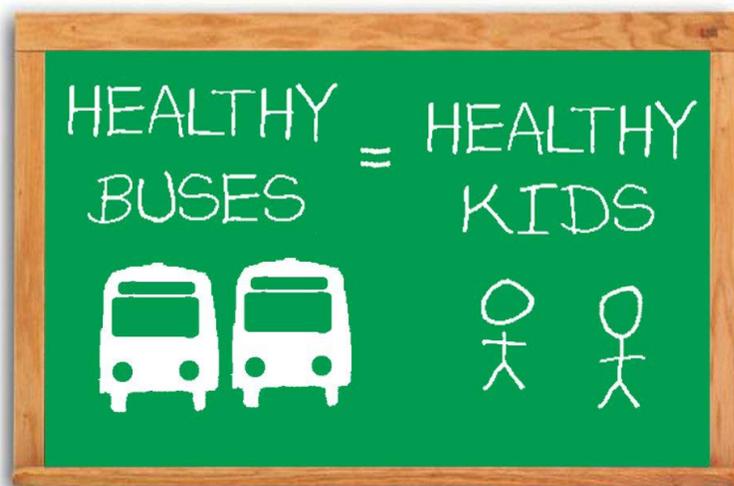


Image by Peter Bartholomew

also linked to asthma attacks, heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, and reduced brain function. Children are especially vulnerable, as they breathe at a faster rate than adults and have a diminished ability to detoxify and excrete many chemical toxins. And since their bodies are still developing, damage now could impact their bodies and minds for years to come.

Right now 15% of the school buses used at Pittsburgh Public Schools are nearing retirement age. Going forward the school district and bus companies that serve them need to think long term. What can the school district and the bus companies do to minimize their impact on human health and reduce their carbon footprint? What opportunities can they take advantage of to replace diesel buses with less polluting ones, for instance transitioning to clean burning natural gas or zero emission electric buses?

School districts, bus companies, municipalities, and other diesel fleet owners should start thinking now about projects that could potentially be funded by local, state, and federal funding. One possible source of funding is the Volkswagen settlement money coming to Pennsylvania. According to a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette December 2016 article (<http://tinyurl.com/m9xnnbn>), "Pennsylvania is slated to receive more than \$110 million to reduce air pollution from vehicles, ferries and other diesel-powered machines under the terms of a settlement with Volkswagen over the car company's emissions-cheating scheme." Another source could be Allegheny County Clean Air Funds. At GASP, we are happy to help interested groups search and apply for funding. Contact [rachel@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:rachel@gasp-pgh.org) with questions and ideas. ♿

## Contract language from the Pittsburgh Public Schools' Pupil Transportation Agreement:

"CARRIER agrees that the age of all school bus constructed vehicles made available to the DISTRICT during the term of this agreement shall not exceed twelve (12) model years and shall be manufactured in 2007 or later, except for such school bus constructed vehicles as are equipped with diesel particulate filters (DPFs) and closed crankcase ventilation systems (CCVs), which may be manufactured not earlier than 2005 and shall not exceed twelve (12) model years in age."



# air quality camp

June 26, 2017 - June 30, 2017

Ages 10-13

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Environmental Charter School

(829 Milton St., Pittsburgh, PA 15218)



Join GASP for a week-long, in-depth look at air in Southwestern PA including field trips, nature explorations, air monitoring, science experiments, and so much more!

The cost is \$150 per child. Scholarships are available and this special registration is due by June 1st. Please contact [jessica@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:jessica@gasp-pgh.org) or 412-924-0604 x207 with any questions.



*Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) is a nonprofit in Pittsburgh working to improve air quality through education, advocacy, and policy making.*

For more information and online registration:

<http://gasp-pgh.org/air-quality-camp/>



## GASP's Air Quality Camp Interest Form

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Check Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you prefer not to use online registration, please make check payable to *Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc* and mail to *GASP, 1133 S Braddock Ave, Suite 1A, Pittsburgh, PA 15218*

by Friday, June 16, 2017

# Spotlight on a GASP Board Member

James Fabisiak, Ph.D., is one of the newest members of the GASP board, joining in the fall of 2016. When asked about the importance of clean air, Jim responded that growing up in Central New York as the son of an avid outdoorsman shaped his views. Jim and his dad explored the wilds of New York and Canada, especially the Adirondack mountains. “My earliest recollection of the effects of air pollution was the depletion of the brook trout in many of the lakes and ponds within the Adirondacks.” Despite the absence of any major pollution sources near this pristine wilderness, acid rain caused by emissions from far off coal-fired power plants was falling into these treasured wilderness waterways, rendering them unsuitable for the pollution-sensitive brook trout that “many look to as a symbol of natural beauty and, by the way, is the state fish of both New York and Pennsylvania.” Jim notes that, with the passage of the Clean Air Act and steadfast efforts of the New York state’s Dept. of Environmental Conservation, some of those lakes are recovering and trout are beginning to thrive again.

Jim’s outdoor experiences prompted him to attend the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse University. Midway through his undergraduate years he became interested in psychology, from a neuroscience perspective, and graduated with a B.S. and dual majors in Biology and Psychology. He went on to graduate studies, earning a M.S. degree from Cornell University, N.Y.S. College of Veterinary Medicine and a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from Penn State’s College of Medicine. Jim completed his post-doctoral training as a Parker B. Francis Fellow of Pulmonary Research at the University of Vermont. Along the way Jim considered alternative careers as a fishery biologist, veterinarian, physician and musician, but ultimately embarked on a 25+ year career as a cellular and molecular toxicologist. Jim is currently an Associate Professor of Environmental & Occupational Health at Pitt’s Graduate School of Public Health.

Jim accepted the invitation to join the GASP board to bring his work in environmental health into a more practical and applied public health arena. “I wanted to combine my academic skills and science to study air pollution in the region where I and millions of others live, as well as educate and inform those communities.” Jim sees a role in helping citizens advocate for their well-being and for social and political change that advances environmental and health protection. He wants to advance GASP initiatives on community education and engagement, leveraging his knowledge to more efficiently harness GASP citizen-science air monitoring projects, along with those of other groups to help “paint the Pittsburgh air



pollution picture.” Jim also works to understand and raise awareness regarding the environmental and health impacts of unconventional natural gas extraction and the expansion of the petrochemical industry into Southwest Pennsylvania. Jim states, “Reminiscent of those delicate ecosystems in the Adirondacks, the science tells us that those most vulnerable to feeling the effects of air pollution today are people with asthma and other lung ailments, the elderly, young children, and pregnant women.”

When asked to share an interesting personal story, Jim fondly recalled his time spent as a semi-professional guitar player in the rock music scene during his high school and college years. “I, along with a nucleus of very close friends, spent years living the quintessential garage band life style. From basement practices that drove our parents nuts, to high school dance and frat party gigs, to eventually touring small clubs throughout upstate New York.” Jim said it put money in the pocket and made memories galore, with some of his bandmates even going on to have fairly successful careers in the music industry. He himself brushed against music stardom, as he “did get to shake hands and have a conversation with James Taylor.”

Jim and his wife, Margie, currently reside in the North Hills and their son, Luke, attends Duquesne University. In his free time Jim enjoys hiking, photography, a good book, and, most of all, a good fishing hole.



# Remembering Marilyn Skolnick

Marilyn Skolnick, long-time environmental activist and volunteer GASP Board member, passed away last Dec 10, just shy of her 92nd birthday. You may have seen her Post Gazette obituary: <https://tinyurl.com/marilynskolnick>

Marilyn had a particular passion for transportation issues and citizen involvement. As a former colleague of hers recalls, Marilyn vigorously fought for citizen participation before it was considered mandatory, successfully pushing for legislation mandating the formation of a citizen advisory board to the Allegheny County Port Authority.

But what of her personal side? Those of us who were fortunate to know her knew a woman of great wit and a sometimes acerbic tongue. She didn't suffer fools gladly, and if someone did something particularly boneheaded, she wasn't shy about commenting on it. But she also was quick

to give praise for things well done. She became a friend to many and a mentor to budding environmental activists. She bravely spoke truth to power and led by example.

I remember going to a Port Authority event—the unveiling of PAT's first hybrid bus, as I recall—at which various high ranking authority officials and multiple politicians were in attendance, and was amused to see that Marilyn was at least as well known as they were. Everyone just took it in stride, accepting that Marilyn was a force of nature who commanded attention.

Marilyn left a rich legacy of environmental and civic accomplishment, and I'm grateful to have worked with her. We miss her intellect and quick wit and are thankful for the bequest Marilyn left GASP in her will. The greater Pittsburgh region is undoubtedly a better place today as a result of her tireless efforts on behalf of its citizens and for a healthier planet.

Below is a reprint of an article originally printed in our 2002 Hotline.

Jonathan Nadle, GASP President



## Join GASP Today!

- \$40 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
- \$60 Grassroots Contributors
- \$100 Grassroots Patrons
- \$250 Clean Air Defenders
- \$500 Clean Air Protectors
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

*Call GASP at (412) 924-0604 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Check  Visa  Mastercard  American Express

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

CCV code: \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

## Kudos to a Lifetime Achiever!

Marilyn Skolnick, longtime GASP Board Member and volunteer, has been commended for her contributions to the environment and society with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Brooklyn College Alumni Association. This award recognizes a distinguished career and outstanding achievements which have contributed to the living history of Brooklyn College.

In addition to Marilyn's dedicated work with GASP, she also serves on the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club Allegheny Group; is current president of the Allegheny County Transit Council; participates in a number of subcommittees of the Division of Air Quality, Allegheny County Health Department; is a member of the Allegheny County Emergency Management Council; is a director for Citizens for Alternatives to New Toll Roads; and serves on the Public Participation Panel for Allegheny County for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission.

Joining Marilyn in receiving this award are: author Irwin Shaw, congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, attorney and author Alan Dershowitz, actor Jimmy Smits, music critic Harold Schonberg and actor Alfred Drack.

Congratulations Marilyn!

*Reprinted from the Winter 2002 GASP Hotline*

# Save the Date

*Making the Connection:*

## ***Physical Activity, Air Pollution and Asthma in the Urban Environment***

Wednesday, May 3, 2017  
5 P.M. - 8 P.M.

Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC  
\$5 Online Registration



***Dr. Stephanie  
Lovinsky-Desir***

[gaspmakingtheconnection.eventbrite.com](http://gaspmakingtheconnection.eventbrite.com)

Join us for our annual fundraiser:

## **GASP-toberfest**

Friday, October 20, 2017

6:30 P.M. - 9 P.M.

Penn Brewery - Eisenhalle



ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



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1133 S. Braddock Ave., Suite 1A  
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