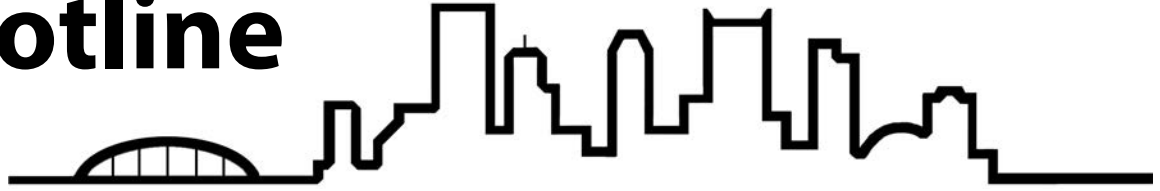




# Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Fall 2017

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

## In this issue

No Idling! Young Lungs at Work	1
A Connection Made: Physical Activity, Asthma, and Air Pollution	1
Athletes United for Healthy Air	2
Smelly Hydrogen Sulfide has a Legal Limit but that Standard is Frequently Violated	3
McConway & Torley and ATI Brackenridge <i>Still Do Not</i> Have Operating Permits	4
GASP for Clean Air! Sources, Symptoms, and Solutions: An Air Quality Exhibit at Assemble	6
GASP's First Air Quality Summer Camp a Success!	7
Idling: Myth vs. Fact	9
Spotlight on a GASP Board Member	11
GASP in Action	12

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.

## No Idling! Young Lungs at Work

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Earlier this year GASP, in collaboration with the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children, launched our No Idling! Young Lungs at Work program, made possible with a grant from The Grable Foundation. The overall goals of the program are to increase awareness among Allegheny County childcare providers about air pollution's negative impact on children's health and to empower them to reduce pollution from one source, idling cars, by giving them the tools necessary to discourage this polluting behavior on their property.

While there is currently a law in Pennsylvania limiting the idling of heavy duty

diesel vehicles, such as school and transit buses and delivery trucks, there are no laws in place to prohibit the idling of gasoline or diesel powered cars. The idling tailpipes of cars spew out the same pollutants as moving cars. These pollutants have been linked to serious human illnesses including asthma, heart disease, chronic bronchitis, and cancer.

Idling is common at childcare centers. Many parents may think they are saving time or money by letting their cars idle, when in fact an idling car wastes fuel and in turn money. Some parents may also not be aware that the pollution exiting the tailpipes

continued on page 5

## A Connection Made: Physical Activity, Asthma, and Air Pollution

by Emily Persico, GASP's Student Conservation Association Sustainability Fellow

The Center for Disease Control recommends that the average adult gets at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week. Unfortunately, in a region plagued with unhealthy levels of pollution and an epidemic of asthma, where and when we exercise can be just as important as how much exercise we get. This truth is exacerbated in the case of children, whose lungs are still developing and sucking in more air per pound than adults.

On May 3, 2017, GASP hosted Dr. Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir from the

Pulmonology Division of Columbia University Medical Center to break this issue down and discuss her research, which is focused on understanding how to keep children living in urban polluted environments active and healthy.

Asthma inflames and narrows the airways of 8.4 percent of all United States children, explained Dr. Lovinsky-Desir. In the U.S., asthma costs \$56 billion, 10.5 million missed school days, and over 200 childhood deaths per year. This burden disproportionately falls on children exposed to poor air

continued on page 10

# Athletes United for Healthy Air

by Emily Persico, GASP's Student Conservation Association Sustainability Fellow

You may not consider yourself an athlete, but odds are you spend a considerable amount of time outdoors, breathing in the poor air quality of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

**Athlete (n):** a person who participates in outdoor activities, including but not limited to gardening and dog walking, running and biking

If you fit this definition, then the Group Against Smog and Pollution considers you a part of a sensitive population. What does this mean? A sensitive population is a group of people that is more susceptible to the negative effects of air pollution. Other groups that fall into this category are children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with certain pre-existing heart and lung conditions.

While these other groups may seem inherently vulnerable, athletes don't intuitively fit into this framework. Athletes improve their health when they exercise, counteracting a lot of the health consequences that dirty air threatens to bring.

Unfortunately, however, Allegheny County has high levels of fine particulate matter, ground-level ozone, and sulfur dioxide, all of which impact our health. And athletes are not immune. By being and breathing outside, athletes are exposed to more of these pollutants, putting them at risk of sacrificing all of the great benefits they gain from being active. This sacrifice is magnified under more strenuous exercise. As respiration rates increase and unfiltered air is channeled through the mouth rather than the nose, pollution is allowed to more rapidly settle in the lungs.

That is why GASP created the Athletes United for Healthy Air program. We believe that athletes deserve the right to know how our air quality is impacting their health, and that



they will be empowered to make changes to their activities to reduce the risk.


In early fall, GASP asked athletes what they knew and what programming they were interested in. This survey is still available online, and we would love your input:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWPHSD6>

What we've learned so far is this: Athletes don't fully understand the risks associated with exercising in our poor air quality, but they can feel some of the short-term impacts more directly. From behavior changes and stress to smelling horrible industrial smells and asthma, the athletes of Southwestern Pennsylvania have surely suffered enough.

So join us on our mission to improve our health. Here's what you can do:

- Take our survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RWPHSD6>
- Attend our events! From hikes and bike rides to lectures and trainings, there is plenty to do with Athletes United. Check GASP's Facebook page for the latest: @GASPPGH
- Follow Athletes United for Healthy Air on Twitter: @Athletesforair
- Protect yourself! Exercise in the early mornings or evenings to reduce your exposure, and keep your activity as far from busy roadways as possible. Breathe through your nose and report bad odors to the Allegheny County Health Department and the Smell PGH app.

Athletes, unite! For healthy air, healthy communities, and a healthy environment, let's clean up our air. 

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

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## GASP Mission Statement

The Group Against Smog and Pollution works to improve air quality to protect human, environmental, and economic health in southwestern Pennsylvania.

## GASP Vision

GASP envisions a Southwestern Pennsylvania where the air we breathe supports human, environmental, and economic health and where:

- Every citizen can breathe cleaner air, which at a minimum meets federal health-based standards and is no longer listed as one of the top 10 most polluted areas in the United States.
- Regional data will show over time that citizens have less prevalence of diseases and conditions that are proven to be linked to air pollution.
- Citizens understand the health implications of polluted air and appreciate that clean air is imperative not only to good health but also to both a healthy environment and a healthy economy and where they hold policymakers accountable for regional air quality.
- Policymakers consider new development through an "air quality lens."
- All regional businesses comply with their air quality permits. In the cases where they are not complying, regulatory agencies take swift action to stop violations of air quality permits and regulations.



# Smelly Hydrogen Sulfide has a Legal Limit but that Standard is Frequently Violated

by Sue Seppi, GASP Program Manager

Waking up in the middle of the night to “rotten egg odors” is not an uncommon event in Allegheny County, especially in and downwind of the Mon Valley. That smell is very likely the malodorous hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), whose odor is traditionally described as “rotten eggs” and perceptible by most people at a very low ambient concentration. Of course there are other disagreeable ambient odors, but the H<sub>2</sub>S odor is so unpleasant and common that Pennsylvania has required an ambient limit



Sue Seppi speaks at an Allegheny County Board of Health meeting about hydrogen sulfide.

of .005 parts per million (ppm) averaged over 24 hours. This standard is adopted and enforceable by the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) Air Quality Program.

Recently, the public has had a new option: not just to hold their noses, but to report this window-slammng odor to the ACHD Air Quality Program using the Smell PGH mobile app developed by the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University. The

Smell PGH app has recorded 396 specific “rotten egg” odor complaints between September 29, 2016 and September 5, 2017. Additional “rotten egg” malodor complaints likely were made directly to the ACHD Air Quality Program or to Smell PGH, but with the description on the app left blank.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states, “In order to avoid substantial complaints about odor annoyance among the exposed population, hydrogen sulfide concentrations should not be allowed to exceed 7 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (0.005 ppm), with a 30-minute averaging period.”<sup>1</sup> The standard averaging time of 24 hours in the Pennsylvania standard allows for some considerably higher hourly H<sub>2</sub>S levels.

Increased hourly concentrations usually occur at night or early morning during our county’s frequent inversions when pollutants get trapped in chilled ground level air. H<sub>2</sub>S is also heavier than air, so it may stick close to the ground at breathing level.

24 hour Average Standard of .005 ppm Violations	Year
35	2017 through September 5
41	2016
87	2015
49	2014
28	2013
65	2012

Table 1: Number of violations of the 24-hour standard for H<sub>2</sub>S at the Liberty Monitor

Most of the time there are consequences for violations of air quality standards that force improvement but for the 24-hour H<sub>2</sub>S standard in the Mon Valley, not so much. This H<sub>2</sub>S standard, even with the 24-hour average, has been significantly violated at the Mon Valley Liberty monitor as shown in Table 1.

Is the ACHD Air Quality Program paying enough attention to excessive hydrogen sulfide or other odor issues? Some citizens in the Mon Valley area have resorted to litigation, recently suing U.S. Steel in part because of “noxious odors” alleged to be caused by U.S. Steel’s Clairton Coke Plant air emissions.

Odor issues should not be allowed to slide. All the odor complaints directed to ACHD and the creation of the Smell PGH app confirm how upsetting odors are to the public. The ACHD Air Quality Program needs to do its job in order for our region to reach attainment of all air quality standards, including the hydrogen sulfide standard. Odor is one of the most obvious features of the air. To really be in the high rankings of “Most Livable Cities” designations, we must certainly achieve agreeable air quality as a component of our county’s many assets.

1. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark, Air Quality Guidelines 2nd edition-ch.6-6, hydrogen sulfide, 2000, p. 6, [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/123076/AQG2ndEd\\_6\\_6Hydrogensulfide.PDF](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/123076/AQG2ndEd_6_6Hydrogensulfide.PDF)



# McConway & Torley and ATI Brackenridge Still Do Not Have Operating Permits

by Ned Mulcahy, GASP Staff Attorney

Located on a 13-acre tract along the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville neighborhood, McConway & Torley is one of the oldest steel production and fabrication facilities in the region. About 20 miles up the Allegheny lies another steelmaking facility: the ATI Brackenridge plant. At 110 acres, ATI's site dwarfs its downriver counterpart. Nonetheless, the two facilities have a lot in common. Both use electric arc furnaces to produce steel, both have been in existence well over 100 years, and *both have never been issued operating permits by the Allegheny County Health Department's (ACHD) Air Quality Program.*

## How could this happen?

There is no single answer but part of the issue lies in the fact that plant-wide permitting came about many years after recognition of the air quality crisis. Allegheny County began regulating air pollution in the 1940's but it was not until specific regulations were adopted in 1995 that all sources of air pollutants in Allegheny County were required to obtain an operating permit covering the entire facility. This was a profound advancement for the permitting agencies and air quality generally. Including all applicable limitations in one document allowed regulators and the public to better understand and check compliance. The implementation of this new permitting process mandated a November 1995 deadline for initial operating permit applications. The new regulation further required the Air Quality Program to take action on the McConway & Torley application by April 1998 and the ATI Brackenridge application by November 2002.

But the question remains: when the law required action well over a decade ago, why has ACHD still failed to issue permits for these facilities? There is plenty of blame to go around but no clear answer. However, we can confidently answer this related question: What is GASP doing to change the situation?

## McConway & Torley

McConway & Torley submitted an operating permit application in June 1996 and updated applications in February 2008 and July 2010. Over the past seven years, GASP has worked with community partners to pressure ACHD to act on this matter. In 2010, GASP appealed the issuance of an electric arc furnace installation permit over concerns that it did not adequately protect human health. That appeal ended with GASP and McConway & Torley entering into a consent agreement in 2011, which required supplemental

emissions controls for particulate matter and toxic metal emissions at the facility. In 2014, GASP threatened litigation over ACHD's continued failure to issue an operating permit but the matter became moot—at least temporarily—when the Air Quality Program completed a draft operating permit and made it available for public comment in March 2015.

McConway & Torley vehemently opposed the production limitations contained in the March 2015 draft permit. The Air Quality Program has continued to work with McConway & Torley toward revising the draft operating permit but still has not published a final permit. From right-to-know requests, GASP has ascertained that the revision process has been plagued with delays. For instance, McConway & Torley needed to conduct additional emissions testing to challenge ACHD's production limitations but did not complete those tests until November 2016. In July 2017, McConway & Torley completed a second set of emissions tests on new emissions control equipment that it originally sought to install in February 2016. Publicly available correspondence also shows that differences between ACHD and McConway & Torley concerning replacement of an electrical transformer, emissions inventory reporting, replacement of a ladle pre-heater, and applicability of certain emission standards have contributed to the delay. These repeated modifications and disagreements have allowed McConway & Torley to keep pushing off the publication of a final operating permit, and nothing in the publicly available documents suggest a timeline for when this revision process will end.

## ATI

Stop me if you have heard this before. ATI Brackenridge submitted an operating permit application in November 1995 and a subsequent update in July 2013. In July 2016, GASP sent a letter to ACHD announcing its intent to sue over their failure to act on ATI's operating permit application. ACHD published a draft operating permit in September 2016 but has yet to take final action on this draft.

In this case—unlike McConway & Torley—GASP hopes this delay means that ACHD is working to strengthen the permit. The initial ATI Brackenridge operating permit draft would have allowed New Source Review & Prevention of Significant Deterioration requirements—regulations for large facilities designed to protect ambient air—to be circumvented and would have established illegally high

continued on page 5

## No Idling! Young Lungs at Work continued from page 1

of their vehicles is damaging to health and the environment.

Through the No Idling! Young Lungs at Work program, childcare center staff learn about air quality and anti-idling issues by participating in a one-hour professional development webinar. Staff are able to earn continuing education credits by participating. Those childcare centers will then be eligible to receive free materials for their centers. This includes weather resistant signage to be placed outside the facility and educational materials for distribution to parents.

We hope their participation in this program will give them a greater understanding of a variety of air quality issues and may lead to them being interested in collaborating with us on future projects that minimize children and staff's exposure to air pollution and increase awareness among staff and parents. Another outcome of this program will be the education of parents about air pollution and idling. If they decide to switch off their engines at the childcare center due to our education and encouragement, they may be more likely to switch them off at other places too.

To date, the following Allegheny County childcare centers have participated: First Bethel Kings School Kids, Hosanna House Child Care Center, St. Paul's Preschool, Shady Lane School, The Children's Center of Pittsburgh, Thomas Child Care and Learning Academy, and the YMCA Duquesne



The No Idling sign on display at the First Bethel Kings School

University Child Development Center. Their collective participation has allowed us to reach more than 600 families.

To learn more about the program and how to get your child care center involved contact [rachel@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:rachel@gasp-pgh.org).

**See GASP's *Idling Myths vs. Facts* factsheet on page 9.** 

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## McConway & Torley and ATI Brackenridge continued from page 4


emission limits for their electric arc furnaces. The draft permit underestimated potential emissions of the hazardous air pollutants hexane, hydrogen fluoride, and formaldehyde. ACHD's Technical Review Document did not fully explain the basis for a number of emission limits in the draft Title V Operating Permit and it did not include testing, monitoring, and recordkeeping requirements sufficient to ensure compliance with all permit limits. GASP submitted these concerns in formal comments on the original draft permit but cannot be sure that ACHD will incorporate them into the new draft permit.

In March, GASP, PennEnvironment, the Environmental Integrity Project, and the Clean Air Council threatened ACHD with litigation, again, for its failure to issue the ATI permit. Again, ACHD took just enough action to avoid answering for its actions in court, this time issuing ATI a fine but still failing to issue a permit that protects local citizens near the facility.

While ACHD continued to work out the details of a permit revision, the reality of the situation near the Brackenridge facility is looking bleak. In September,

GASP, in conjunction with the Environmental Integrity Project, PennEnvironment, and Clean Air Council, held a community meeting to discuss air quality issues and specific concerns with both the ATI facility as well as Harsco, ATI's waste subcontractor. Community members voiced a variety of concerns, including waking to find thick layers of soot on their properties and foul odors. We urged them to continue to report these concerns to ACHD and to be prepared to comment once ACHD publishes the revised draft operating permit.

### Citizen Engagement

And just as we started this article, there is a striking list of similarities between McConway & Torley and ATI as we look forward. For both facilities, GASP remains committed to seeing the operating permit through to completion. Regarding both ATI and McConway & Torley, you can help to push back against the companies' complaints when ACHD publishes these new permits. For both facilities, the public will have a chance to tell ACHD that they should protect our health. Your voice matters. Stay tuned to GASP's email alerts this fall. 

# GASP for Clean Air! Sources, Symptoms, and Solutions: An Air Quality Exhibit at Assemble

by Chelsea Arnold, GASP Education and Events Coordinator

Right: A giant air quality index on the window and live music draw a crowd into Assemble.

This past August, GASP took over Assemble, a maker space and gallery on Penn Avenue, and created an interactive exhibit to teach people about air quality in a fun and unexpected environment. The exhibit tried to answer three main questions: what are the sources of air pollution, what health and environmental impacts does it cause, and what can we do to help? GASP for Clean Air! was up for the entire month of August and was open for First Fridays and several other GASP-hosted events. We estimate that over 500 people were educated during our events as well as many others who used the space when GASP staff weren't present.



Left: Participants look into the “windows to air pollution.”

Repurposed windows with large prints of “sources” like camp fires and idling buses and “solutions” such as homes covered in solar panels were the first stop for guests. Each window was accompanied by a shutter that asked a question about that particular source or solution and had the answer along with additional information when opened up.

Right: Participants engage with the “Symptoms” section of the exhibit.

To learn how air pollution affects their health, exhibit visitors picked “boogers” from a giant nose, which were fill-in-the-blank answers to the questions on the wall surrounding it. Plush body parts representing organs most impacted by air pollution had tags with more information.



Left: The “Solutions” section gives exhibit visitors information on resources.

The “Solutions” area was set up to be a resource for anyone wishing to do their part in the fight for clean air. Included was information on many local organizations working towards better air quality, a desk with petitions and postcards for attendees to fill out, and a display showing how to write to your local legislators.

continued on page 8

# GASP's First Air Quality Summer Camp a Success!

by Chelsea Arnold, GASP Education and Events Coordinator

Educating the next generation of civic and business leaders, health care professionals, and engineers about the importance of clean air is a priority for us at GASP. With that in mind, June brought something new to our organization in the form of our first ever summer camp.

The week-long camp, held at the Environmental Charter School, taught 10-13 year olds a variety of air quality-related topics using games and crafts, guest speakers, and field trips. Each day of the week had a different theme which campers could explore and learn more about, such as health effects associated with air pollution, impacts of pollutants on climate change, and how best to minimize personal contributions. Overall the camp was very successful, and like most pilot programs we were able to learn a lot about how to improve the camp going forward.



**Above:** Summer campers, along with GASP's Student Conservation Association Fellow Emily Persico, take a break from designing an experiment to find out which areas of Frick Park had the most particulate matter in the air.



**Above:** Campers play a round of "Whose Air Ball!"

This activity takes any sport with one ball and two goals and transforms it into a battle between opposing sides and their environment. The sport then becomes an opportunity for understanding the relationship between the players (the population) and the ever-changing rules (weather or environmental conditions). More particle pollution in the air equates to another ball being added in, and an air action day means players must not overexert themselves and are forced to walk the ball down the field instead of run. The longer they play the game, the more they learn about sensitive populations—and the more fun they have.

**Right:** A camper shows off his particle-infused slime.

Making slime is the latest fad with kids in this age group. Our staff wanted to take advantage of this fun trend, so we found a way to relate it to air quality. By calling the slime "boogers," we were able to talk about how important our noses are when it comes to detecting particles. Campers learned that our nose is a first defense against air pollution due to its ability to trap particles in the hair and mucus.



continued on page 8

**Air Quality Summer Camp  
continued from page 7**



**Above: Campers tour the Carrie Furnaces at Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area.**

Along with hearing from guest speakers, campers were also able to learn from tour guides during two field trips. At The Donora Smog Museum campers learned the history of the 1948 inversion event that killed two dozen people in the small town in PA. Campers also toured the Carrie Furnaces to learn more about the history of Pittsburgh's air quality and how the city's industry has changed over time.

**Below: Campers stretch with Kara Prentice from Pittsburgh Passion.**

We had several guest speakers join us during the week, including Kara Prentice from Pittsburgh's all-female football team, the Pittsburgh Passion. Kara spoke to the campers about how air quality affects the lives of athletes and had them run drills as she taught them to throw and catch a football. Along with Kara, the camp had guests from a variety of different environmentally-focused organizations including PennFuture, Healthy Ride, and the Penn State Center. These visitors told the campers stories about how they were able to take their personal interests and focus them into a career that would positively impact the environment.



**Air Quality Exhibit  
continued from page 6**

**Below: Shelby serves polluted meringues at the Air Fair to make the invisible more apparent.**

After attending a workshop where she was able to study the GASP archives housed at Pitt, Shelby Brewster, a Theater and Performance PhD candidate at The University of Pittsburgh, got in touch with us to see if there was some way we could work together. Interested in GASP's history of using baked goods to drive social change, Shelby wanted to incorporate desserts into her project. She noted that "Meringues are up to 90% air, so by whipping up egg whites in polluted areas, the meringues capture any pollutants currently present in the air." Shelby made meringues near two different sources of air pollution and one control set in her home and then challenged participants to a blind taste test to see if they could tell the difference.



**Above: Air Fair attendees talk to tabling organizations.**

Throughout the month GASP held several events at Assemble, the largest of which was the Air Fair. This event played host to seven different environmental organizations (including GASP) that focus on air quality issues and gave visitors the chance to meet with representatives while exploring the exhibit.



Both the Air Quality Summer Camp and GASP for Clean Air! Exhibit were made possible with generous funding from The Heinz Endowments.





# Idling

## *Myth* vs **FACT**

*"I'll just leave my engine **idling** for a second while I run inside."*

Leaving my engine running when I'm stopped is okay.

*Myth*

**FACT**

Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to air pollution, and **idling can produce more pollution per minute than driving.**

Studies have linked various types of vehicle emissions to the formation of ground-level ozone which has been associated with eye/nose/throat irritation, asthma, bronchitis, decreased lung function, and many other negative health outcomes.

*Myth*

I need to warm up my vehicle.

**FACT**

**Idling isn't the best way to warm up your vehicle, even in cold weather - driving it is.** Your car needs no more than 30 seconds to fully circulate oil on freezing days.

*Myth*

Restarting my engine causes damage.

**FACT**

Cars today in the United States most often come with fuel injection technology. This delivery of fuel to the vehicle's engine keeps oil from washing off cylinder interiors and prevents oil dilution. Only your battery and starter are even slightly affected by frequent starts.

*Myth*

It uses less fuel to just leave the engine running.

**FACT**

Restarting most gasoline engines uses about the same amount of fuel as idling for 5 seconds. If you'll be stopped for more than one minute and it's safe to turn off your engine, you'll save more money by shutting it down.



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## Physical Activity, Asthma, and Air Pollution continued from page 1

quality, namely minorities and city-dwellers.

To better understand the influence of pollution on asthmatic symptoms in New York City, Dr. Lovinsky-Desir and her research group asked a critical question: Does exposure to air pollutants negate the positive effects of exercise on overall lung health?

Some research certainly seemed to say so. Exercise increases respiration rates, meaning that active people suck more pollutants into their lungs. In highly polluted environments, this had been associated with decreased lung growth in children and reduced lung function in adults. So the question that remains is this: Is exercising worth the risk?



**Dr. Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir speaks about her work studying the effects of air pollution on physical exercise in children.**

To sort this out, Dr. Lovinsky-Desir strapped vests to 163 children between the ages of 9 and 14, 50 percent of whom were previously diagnosed with asthma. These vests were equipped with GPS units and monitors for black carbon, physical activity, and airway inflammation.

The data that Dr. Lovinsky-Desir collected over two 24-hour periods reveals just how complex an issue this really is. While active children experience 20 percent lower airway inflammation than non-active children, they were also exposed to 25 percent more black carbon. Black carbon, a large component of the particulate matter small enough to penetrate deep into our lungs, can suppress lung development in children. Because of this, it is difficult to say how much better off the active children truly are, especially if active while exposed to high doses of pollution.

Adding to this presentation hosted by GASP were three panelists: Dr. Deborah Gentile, Director of Allergy and Asthma Clinical Research at the Allegheny Health Network; Dr. Ned Ketyer, a retired pediatrician with the Pediatric Alliance; and Patrice Tomcik, a Field Organizer for Moms Clean Air Force.

Dr. Gentile and Dr. Ketyer brought the topic back home, discussing their experience and research in the Pittsburgh



**Dr. Deborah Gentile answers an audience member's question, while panelists Patrice Tomcik and Dr. Ned Ketyer, along with speaker Dr. Stephanie Lovinsky-Desir, look on.**

area, where asthma plagues 26,000 children at rates 4 percent higher than the national average.

“Our findings are significant because they show that, despite the availability of local primary care providers, asthma specialists, and excellent controller medications, asthma is underdiagnosed and undertreated in many local children,” Dr. Gentile remarked. “They also suggest that poor regional air quality contributes to the local incidence and severity of asthmatic disease.”

Patrice Tomcik moved the discussion into a focus on natural gas development in rural areas surrounding Allegheny County. Tomcik has become a real leader on issues around fracking and methane, helping to educate and galvanize fellow parents in her community. Her voice, strong with passion, urged the audience to step up and defend our children’s health.

In a country-wide comparison of air quality, the State of the Air Report ranked our 12-county region eighth-worst for year-round fine particulate matter and 29th worst for ozone pollution. Allegheny County receives an “F” grade for both measures. With such serious pollution plaguing our region, many athletes are searching for answers. Dr. Lovinsky-Desir left the audience with this advice: Exercise during low traffic times (not rush hour), and stay away from major roads and highways. And, before you go out and exercise, visit [AirNow.gov](http://AirNow.gov) to check your local air quality conditions.

This event was a part of Athletes United for Healthy Air, an initiative of GASP to engage athletes of Southwestern Pennsylvania in the campaign for cleaner, healthier air. Past events have explored the link between air pollution and cardiovascular health, neurological health, and autism. To learn more about Athletes United for Healthy Air, visit the GASP website at <http://gasp-pgh.org/projects/au/>.



# Spotlight on a GASP Board Member

Harold Rickenbacker is one of GASP's newest board members and a current full-time PhD student in Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. He grew up in Orangeburg, SC and attended South Carolina State University, where he graduated magna cum laude with a BS in Civil Engineering.

Harold has only been in town for four years, but quickly involved himself in a variety of activities, including volunteering as a mentor in the Big Brother program, serving as program coordinator for Pitt's Engineering Diversity Graduate Student Association, and membership in the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and Tau Alpha Pi Engineering Honor Society. He also participates in the Reducing Outdoor Contaminants in Indoor Spaces (ROCIS) project.

When asked why he wanted to join GASP, he stated: "Since moving to Pittsburgh in 2014, I gained interest in working directly with a nonprofit that championed clean air. Through my involvement with the Environmental Justice Community Alert Matrix (EJCAM) initiative at the Kingsley Association, I was originally introduced to GASP as we worked to pilot a citizen science air monitoring bicycle campaign in the East End of Pittsburgh. The bicycle campaign was used to engage residents in participatory research to help advance environmental justice and sustainability topics in vulnerable communities. Historically, GASP has focused on providing communities with similar support. I saw GASP as an opportunity to not only learn more about 'on the ground' efforts in support of environmental equality, but also a chance to connect with like-minded individuals and combat air pollution within our region."


Harold's graduate research focuses on indoor and outdoor ambient air quality, working to uncover relationships between air pollution and quality of life in the Pittsburgh region. He also researches the Pittsburgh 2030 Districts project using life cycle assessment-based models linking energy reduction to long-term improvements in indoor and ambient air quality. He interned with the Department of Energy on a major demolition project in Oak Ridge, TN, gaining experience in hazardous waste exposure and transport, as well as with the Atlantic Naval Weapons Station in Charleston, SC, where he received training in site design and program management.




Harold has received multiple awards throughout his academic career, most recently including:

- American Center for Life Cycle Assessment (ALCA) XVI Conference: 2nd Place Student Poster Competition 2016
- National Science Foundation - Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate Fellow

Outside of academia, Harold enjoys travel, fishing, and hiking and said, "Hiking the Great Rocky Mountains was a life changing experience." Over the past four years, he's had the "very

rewarding" opportunity to travel to over a half-dozen cities around the country presenting his research. 

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# GASP in Action



GASP's Policy and Outreach Coordinator, Jamin Bogi, led a bicycle air monitoring tour for journalists attending the Society of Environmental Journalists conference in Pittsburgh in October 2017.

## Are you a member of GASP?

GASP members may vote for the GASP Board of Directors. Ballots will be emailed this year. If we don't have your email address, please contact the GASP office by phone at (412) 924-0604 or via email at [info@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:info@gasp-pgh.org).

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