



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Fall 2019

50th Anniversary Issue

www.gasp-pgh.org

In this issue

Michelle Madoff Award of Environmental Excellence Winners Honored	1
GASP's Key Accomplishments in 50 Years	2
GASP at 50: Remembrances from an Original GASPer	4
October 1 Proclaimed "GASP Day"	5
After 50 Years: Remembering GASP Founder Michelle Madoff	6
Just Call Him Richard: Son of Dirty Gertie Unearthed at GASP Archives	7
50th Anniversary Gala	8
GASP's Founding Activists an Inspiration for <i>Citizen Environmentalists</i> book	10
GASP's Legacy	11
Thank You Event Sponsors	14
Spotlight on a GASP Staff Member	15

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.

Michelle Madoff Award of Environmental Excellence Winners Honored

by Amanda Gillooly, GASP Communications Manager

In the fall of 1969, trailblazer Michelle Madoff helped gather a group of Pittsburghers concerned about air quality to see what could be done to improve it. GASP was born from that meeting, held right in Ms. Madoff's living room. Now, 50 years later, GASP has grown into a nonprofit with seven paid staff members who work steadfastly to continue the fight for clean air through a mix of education, progressive policy advocacy, and legal watchdog efforts.

For our 50th anniversary, we celebrated our founder through the Michelle Madoff Award of Environmental Excellence—a designation that honored outstanding women working to help improve the world around us.



Award winners: Patricia Himes, Laura Nettleton, Sue Seppi, Eva Resnick-Day, and Dr. Deborah Gentile (Kristina Marusic not pictured)

We honored those women—leaders in the business, community organizing, education, media and medicine fields—at our 50th anniversary gala on October 12 at

the Rodef Shalom Temple in Oakland. They included:

Laura Nettleton, Business

Laura Nettleton is the award winner in the business category. She is the owner of Thoughtful Balance, a Pittsburgh-based architectural firm specializing in resilient and low-energy design.



During her career, which spans more than 30 years, Nettleton discerned the ever-developing demand for sustainable, efficient homes “before this important niche of the residential market had so evolved.”

Ranging from the 2014 North American Passive House Conference, San Francisco, CA, to the 2016 Passive House Conference in Darmstadt, Germany, her speaking engagements confirm her wide recognition as a leader in architectural innovation who has materially influenced the evolution of this growing market segment.

Nettleton, who earned an undergraduate degree in arts/psychology/art history at the Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree in architecture from the University of Oregon, was called a pioneer by her nominators. They wrote:

“Laura has shown the way for other developers to adopt a more sustainable approach. By proving that Pittsburgh's energy-inefficient housing stock can be

continued on page 12

GASP's Key Accomplishments in 50 Years

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Since GASP's founding in 1969, it has developed into a strong local voice for the environment. Some of GASP's key accomplishments include:

- ★ Successfully litigating in federal district court in the 1970s to require Allegheny County to adopt standards based on the Clean Air Act of 1970.
- ★ Cooperating with the EPA in the 1980s to gain enforcement of air quality standards at the U.S. Steel coke production facilities at its Clairton Works.
- ★ Joining a successful EPA suit against LTV corporation in the 1990s to enforce existing air quality standards at the firm's Hazelwood plant; the plant was subsequently closed.
- ★ Filing a notice in 1998 of GASP's intention to sue Shenango, Inc., for long-standing air quality infractions at its Neville Island coke plant which was preempted by a successful EPA suit on the same issue. In each case the court action resulted in substantial financial penalties and/or remedial actions being imposed on Shenango.
- ★ Suing the EPA, along with the Sierra Club, asking it to classify southwestern Pennsylvania in "serious non-attainment" of specified ozone levels.
- ★ Joining efforts to protest a new coke plant on Hazelwood's riverfront property after LTV's coke facility closed in 1998. A Hazelwood community group, Citizens Helping Our Community (CHOC), was organized with GASP's help. GASP strongly supported this group with advice and participation for over a year. This joint effort clearly contributed to defeating the sale of the LTV site to Sun Coke.
- ★ Researching and officially commenting on Title V operating permits, a program of the 1990 Clean Air Act. GASP held several public meetings to educate and encourage the public to comment on Title V permits.

continued on page 3

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.

GASP Staff

Rachel Filippini	Executive Director
John Baillie	Staff Attorney
Amanda Gillooly	Communications Manager
Chelsea Hilty	Education and Events Coordinator
Kathy Lawson	Office Manager
Ned Mulcahy	Staff Attorney
Suzanne Seppi	Project Manager

GASP Board of Directors

Maren Cooke, PhD	Frances Harkins
Zelda Curtiss	Janis Johnson
Roger Day	Jonathan Nadle
David Eibling, MD	Abby Resnick
James Fabisiak, PhD	Kate St. John
Marla Ferrency	Peri Unligil, MD
Karen Grzywinski	

- ★ Campaigning to clean up emissions from coal-burning power plants in Pennsylvania that pose serious environmental and health hazards. In 2004, GASP entered into a settlement agreement with Reliant Energy (now NRG Energy) in Cheswick. The agreement was aimed at reducing high opacity (smoke) readings recorded at its Cheswick Power Station stack. Because of this agreement, improvements were made at the facility that resulted in far fewer opacity violations.
- ★ Serving on advisory committees at the county, state, and federal levels. Since its inception, GASP has had a representative on the Allegheny County Air Pollution Control Advisory Committee.
- ★ Pushing for an anti-idling ordinance at Allegheny County Council for heavy-duty diesel vehicles and participation in developing the regulatory language.
- ★ Crafting a draft Continuous Opacity Monitor (COMs) regulation in 2004 for Allegheny County. Up until then, opacity was measured by Method 9 (visual) alone, which has obvious limitations. The use of COMs enables accurate, around-the-clock measurements of opacity, equipping regulators with technology that monitors compliance with opacity regulations for 100 percent of a facility's operating time.
- ★ Helping to lead the *Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution*. Our campaign was influential in helping to identify diesel emission reduction projects and in garnering more than \$9 million for these projects in our region. We were also instrumental in getting Pittsburgh Public Schools to include requirements for cleaner buses in their school bus contracts and in working with the City of Pittsburgh and the Urban Redevelopment Authority to enact clean construction legislation.
- ★ Through community organizing and negotiations directly with the company, GASP was able to convince RRI Energy (now NRG Energy) to accept a lower lead emissions limit in their scrubber installation permit in 2010.
- ★ GASP launched the *Athletes United for Health Air Campaign* to educate athletes about air quality, steps to reduce exposure, and how to advocate for healthy air. Through this campaign we have partnered with such groups as Venture Outdoors and Bike Pittsburgh and have educated hundreds of athletes.
- ★ GASP supplied more than a dozen school districts in southwestern PA, including all of Pittsburgh Public Schools, with "No Idling" signs to remind school bus drivers to turn off their engines. We have also supplied at least two dozen daycare facilities in the region with no idling signage as well, through our *Young Lungs at Work* program.
- ★ GASP created the Air Permits Clearinghouse on our website. This is a one-stop shop for all Title V air quality permits in southwestern PA. It provides users with an easy way to see the major sources of air pollution in the region. Clicking on a facility brings up the latest permits, allowing viewers to learn what the facility does, and the types and amounts of pollutants it's allowed to emit.
- ★ GASP conducted extensive research examining the backlog of Title V permits across Pennsylvania, determining that certain regions, including Allegheny County had unacceptably large numbers of permits that were expired or never issued.
- ★ Combining efforts with other environmental and advocacy groups in the region and state, such as the Sierra Club, PennEnvironment, Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, Clean Water Action of Pennsylvania, Clean Air Council, and many others.
- ★ For 50 years, we've undertaken a continuous program to educate the public about air pollution and its remediation using several methods: publishing GASP's widely circulated newsletter, *Hotline*; participating in public meetings and organizing our own; providing a speakers bureau; giving statements to the media; writing letters to the press; appearing on local (and sometimes national) radio and television programs; and conducting an air monitoring program involving training sessions and the loaning of a professional-level air quality monitor to local secondary schools and citizens. GASP has also recently developed and implemented week-long air quality focused summer camps for middle schoolers.



GASP at 50: Remembrances from an Original GASPer

by Bernie Bloom, Founding Member of GASP

On this the golden anniversary of GASP's beginnings, I would like to convey to GASP's current members just what it was like at its founding in the winter of 1969-1970. This writing is from my memory. At that time I was a 27-year-old in my last year as a graduate student in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at CMU. I was about to begin an environmental program at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health when I met Michelle Madoff and became a part of her initial organizing committee.

It is an understatement to say those were tumultuous times. The Vietnam War was still raging. Nixon had been in the White House for about one year, and peace was not in sight. In early April of 1970 the first Earth Day/Environmental Teach-In would take place on the three main university campuses in Pittsburgh. In early May, Allison Krause, the daughter of GASP scientific committee member Arthur Krause, was among the four students who were shot dead at Kent State. Pittsburgh was alive with protests including the Grape Boycott, the Gulf Action Project, and feminist actions such as Wilma Scott Heide's 1969 successful efforts to erase gender-based hiring ads in the Pittsburgh Press.

And at her home on Mt. Royal Road, near the land above the Squirrel Hill Tunnel, Michelle Madoff, Arnold and Esther Kitzes, and a few others were forming GASP.

Of course, steel mill air pollution was on our minds. In those days we were some twelve years from the mill closures of 1982. Coke plants, iron and steel furnaces, and associated equipment were in full operation from Wheeling-Pittsburgh's plant near Monessen in Westmorland County, through US Steel's Mon Valley facilities at Clairton, West Mifflin (Irvin), McKeesport (National Tube), Duquesne, Braddock and the Carrie Furnaces and the Homestead Works still further downriver. Further to the west and south along the Mon/Ohio system were J&L factories in Hazelwood, Southside, and Aliquippa, and at Shenango on Neville Island.

In the spring of 1970, as I began my environmental health and science studies at Pitt, I was also an integral part of the earliest activities of GASP. In June of that year we testified before the Air Pollution Variance Board regarding ongoing air pollution from U.S. Steel's Edgar Thomson open hearth facility in Braddock. That testimony illustrates how people of diverse backgrounds came together under the GASP umbrella. GASP conducted an air monitoring project at sites around the ET mill, invaluable assisted by Professor John Frohlinger, an air chemist at the University of Pittsburgh. GASP received the quiet advice of individuals who knew much about oxygen lanced open hearth steelmaking.

Members serviced the monitors in the Penn Hills and near Turtle Creek. Testimony before the Variance Board was supported by other GASP members.

In that summer, GASP testified before the Board again, this time regarding US Steel's request for a variance for its dirty coke quenching operations at Clairton. GASP demonstrated that technology existed even then to clean the filthy quench water, thus showing that there was a third way besides dumping this waste water into the Monongahela River or pouring it onto hot coke and thus polluting the air with the phenolic wastes. The irony was that the information that supported the existence of working technology was found in the main reading room of the Carnegie Library in Oakland, named after one of the original steel industrialists of the 19th century.

GASP's intervention led to a decision by the Board in November 1971 to deny the variance and to encourage local and state government to seek equitable relief. That denial led to a joint state/county lawsuit against US Steel, a suit that went beyond coke quenching to all the company's operations at that plant. And that suit ultimately led to the installation of the biological oxidation plant that started up at the Clairton Works twenty years after the original intervention. To those who say GASP was long on publicity but weak on actual accomplishments, I point to the 1970 intervention as evidence to the contrary.

GASP was people. There are so many names that I could not give credit to all so this list is incomplete. I remember Michelle Madoff, a one-of-a kind powerhouse. I still miss her presence on this Earth. But she and the air pollution issue attracted many smart, creative, dedicated, educated women; women who at that time were not in the traditional workforce. I remember Pat Pelkofer, Ann Cardinal, Esther Kitzes, Joan Hays, Pat McGuire, Pat Newman, and many other motivated women.

GASP was an organization of citizens, both men and women, who came from different walks of life but worked towards the common goal of cleaning air in Pittsburgh. I am using the word "citizen" here in the broad sense. I knew many professional men who were in one way or another affiliated with GASP, but who could not risk publicly visible activism. One example is Dr. Mort Corn, a Republican who taught at the University of Pittsburgh and was active as a consultant in the industrial hygiene field. Mort and I co-chaired the GASP Technical Committee. Another example was Emerson Venable, a consulting industrial hygienist. Dr. Dale Kearns was also a member of GASP's Technical

continued on page 5

October 1 Proclaimed "GASP Day" by Mayor Peduto and Pennsylvania Senate

Group Against Smog and Pollution 50th Anniversary October 1, 2019

WHEREAS, the Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) was established in 1969 by 43 residents concerned about Pittsburgh's poor air quality; and

WHEREAS, GASP has grown and evolved from a volunteer-led group to one that today includes seven paid staff, including two attorneys, and a volunteer board who have worked tirelessly to improve our region's air quality; and

WHEREAS, GASP has written countless letters to the editor, spoken at dozens of public hearings, served on numerous regional committees and boards, testified for bills, and helped set legal precedents that have had state and national impact, such as the PA diesel idling law and federal coke oven regulations; and

WHEREAS, GASP has reviewed and commented on hundreds of air quality permits, regulations, and policies, and educated tens of thousands of residents about air quality issues; and

WHEREAS, GASP operates with scientific integrity, honesty, and fairness in the service of improving the air we all breathe, and believes in the rule of law, and that industry, regulators and elected officials should be held accountable for their actions—with good actions being acknowledged and supported.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that I, William Peduto, Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh, do commend the achievements GASP has made over the last 50 years to improving our region's air quality and do hereby declare October 1, 2019 "GASP Day" here in our most livable City of Pittsburgh.

Remembrances from an Original GASPer continued from page 4

Committee. Dale was a chemical engineer, then studying coal combustion at Westinghouse. He became president of the AIChE, which put him at the top of his profession. Dale spoke out about air pollution in Pittsburgh but he also worked on the "inside" as a research engineer. Other men, in particular, Art Gorr, a pro bono GASP attorney, and Professor Walter Goldberg (physics, Univ. of Pgh) were active

GASP participants. So were Richard Margolis, Don Spencer, Walter Zadan, Steve Wiel, among others. Also to be remembered here are important GASP allies, especially Dan Hannan and Howard Holmes of the United Steelworkers of America, Dan Binstock of the Variance Board, and Tony Picadio, a member of GASP's board.

On this 50th anniversary, I wish GASP well. Times change; issues change; but you have persisted. Keep at it. 🚲

After 50 Years: Remembering GASP Founder Michelle Madoff

by Amanda Gillooly, GASP Communications Manager

It's been 50 years since GASP's founder, Michelle Madoff lit the match that blazed up into a war on Pittsburgh's worst polluters—a battle that pre-dated both the Environmental Protection Agency and the first-ever Earth Day celebration.

Madoff, who died in 2013, has long been remembered as a pioneer at a time when there was no other environmental watchdog.

"It was a time when big-time polluting corporations could successfully threaten to take their plants to another state where environmental regulations were ineffective or, even better, non-existent," former GASP board member and founding member Walter Goldburg recalled in 2004. "When that small crowd left her living room at the end of that October evening in 1969, we were convinced that ordinary citizens, if mad enough, could take on the big corporations who were using our sky as a dumping ground."

What was Michelle's trick? For one thing, he recalled, she had chutzpah. But Goldburg noted that was only one of her weapons. She also recognized what the group needed to know to wage that war against polluters: knowledge.

"There was the recognition that ignoramuses have no place in this pollution fight. Our knowledge about what pollution control

measures could work and what [could not] to match that of the corporate engineers and lawyers whom we would be facing in hearing after hearing," he said.

From the beginning, Goldburg said, it was clear that the fight for cleaner air was going to take time: time for learning the ropes of pollution control, preparing testimony, and generating publicity in print, on the radio and TV.

"If GASP members thought there was a cleaner way to make steel, coke, and electric power, we had to come up with the better way ourselves. Getting this knowledge wasn't easy, because those who held it were on the payroll of the offending corporation," Goldburg recalled. "Our salvation

The EPA described GASP as a model for future citizens' involvement in environmental affairs across the nation.



was often found in academia, including graduate students, engineering professors, and lawyers. Sometimes allies were found in the regulators themselves. The help of the United Steel Workers of America was crucial, as well. Finally, there were the courts, always [the] last resort."

Some lawyers took cases for GASP on a contingency basis. Others charged nothing at all.

"To illustrate GASP's technical prowess even in those early days (circa 1975), we obtained a court order compelling

a polluter to put in place 15 pages worth of equipment and procedural changes that GASP had identified," Goldburg noted. "No wonder that the EPA described GASP as a model for future citizens' involvement in

environmental affairs across the nation."

Now, 50 years later, that statement is still true.

"In those old days, as now, there were lots of smart Pittsburghers who hated the pollution and were working hard to end it," he added. "Could they have won all those fights and created an organizational model for the whole country without Michelle?" To those fortunate to have known her personally, the question seems foolish, and the answer is a resounding "No."



Just Call Him Richard: Son of Dirty Gertie Unearthed at GASP Archives

by Amanda Gillooly, GASP Communications Manager

Longtime friends and supporters of the Group Against Smog and Pollution are likely familiar with our mascot from the '60s and '70s: Dirty Gertie the Poor Polluted Birdie.

Our gal Dirty Gertie was featured in cartoon videos and print correspondence to help educate local folks about the pervasive health and environmental impacts of poor air quality at a time when Pittsburgh's iconic skyline was perennially choked with smog.

But here's what you might not know: Before GASP retired ol' Dirty Gertie as a mascot way back when (if we're being honest with ourselves, the costume version of the old bird was the stuff of nightmares), she had a son—and that son was the subject of a recently unearthed contest dating all the way back to 1972.



The challenge, posed to school kids circa '72? To name the little chickie.

GASP staff sifted through dozens of boxes containing 50 years of history—documents, photos, and other memorabil-

ia, oh my!—to find out more about our favorite birdie's only offspring, and we're happy to report that we have unshrouded this mystery.

The contest, which spurred a whopping 150 name submissions, ultimately was won by an 8-year-old Mt. Lebanon boy named Kirk Botula who submitted the moniker "Dirty Dickie the Poor Polluted Chickie."



GASP caught up with Botula this past summer, who filled us in on his award (and who thanked us for forwarding along the photo. His daughter, he said, had some definite opinions on the outfit donned by his grade-school self).

As for Dirty Dickie? He's put his mascot days behind him, and now just goes by Richard.



View the original Dirty Gertie video clip here:
<https://tinyurl.com/DirtyGertieGASP>





More than 120 people joined us for GASP's 50th anniversary gala on October 12, 2019 at Rodef Shalom in Oakland. The fete featured a fine meal, happy hour celebration, myriad items from our archives showcasing five decades of accomplishments, live music, a raffle, and a lot of nostalgia. We offer a sincere thank you to our generous donors and sponsors (see page 14 for the full list).



More than 120 people joined GASP to celebrate our 50th anniversary and honor our Michelle Madoff Award of Environmental Excellence winners. *Photo by Maren Cooke.*



GASP Board President Jonathan Nadle welcomed guests and made opening remarks. *Photo by Maren Cooke.*



The Deep Breath Trio (featuring GASP's own Roger Day on tuba) provided musical entertainment during the gala's happy hour. *Photo by Maren Cooke.*



GASP Board Members Dr. David Eibling and Kate St. John chatted with guests. *Photo by Maren Cooke.*



Guests enjoyed a walk through GASP history: A mini-museum featuring letters, photos, and other memorabilia from our archives. *Photos by Amanda Gillooly.*



Thanks to our generous sponsors, GASP had raffle baskets for every taste. *Photo by Amanda Gillooly.*



Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto lauded our 50 years of advocacy, proclaiming Oct. 1 as GASP Day. Photo by Maren Cooke.



Guests enjoyed a catered dinner from Divine Delectables. Photo by Maren Cooke.



Former GASP president Walter Zadan is interviewed by GASP podcast intern Madeline Hennessey about his time with the organization, as Zadan's son looks on. Photo by Maren Cooke.



Eva Resnick-Day, our Michelle Madoff Award of Environmental Excellence winner in the community organizing category, accepts her plaque from Madoff's daughter, Karenlin. Photo by Maren Cooke.



Left: Original Board member Dr. Cyril Wecht served on our host committee, pictured here with Michelle Madoff's daughter, Karenlin, and his wife, Sigrid Wecht. Photo by Amanda Gillooly.



Right: Surprise guest Peter Seppi watches as his mom, our project manager, Sue Seppi, accepted the GASP Lifetime Achievement Award. Photo by Maren Cooke.

GASP's Founding Activists an Inspiration for *Citizen Environmentalists* book

by James Longhurst

James Longhurst is a history professor at the University of Wisconsin and former board member of GASP. He published a book called Citizen Environmentalists which focuses on GASP as a case study of the impact of new federal legislation and judicial philosophy on local organizing, implementation and enforcement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. What follows is an excerpt from this book.

"I belong here! If you believe that, then you can walk right up in the corridor of power, on the 60th floor of the U.S. Steel building and say, look, this is my air; you don't own it because you sit in this oak-paneled office. This is my air, my daughter's air, my husband's air, my son's air, my offspring's air, and you have absolutely no right to take it as your own."

—Unnamed GASP member, from the film *I Belong Here!* which can be viewed here:

<https://tinyurl.com/IBelongHereGASP>

In 1975, GASP made a remarkable short film, summarizing the organization's history to that date and urging national viewers to follow its example. In the opening of the film, Pittsburgh's polluted past is quickly established with a montage of historical photographs. The pictures and music build to a crescendo when the timeline arrives at the present. The images imply activism and protest, reinforced by the rattle and crack of the marching drums on the soundtrack. The narrator, calmly defiant, declares: "In 1969 a handful of people shared a strong feeling that they had a right to clean air. These few were moved to assert that right." Immediately after the title card—"I Belong Here!" was intended as a rallying cry for any citizens who believed themselves shut out of political affairs—the establishing shot zooms in from the evening sky to a warmly lit window, bracketed by the leafy trees of Pittsburgh's relatively affluent, middle-class Squirrel Hill neighborhood. The window of GASP founder Michelle Madoff's home fills the screen, and after a cheat cut to the interior, the viewer is suddenly in a comfortable, carpeted living room filled with GASP activists. Arrayed around the fireplace and sofas sit bespectacled, bearded men and skirt-wearing young women, all engaged in earnest if not cacophonous conversation. There's a woman in a turtleneck on the couch, gesturing broadly and laughing with another woman in horned-rimmed glasses. Seated on the floor, a younger woman with long, straight hair listens and smiles. The camera pans across the graciously decorated living room, showing packed couches and overflow seating of straight-backed dining room chairs, all occupied by comfortably dressed men and women laughing and animatedly talking over one another. "Who were the people who originated GASP?" asks the narrator, and an un-

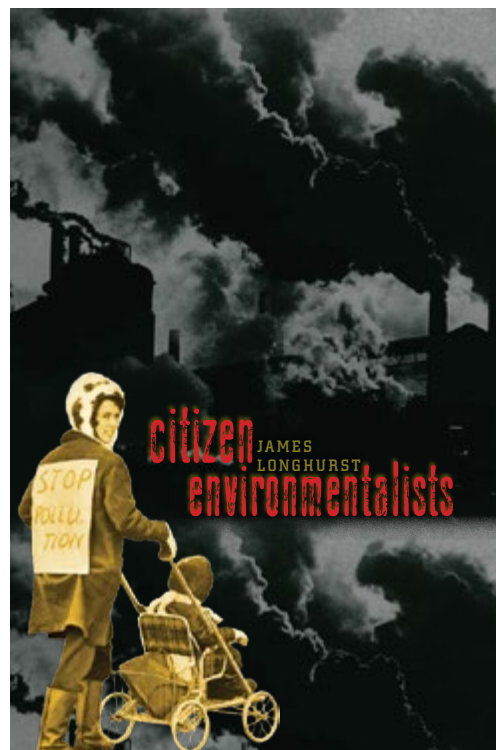
named GASP member responds: "There were housewives, union people and students; out of the original 43, probably only half of these were active.

A lot of these were university people; professional people of one type or another."

The film goes on to outline the group's committee structure,

rhetoric, challenges, and successes, all with the intention of providing a blueprint for other activist or watchdog groups nationwide. Funded in part by an EPA grant and distributed to groups in many states, the film may have done just that. But the opening scene of *I Belong Here* also offers clues to a number of interesting themes, most likely unintended by the filmmakers. First, where did these activists in Michelle Madoff's living room come from? GASP claimed that they "came from all walks of life" and argued that they represented all of Pittsburgh's people, but was that rhetoric or reality? How important were the "professional people" to the group? And since GASP claimed to both represent similar developments nationwide and to stimulate the formation of other activist groups, those same questions should be asked of those groups as well: Where did the new wave of local environmental activists come from? How did they organize themselves, and what arguments helped them gain the attention of the public and the authorities? Who were the citizen environmentalists?

In brief, they were mixed-gender, middle-class profes-



continued on page 11

GASP's Legacy

We asked two long-time GASPs: "What did being involved with GASP for so long mean to you? What do you think GASP's legacy is?" Here are their responses.

For most of the 20th century my neighborhood suffered with air pollution from LTV's Hazelwood Coke Works just a mile from my home.

When the plant closed in January 1998 our air was suddenly cleaner, but a few months later we learned that a new Sun Coke plant was proposed for the LTV site. I loved our clean air and didn't want to go back to the dirty past. Was there any way to stop the plant?

GASP held a public meeting to discuss the proposed coke plant and the region's options. Though I had never been a community activist before—in fact I was afraid to try—I put my name on a list of those willing to pitch in. GASP called me up and changed my life.

With GASP's help, residents of Hazelwood and Greenfield formed Citizen's Helping Our Community (CHOC) to fight the Sun Coke plant. We'd never been a group before, we knew nothing about air quality, and we didn't know if the new plant could be turned away. We hardly dared believe we could do it. It was a roller coaster ride.

GASP helped us through the process and in the end, we won! The Sun Coke plant was built in Ohio instead of Pittsburgh. That amazing victory has kept me going for over 20 years.

GASP's 50-year legacy is the cleaner air and countless people like me who've joined together to make western Pennsylvania a better place to breathe. We know that real change takes time and it takes dedication, that science counts, that small victories accrue to turn the tide.

The air is cleaner than when GASP began in 1969. We've still got more to do. I am full of hope. Let's do it!

—Kate St. John

As a newer resident in Pittsburgh in the early seventies and a busy mom, I was not paying much attention to air quality but it was soon obvious that there was an air pollution problem here. When I discovered GASP, it felt like a lifeline to do something. I joined the GASP efforts and as a bonus met a lot of great people. I started with GASP just to work to improve air quality, but I ended up finding friends, joining a Board, working in GASP leadership and becoming part of the staff at GASP where I remain today. In retrospect, what a great idea to join GASP!


Having been a part of this organization for so many years, what might our legacy be at the 50-year mark? For me, it is that a small group of people really can make a difference for the better. GASP efforts set an early and continuing example of a grassroots organization creatively and persistently putting the unhealthy air issue in front of the public and the regulators. For a very long time, GASP was mostly a hardworking volunteer bunch with donated work space. From Dirty Gertie, the poor polluted birdie cookies, and fresh air cans sold on the streets of Pittsburgh to litigation involving many of the larger and more polluting industries in our area, GASP has been and continues to be a force for healthy air. That we have been at it for 50 years, with ups, downs, and transitions but always amazing people successfully contributing to cleaner air in Allegheny County is a great legacy.

—Sue Seppi

Citizen Environmentalists continued from page 10

sionals who used the language of citizenship, professional expertise, and maternalism to gain access to environmental policymaking and enforcement institutions. Their social capital afforded them entrée. As professionals and academics happy to work with existing institutions, they spent more time in committee meetings and hearings than in street protest. They were, in some ways, policy outsiders but political insiders. As white, middle-class professionals they were already familiar fixtures of civil society, even though environmental concerns were a new addition to policymaking. These environmentalists shared certain similarities with Progressive Era civic organizations, enjoying connections

with existing civic associations and networks and deploying the language of expertise and maternalism. Most importantly, they were concerned with local environmental issues and political institutions, doing their organizing below the level of the larger, older, national groups.

This book examines the formation and demographics of both GASP and similar groups nationwide using internal sources from GASP, the concepts of representative membership and social capital, and organizational and institutional records for the nation. In doing so, it rescues the historical significance of local environmental organizing. In defense of the much-maligned "NIMBY" groups, interesting things happened in local and neighborhood organizing in the early 1970s, and GASP was at the forefront. 

Michelle Madoff Award Winners continued from page 1

retrofitted with systems and materials that meet high standards like Passive House, Laura's work sets an industry standard for sustainable construction, positively contributes to the overall air quality of the city and region, and marks her as a business leader who lives by a commitment to the triple bottom line.

“an inspiration to others”

"Laura is not a self-promoter, and the impact of the kind of work she does can often sound technical or go unnoticed. We feel Laura has gone unrecognized for too long, and that her commitment to finding affordable, sustainable building solutions where few or none existed before is a boon to our region, and an inspiration to others."

Eva Resnick-Day, Community Organizing

Eva Resnick-Day is the award winner in the community organizing category. She currently serves as a community organizer with the Sierra Club's *Ready for 100* campaign, which aims to bring the City of Pittsburgh to 100 percent renewable, clean energy through a path that centers on equity and meets the concerns of the area's most vulnerable communities—as well as the workers who are, or will be, impacted by an energy transition.

Resnick-Day's involvement in the environmental movement dates back to 2010, when she worked as an organizer for a city-wide fracking ban. She worked with Greenpeace prior to her tenure at Sierra Club.



“a force of nature”

She said she's "thrilled to be fighting for a brighter future for Pittsburgh." When she's not out trying to make the world a better place, the Taylor Allderdice alumna can be found singing and mountain climbing.

Resnick-Day, who earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh, was called a "force of nature" by nominators. They wrote:

"Eva Resnick-Day is an extraordinary organizer for social, environmental, and climate justice. She has a fierce love for the people, history, and natural beauty in and around Pittsburgh, and her unwavering vision for what is possible for our future makes her an invaluable asset to the Pittsburgh community... Eva is so dedicated to inspiring and training community members to stand in their own power that we rarely see her at the center of attention. Instead, she is a force of nature consistently and strategically

pushing the people and city she loves with her whole heart toward a visionary future of equity, justice, and wellbeing."

Patricia Himes, Education

Patricia Himes is the winner in the education category. She currently serves as a naturalist educator at the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, and can typically be found in parks, streams, woodlands, and meadows helping kids connect with nature. After all, she discovered one of her true loves—nature—playing in Clarion County's forests and streams growing up.



Himes earned an undergraduate degree in biology to further her understanding of nature, and then a master's degree in education to help her share her "love and curiosity of the diverse, beautiful, magical world."

“a game-changer”

She was called a game-changer by nominators, who wrote: "Patty joined the Frick Environmental Center staff in 2000, as a Park Naturalist under Pittsburgh's Citiparks division. Over the past 19 years, she has connected several generations of young Pittsburghers to nature in Frick Park. Just two years into her work at Frick, the Environmental Center burned (down) – on August 5, 2002, in the midst of summer camp. Patty and her colleagues made the difficult decision to continue the summer camps, a decision that ultimately affected the nature and philosophy of programming at the center. For 14 years between the fire and the opening of the new Frick Environmental Center in 2016, programming without a dedicated center tested Patty's resourcefulness but also solidified an approach of using the park itself as the center's primary classroom."

They added: "Patty's collaborative working style, her genuine care and concern for every person she interacts with, and the richness and authenticity of her own connection to nature have become hallmarks of Frick Environmental Center programming for all audiences."

Kristina Marusic, Media

Kristina Marusic is the winner in the media category. A reporter for Environmental Health News, she covers issues related to environmental health and justice, with a focus on western Pennsylvania.

Prior to her tenure there, Marusic worked as a freelance journalist covering issues such as social and environmental justice, activism, politics, and LGBTQ equality. Her bylines appeared in myriad media outlets, including the



Washington Post, CNN, Slate, Vice, and MTV News.

Marusic, who earned her undergraduate degree in creative writing from Hofstra University and her master's degree in creative nonfiction writing from San Francisco

University, was called fearless by nominators. They wrote:

"She has become a leading voice in the region and has helped shine a national spotlight on Western Pennsylvania's pollution and environmental injustice. This increased awareness through her reporting has led to a shift in the conversation around environmental issues in Western Pennsylvania and has forced people in power to answer for persistent pollution and the racial and economic disparities in impacted populations."

"a truly gifted storyteller"

Nominators mentioned her investigative project "Breathless," which dug into data on childhood asthma and air pollution revealing a regional epidemic: While the national average for childhood asthma is 8 percent, around 22 percent of kids in Pittsburgh's most polluted neighborhoods have the disease.

They noted: "Kristina is everything that's right with journalism—a truly gifted storyteller who's decided to aim those talents at bettering our environment, her community, and the lives of her neighbors. She is a forward thinking, strong-willed reporter dedicated to speaking truth to power. The kind of journalist every community deserves."

Dr. Deborah Gentile, Medicine

Dr. Deborah Gentile is the winner in the medicine category. She currently serves as medical director at Allergy and Asthma Wellness Centers and Director of Allergy and Asthma Services at East Suburban Pediatrics.

She completed medical school, pediatric residency and allergy/immunology fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh. She previously worked at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Allegheny Health Network and Pediatric Alliance, respectively.

Her recent research efforts have focused on evaluating asthma outcomes and triggers in disparate children from the Pittsburgh region. Her work identified a strong association between exposure to elevated levels of outdoor air pollution



and increased asthma prevalence and poor disease control in these children. She currently has funding from the Heinz Endowments to support this work.

"life-changing"

Dr. Gentile has authored more than 60 publications and is the recipient of numerous awards for her research efforts. She is past president of the local and state allergy societies and is a member of several professional organizations.

Nominators called her work life-changing. They wrote: "Dr. Gentile's in-school asthma clinics have been literally life-changing for the children with asthma who she treats (and for their parents) - especially in Clairton in the shadow of the Clairton Coke Works facility. Before beginning her clinic, many of the students she treats didn't have their disease under control, leading to missed school days, inability to participate in normal and necessary physical activities like sports, and frightening emergency room visits. Thanks to Dr. Gentile's work, the students in her clinic all now have their asthma under control, so they're missing fewer school days and now have improved odds of keeping up with their peers developmentally and educationally for the rest of their lives."

At our 50th anniversary celebration, the winners took to the stage one by one to accept their awards and make their acceptance speeches, which was when GASP's Executive Director, Rachel Filippini, made a surprise announcement: there was still one award yet to be bestowed. "We have one final super secret surprise award that we would like to present. This award goes to a woman who has been working to improve air quality in our region for decades, serving in a variety of capacities with the GASP organization since at least the late 1970s," Rachel said.

She continued: "Over the years she has testified at numerous public hearings, written countless comments to local, state, and federal regulatory agencies, managed our smoke readers program, initiated our first air quality monitoring educational program in schools, has conducted a variety of air monitoring in the community--even going out in the middle of the night to collect samples, has assisted grassroots organizations, and previously served as director of the organization." Many in the audience had guessed the secret winner by this point.

Rachel continued: "Her reserved, quiet nature can fool you, because truthfully she is a fighter--someone who has never been afraid to ask tough questions and go toe to toe in meetings with both industry and regulators alike. She offers an equal amount of warmth and compassion to a community member calling us with a concern about air pollution in their community. If you haven't guessed it yet, I'm talking about GASP's very own Program Manager, **Sue Seppi**."

As Sue made her way to the stage to accept her award, she was greeted by a surprise guest: her son, Peter Seppi.



Thank You!

GASP sincerely thanks all of the individuals and businesses—big and small—who helped make our 50th anniversary celebration a night to remember. We are thankful for, and indebted to, the following folks, who generously sponsored our October 12 gala:



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Spotlight on a GASP Staff Member

For Amanda Gillooly, becoming the communications manager for GASP felt like coming home again.

In the last several years she served as a writer, public relations, and social media specialist for several law firms and non-profit organizations, but she missed the watchdog role she enjoyed as a longtime member of the media.

Amanda graduated with a degree in journalism and mass communication from Point Park University and worked as a beat reporter for the Valley Independent, Beaver County Times, and Observer-Reporter. She then made the jump to digital journalism, working as the local editor for the Canon-McMillan Patch, one of a group of local news websites.

That's when she became aware of and concerned about issues related to Marcellus Shale development in the beat she covered. During her tenure at Patch, she made it her mission to be a watchdog for the communities she was covering.

"As a reporter it was shocking to me to attend these municipal meetings and realize how little balanced coverage there was about Marcellus Shale issues," Amanda said. "The complex topic required me to learn a great deal about not only environmental issues, but also topics related to permitting and violations."

After the Patch network shut down local operations, she decided to launch an independent investigative reporting website devoted to Marcellus Shale issues, Marcellus Monitor. "At that point there was a flurry of activity in Washington County related to waste water impoundments, and violations there—all at a time when Act 13 was being challenged," she said. "I found there was a major leak at an impoundment that was not being reported on by the mainstream media."

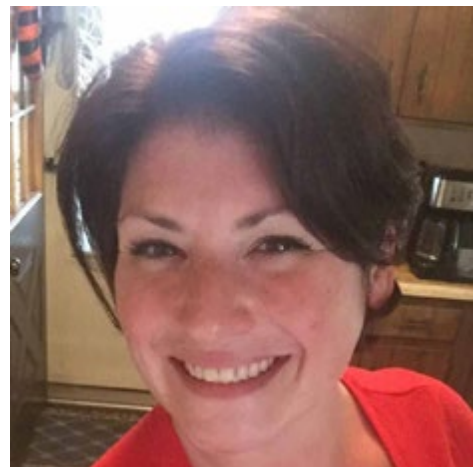
That all changed after Amanda said she begged a local activist and pilot to take an aerial shot of the Jon Day Impoundment so that people and members of the media could see for themselves how much of a wreck it was. "Soon after, all the local media was covering the story," she said. "A huge civil penalty was ultimately assessed, DEP inspectors were called in, and the public thankfully became aware of how much of a mess the cleanup was."

The experience, Amanda said, made her aware of just how much of a difference a few committed individuals can make and how it's more important than ever to educate the public on environmental issues that impact us all.

"In my capacity as communications manager at GASP, I look forward to being part watchdog, part educator," she said.

Amanda added that she's beyond excited to come on board as GASP celebrates its 50th year. "GASP has done so much to help improve air quality in the Pittsburgh region

over the last five decades and we continue to fight the good fight, holding truth to power, and acting as a true environmental steward," she said. "I look forward to highlighting and celebrating all that we've accomplished and getting the word out about the work we continue to do in the name of clean air."



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