



ALLEGHENY COUNTY CLEAN AIR NOW

412-301-8478

11000 Park Plaza Drive, Apt. 1302 Pittsburgh, PA 15229

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2018

Thaddeus Popovich, ACCAN
(412) 327-5988 (cell)
tedpop32@icloud.com

Community Meeting Highlights Health Studies that Show Major Drop in Benzene, Particulate Matter and in Emergency Room Visits for Asthma after the Closure of Shenango Coke Works

Pittsburgh, Pa. — Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN), a citizens' organization founded in 2012 with the sole purpose of fighting pollution violations from the DTE Shenango Coke Works on Neville Island, held a community forum at the Community Presbyterian Church of Ben Avon this evening to release the findings of two key health studies that show dramatic improvements in public health and air quality following the closure of the industrial plant.

"The findings of these studies and our experience with Shenango's air pollution have confirmed to residents what we have known all along – the Shenango coke works was making our community seriously sick," said Thaddeus Popovich, one of the founders of ACCAN. "These studies demonstrate a clear need for our region to continue to work to improve and protect our air quality."

Dr. Deborah Gentile of the Pediatric Alliance presented the findings of her study on asthma prevalence in Northgate elementary school children before and after Shenango's closure. "Preliminary results from a public service project conducted by our group shows that asthma outcomes among local school children improved after Shenango closed. These results provide an impetus for public policy changes to reduce and/or eliminate exposure to pollution from point sources," said Dr. Gentile.

Dr. LuAnn Brink, Chief Epidemiologist at the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), presented the findings of ACHD's public health study comparing air quality and healthcare visits before and after Shenango's closure. Key findings of the study, "ACHD Health Hazard Investigation of North Boroughs," included:

- Benzene, a carcinogenic solvent, dropped 37% from 2015 before closure to 2016 after closure.
- Fine particulate matter (2.5 micrometers or less) decreased about 12% after the plant closed.
- Emergency room visits for asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease dropped by 37.9 percent 2015 to 2016.

Two panelists also addressed the study results and fielded questions, John Graham, PhD, senior scientist, Clean Air Task Force and R Subramanian, PhD, a research scientist with the Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies at CMU.

ACCAN has been dedicated to improving air quality in the Ohio River Valley airshed that includes the North Boroughs for many years. While citizens applauded the overall improvement in air since the closing of Shenango, they agreed more must be done to protect and improve the area's air quality.

“Our experience with the Shenango Coke Works and the results of these health studies demonstrate that citizens must continue to put pressure on the Allegheny County Health Department and County Executive Rich Fitzgerald if our region's public health is to be protected,” said Karen Grzywinski, a resident of Ohio Township and ACCAN co-founder.

The Shenango Coke Works was the fourth largest volatile organic compound emitter in the county and had a long history of Clean Air Act violations. It closed in January of 2016 due to economic reasons and years of protests by residents of the surrounding communities who united under the ACCAN banner.

Read [“ACHD Health Hazard Investigation of North Boroughs.” March 7, 2018](#)

##