

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Cassi Steenblok
Allegheny County Clean Air Now
csteenblok@cleanwater.org
412-765-3053 ext. 240

“Living Downwind: Personal Stories of Those Harmed by Air Pollution from Neville Island”

BOOK RELEASE EVENT
April 20, 2017
Anchor & Anvil, 6:30 p.m.
7721 Church Ave., Ben Avon, PA

Two years ago, on the first day of spring, residents of the north boroughs of Allegheny County presented the owners of the Shenango Coke Works with an unusual prize – The Closed Window Award along with a closed window for its efforts in polluting their air and forcing their children to play indoors on beautiful spring days.

Nearby residents had had enough. The tongue-in-cheek protest was part of the communities’ strategic campaign to hold accountable the plant that had produced more than 300,000 tons of blast furnace coke for steelmaking on Neville Island. For nearly half a century, they had endured billowing plumes of steam laced with soot and watched it settle on their homes and their lives.

The campaign paid off. In 2016, the plant’s owner, Detroit-based DTE, decided to close the plant citing plummeting prices and a lack of demand by North American coke operators. While 173 workers lost their jobs, residents began to notice a refreshing difference in their quality of life and the air they breathed.

“Living Downwind” is a collection of personal stories as told by the residents and families who lived near the plant, recounting their struggles with the industrial coke producer, one of the largest sources of air pollution in Allegheny County with a long history of county health violations.

The voices of these residents tell the story of people and families trapped by an industry that subjected them to endless noise, pollution and the stench of rotten eggs. Few dared to garden or sit outside. Many suffered serious health problems. Children exhibited high rates of asthma.

“We began to tell our stories as a way of educating ourselves and others about our dilemma,” says Thaddeus Popovich who lived across the river from Shenango in Ben Avon and is co-founder Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN), the organization that worked to collect and publish the stories.

“We thought this approach could be a change agent,” he says. “We believed that the air pollution was making us sick and slowly killing us.”

ACCAN hopes to share these narrative as it continues to rally support for the retirement of Shenango's Emission Reduction Credits (ERCs), the building of a solar farm on the site and a clean air a mandate for all of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Residents featured in the book will share their stories in person during the launch party on Thursday, April 20, 2017 at Anchor & Anvil from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. in Ben Avon. The media is invited to attend.

Interviews in advance of the event may be arranged by contacting Cassi Steenblok.
Please visit [Facebook](#) to RSVP.

Living Downwind

Personal stories of those affected by air pollution from Neville Island



Join residents for a community meeting to hear their stories on the impact of air pollution and how the air is now.



Thursday April 20th 6:30-9pm
Anchor and Anvil Coffee Shop
7221 Church Ave Ben Avon, PA

For more information contact
Cassi at csteenblok@cleanwater.org

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