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Contact:
Lydia Randall, Vice
312-483-0266
Lydia.Randall@vice.com

Vice Productions Releases Documentary on the Health Impacts of Pollution in Clairton

New York-based production company Vice released an online documentary today, “Steam Valley,” that relates the story of the residents of Clairton – from a grandmother who runs a daycare to workers employed by the U.S. Steel Clairton Coke Works – and the health impacts many have suffered as a result of emissions from the plant.

Residents fear that the coke plant is doing more than making steel – they fear it is making them sick.

The documentary highlights the research of Dr. Deborah Gentile, director of clinical research, Division of Allergy/Asthma/Immunology for Pediatric Alliance in Pittsburgh. Dr. Gentile is finishing work on an extensive study, “Asthma in Our Region’s School Children,” which examines 1,200 children who live near smokestack pollution sources in Clairton, Woodland Hills and Allegheny Valley.

Dr. Gentile’s findings point to the fact that Clairton residents are 20 times more likely to develop cancer from inhaling emitted pollutants including nitrogen dioxide. Her findings, as presented in the documentary, show alarming rates of childhood asthma across the community. Children suffer from asthma at rates as high as 35%, three times higher than the national and state average of 10% to 13%.

Children in Clairton are also exposed to the highest levels of PM2.5 and black carbon and had a nearly two-fold risk of having a diagnosis of asthma and poorly controlled asthma.

Childhood asthma is an epidemic in this region, Gentile points out.

The Pittsburgh region ranks as one of the top 10 most polluted cities in the nation with regard to year-round particle pollution (PM 2.5) which can increase the risk of heart and lung disease, asthma, adverse birth outcomes, cancer and premature death, according to the American Lung Association.

The Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America ranks the Pittsburgh region as 27th most challenging city to live with asthma.

Watch the Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPpNlct8Lu0>