



CREATE Lab

Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CREATE Lab and Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN) Honored For Monitoring Emissions at Shenango Coke Works

Joint Effort With Grassroots Advocates Highlighted Pollutants, Smells

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Carnegie Mellon University's CREATE Lab and the grassroots advocacy group Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN) are winners of an inaugural Constellation Prize for their collaboration on the Shenango Channel, an effort to highlight pollutants from a now-defunct coke works near Pittsburgh.

The Constellation Prize was created by a group of engineers and social scientists to reimagine the role of engineering in society. The award for the Shenango Channel and three other winners will be presented in a virtual ceremony Feb. 24.

The Shenango Channel was an offshoot of [Breathe Cam](#), a network of cameras that the CREATE Lab uses to monitor visible air emissions in Allegheny County. The channel focused on DTE Energy's Shenango Inc. coke works on Neville Island in the Ohio River.

CREATE Lab and ACCAN worked together to set up cameras to record high-resolution video of the plant 24 hours a day and collaborated to catalog thousands of fugitive emission events from it. The videos, along with other measurements of pollutants and reports of unusual smells, were shared by the public on the channel's website. The reports of fugitive emissions resulted in citations by the Allegheny County Health Department before DTE Energy shuttered the plant in 2016.

The Shenango Channel "exemplifies successful collaboration between engineers and a 'frontline' community and shows how thoughtfully co-designed technology can empower citizens to advocate for social change," said Gwen Ottinger, associate professor in the Department of Politics at Drexel University, who nominated CREATE Lab and ACCAN for the award.

The Shenango Channel helped lead to the 2018 expansion of Breathe Cam into the Monongahela Valley south of Pittsburgh, where cameras are trained 24/7 on three plants in U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works. Breathe Cam is part of the **Breathe Project**, a program of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies that receives support from the Heinz Endowments. The project serves as a clearinghouse for air quality data for Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania.

The CREATE Lab is part of the Robotics Institute. It explores socially meaningful innovation and deployment of robotic technologies. Randy Sargent is visualization director of the lab and has been a leader in the Breathe Cam and Shenango Channel projects.

More information about the Constellation Awards, the other recipients and the virtual award ceremony can be found at www.constellationprize.org.

For further information or to arrange interviews with the winners, please contact Debra Smit at dsmit@breatheproject.org