

B R E A T H E
PENNSYLVANIA

Fresh Air

A newsletter for Breathe PA's supporters and friends



From Executive Director John P. Rupp:

On Wednesday evening, May 11, 2016, Breathe Pennsylvania celebrated the formal handover of our artifacts to the Senator Jon Heinz History Center. Minutes of the first Board meeting in 1904, original donor lists, and the property deed for the TB Sanatorium were among the items on display. The entire collection of artifacts will be preserved and housed in perpetuity at the Heinz History Center.

Board and staff gathered to hear speakers comment on the organization's rich history as the Tuberculosis League of Pittsburgh and its exciting future helping western Pennsylvanians breathe better and live healthier. Featured above on the left are photos of the celebration, including staff and board members and a few items from the collection that were on display.

Breathe PA was honored to have Robert MacDonald, Chairman of the Smithsonian National Board, commemorate this very special occasion.

Prior to the event, Allegheny County Councilman and Breathe PA Board Member Tom Baker declared May 11, 2016 to be Breathe Pennsylvania Day in Allegheny County!

This special event capped off an impressive year at Breathe PA. We continue to grow and develop our programs and our staff. We just held our 3rd Tuberculosis Education Conference that was attended by 76 health and medical professionals. We are preparing to close out June with our 3rd Annual "Breathing in the 'Burgh!" COPD cruise on June 17th and our first-ever Asthma Day at the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium on June 26th. Find additional event information inside, and make sure to stay up-to-date with us all summer through our various social media channels.

Allergy and Asthma-Friendly Cleaning

By: Jessica Schuman, RN, BSN

Spring has sprung and the cleaning has begun!

It is important to clean your home to reduce or eliminate triggers that cause allergies and asthma, but doing so shouldn't make your asthma and allergies worse. One of the questions we often get asked is, "What types of cleaning products should I use if I have asthma or allergies?" As an asthmatic, it's important to be careful what commercial products you use. Most products have harsh cleaning agents in them that can trigger asthma and allergy symptoms. There are two ways to protect your family from these harsh cleaning agent triggers—mixing your own cleaning solutions or utilizing allergy-and asthma-approved commercial cleaning supplies.

Mixing your own products is simple, and you can utilize items that are already found in most homes. Acids like vinegar and lemon juice help to kill bacteria, while baking soda can be used as a scrubbing agent. These safe, non-toxic mixtures can be mixed in a spray bottle for daily use.

The simplest multipurpose cleaner to have on-hand is a mixture of equal parts white vinegar and water, which can be stored in a spray bottle.

If you don't want to make your own products, seek out allergy-free commercial cleaners. More and more companies are taking the plunge and creating products that are safe for people with allergies and asthma. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) certifies products annually that are recommended for individuals who struggle with allergies and asthma. Look for the special logo on their products. Also, products labeled "free and clear" are a good option to try. Free and clear products are non-toxic and do not have a harsh scent. Brands like Seventh Generation, ECOS, and Earth Friendly are a few choices to look for.

Using approved products can help minimize the risk of having an asthma attack while cleaning. Replacing harsh chemicals with asthma- and allergy-friendly cleansers can help you protect your home by making it safer for your family and you.

When was the last time you tested your home for radon?

Have your home tested today!

Radon is a cancer-causing radioactive gas that you cannot smell or taste, but may be present in your home or office environment. The Surgeon General says that radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States after smoking, and is responsible for as many as 20,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

Fortunately, exposure to radon is a preventable health risk. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Office of the Surgeon General encourage all Americans to test the radon levels in their homes and offices. The recommended action level for radon is 4pCi/L. Areas that test above this level are considered dangerous.

You can purchase a radon test kit by visiting our online store at breathepa.org or by calling 724.772.1750.



An opportunity from our friends at the UPMC Asthma Institute:

Volunteer for Asthma – AIR (Asthma Institute Research Registry)
Sally Wenzel, MD, Director of the University of Pittsburgh Asthma Institute at UPMC, is looking for adults with asthma to participate in asthma research studies. Compensation and parking is provided. To learn more, call 1-866-804-5278, email asthmainstitute@upmc.edu, or visit www.asthmainstitute.pitt.edu.

What Does an Air Quality Alert Actually Mean?

You've probably heard of air quality alert days where the air is dangerous to breathe. But what actually causes an air quality alert?

Two things contribute to pollution that can cause an air quality alert:

Ground-Level Ozone – High-levels of ground-level ozone are frequently the cause of air quality alerts. Ground-level ozone is created by pollutants, such as car exhaust and industrial fumes mixing with oxygen. This most often happens on hot, dry, sunny days with a light breeze. Ground-level ozone can trigger asthma attacks and decrease lung function.

Particulate Matter – Particulate matter consists of pollutants such as dust, soot, ash and wood smoke. This is often caused by the burning of fossil fuels or other chemical processes. This type of air quality issue is most common on hot, humid days.

There are also different air quality alert color codes to be aware of:

An **orange air quality** alert means the air is dangerous for sensitive groups, such as those with asthma or the elderly.

A **red air quality** alert indicates it is starting to become dangerous for everyone.

Purple and **maroon air quality alerts**—though rare—are extremely hazardous for all groups.

If there is an air quality alert, try to stay indoors with the windows shut, carry your rescue inhaler with you everywhere, and consider a face mask if you need to go outside. Visit airnow.gov to check the air quality anywhere in the United States, or download their app to be able to check the air quality when you're out and about.

Burning Yard Waste and Your Asthma

By: Carla Conrad, MS-RRT, NPS

As outdoor spring cleaning begins, your neighbors are starting to clean up yard waste. Sometimes, a well-intentioned neighbor can become the bane of your existence when they burn their yard waste, triggering your lung disease. At this time of the year, Breathe Pennsylvania fields phone calls from western Pennsylvanians who ask what they can do to help protect their lungs from the smoke; however, few individuals ever stop to think that the smoke they are creating is affecting someone else's ability to breathe.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies yard waste as a combination of leaves, brush, and grass clippings. When yard waste is burned, it creates smoke that is full of hazardous air pollutants, including carbon monoxide and particulate matter. The smoke from burning yard waste can irritate the nose, mouth, and throat of healthy adults, so imagine how it affects people with asthma.

If there is burning in your neighborhood that is interfering with your ability to breathe, options are available. You could suggest an alternative to burning that is also effective in eliminating yard waste. According to the Benton Clean Air Agency, alternatives to outdoor burning include:

- Composting
- Mulching
- Chipping
- Using municipal collection services

If there is no way to avoid a neighbor burning their yard waste, do your best to avoid the smoke. Keeping your windows closed and the air conditioning running will help minimize the smoke's impact on your lungs by providing you with cool, filtered air. Many Pennsylvania municipalities have ordinances that dictate conditions in which burning yard waste is acceptable. Some Pennsylvania municipalities put restrictions on the practice of burning, and some ban the practice altogether. Contact your local township or municipality to check on local regulations, and ask what steps you can take to influence regulations in your area. Even if you don't have lung disease, exposure to yard waste smoke pollutes the clean air we breathe.



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Donate Today!
Visit www.breathepa.org for more information!**

Breathe Pennsylvania upcoming events:

"Breathing in the 'Burgh!" COPD Cruise

June 17, 2016

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Gateway Clipper

Join us for a morning cruise on the three rivers, and learn more about your COPD diagnosis. This is a great event for newly-diagnosed COPD patients and their caregivers.

The event is FREE and includes lunch.

Registration is required. You can register by visiting our online store or calling 724.772.1750.

More details inside and online at www.breathepa.org.

Asthma Day at the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium

June 26, 2016

9 a.m.—1:30 p.m.

Do you know a 4th, 5th, or 6th grader with asthma? Invite them to attend Breathe Pennsylvania's Asthma Day at the Zoo and PPG Aquarium. The event will feature asthma education for children and their parents, small animal interactions, a boxed lunch for each guest, and plenty of FUN!!! Come learn about asthma and spend a day at the zoo!

Pre-registration and a \$10 fee per child with asthma is required. Visit www.breathepa.org for more information.

Community Outreach:

School Asthma Initiative (SAI)

In 2016-2017, Jeannie Simms and Jessica Schuman, RN, BSN, will be offering a 3-hour interactive School Nurse In-service. There will be a review of breath sounds utilizing an auscultation training station, current treatment options, and much more. If you are interested in participating and would like to get your request on the program calendar, please email Jessica at jschuman@breathepa.org.

Tobacco Cessation

Do you want to help your employees quit smoking? If you answered yes to this question, you can get trained in new methods of tobacco cessation by registering for Breathe Pennsylvania's Smoke-Free for Life Facilitator Training program. More information and 2016 training dates can be found at www.breathepa.org.