



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: 2 p.m. EDT April 25, 2017

CONTACT: Lauri Keagle, South Shore Clean Cities

(219) 644-3698 or lkeagle@southshorecleancities.org

MACOG Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon lauds local efforts

Regional emission reduction projects recognized at annual event

ELKHART — The region's top leaders in air quality improvements were honored at the Michiana Area Council of Governments' (MACOG) 2017 Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon in Elkhart Tuesday.

"We are proud of the outstanding work taking place to improve air quality, public health and quality of life right in our own backyards," said MACOG Executive Director James Turnwald. "This year's award winners are excellent leaders and serve as wonderful examples for others wishing to make a difference in our communities."

Award winners include:

- **The City of South Bend:** The City of South Bend has been Indiana's leader in the implementation of alternative fuels and fleet emission reduction activities thru MACOG's Green Fleet program. Their Central Service Division has been the go-to organization in Indiana, sharing best management practices with other fleets throughout the state. By utilizing a variety of procedures and technologies at the fleet level -- ranging from vehicle type, maintenance, CNG, electric, E85, oils, lubricants and diesel emission reductions technologies -- they have used a creative approach to implementing sustainable practices and making a difference in Northern Indiana.
- **Goshen Community Schools:** Goshen Community Schools has had a long standing Energy Conservation Program. Several schools were able to record a significant decrease in energy consumption totaling a reduction of 1.6 million kWh and a natural gas reduction of 363,683 therms over the course of seven years and multiple phases. Goshen Community Schools has also expanded this program into project-based learning for students, challenging them come up with ideas and solutions for reducing the school's carbon footprint. This program is an excellent example of how schools can have a continuing direct impact on our local air quality.

- **Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light:** Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light (HIPL) works to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. In 2016, five local faith communities installed solar thanks to the funding and support provided through HIPL: Kern Road Mennonite Church; First United Methodist Church; Islamic Society of Michiana; Olivet African Methodist Episcopal Church and St. Anthony de Padua Catholic Church of South Bend. Combined, these faith communities installed 77 kW of solar PV, about three times the size of the South Bend Century Center System. In addition, HIPL provides energy conservation workshops to help leaders in local congregations reduce energy use.
- **NIPSCO:** NIPSCO's In-Charge Around-Town program assisted individuals and companies in learning about the environmental benefits of electric vehicles and electric charging stations. Working with South Shore Clean Cities, NIPSCO installed more than 250 home charging stations and approximately 100 public charging stations across Northern Indiana. Additionally, NIPSCO's work on ordinances, first responder training, and electrician training will assist in moving the program forward. NIPSCO has been a long-standing supporter of the Partners for Clean Air Program. Over the past 15 years their financial support has allowed the program to spread the message, "It all adds up to cleaner air!"

The awards were presented during the event at the Matterhorn Conference Center in Elkhart, Indiana Tuesday. The luncheon also featured presentations by Indiana Department of Environmental Management Office of Air Quality Senior Environmental Manager Shawn Seals, MACOG SolSmart Advisor Leah Thill and South Shore Clean Cities Executive Director Carl Lisek.

A new feature debuted at this year's Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon, a Ride and Drive presented in collaboration with South Shore Clean Cities and the Midwest EVOLVE project. Electric vehicles were on display and available for test drives along with a host of other alternative fuel vehicles.

The Midwest EVOLVE (Electric Vehicle Opportunities: Learning, eVents, Experience) project is a three-year project aimed at demonstrating the performance and environmental benefits of plug-in electric vehicles through showcases, ride and drives, and events. South Shore Clean Cities is a partner on the seven-state project with seven other Clean Cities coalitions and the American Lung Association of the Upper Midwest.

The Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon was sponsored in part by Clean Energy, NIPSCO, South Shore Clean Cities and Truck Centers Inc.

Partners for Clean Air is a coalition of businesses, industries, local governments and community groups committed to improving overall air quality and public health through voluntary actions. Members of the Partners for Clean Air Program develop Air Quality Action Plans. These plans are designed to be implemented on Air Quality Action Days as a way of reducing harmful air pollutants.

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