



ORGANIZING for
HEALTH and JUSTICE

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



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HEALTH and JUSTICE

The Clean Air Coalition of W.N.Y.
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OUR MISSION

The Clean Air Coalition builds power by developing grassroots leaders who organize their communities to run and win environmental justice and public health campaigns in Western New York.

OUR VISION

The Clean Air Coalition envisions a world where our environment promotes health and equity and where communities are actively engaged in decisions that impact their lives.

OUR VALUES

- Leadership Development
- Environmental Justice
- Democratic Decision-making
- Resident Knowledge
- Appreciation, Recognition and Celebration

NOTE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

It was another empowering year of work at Clean Air, and it is a privilege to share our annual report, which highlights the community-based efforts made to fight for a healthier, more just place to live and work.

We saw many successes in existing Clean Air campaigns, including the criminal sentencing of Tonawanda Coke, which was ordered to fund an \$11 million, 10-year health study in the community, among other fines. We saw an unprecedented commitment by New York State in the contentious Peace Bridge Plaza project to invest millions of dollars in pollution reducing technology in hopes of protecting the asthma stricken neighborhood. We fought and won a compelling victory over Amigone Crematory, which had been polluting a Tonawanda neighborhood with human ash for two decades.

In 2014, we embarked upon several new organizing opportunities for which we have already seen measurable success. For instance, the Buffalo Common Council has begun considering participatory budgeting for the City of Buffalo. Regular working groups comprised of City staff and Clean Air members are actively exploring ways to give residents a voice in how money is spent in their City.

We began a proactive Just Transition campaign around the expected closure of NRG's Huntley Coal Plant to shape a vibrant future and protect our tax base from decades of vacant industrial property. While the Huntley plant has not yet closed, corporate interests have left closed plants vacant for an average of over twenty years while workers, educators, and families suffer through the transition. Clean Air knows that transition through the closure of major facilities can—and should—be better.

Clean Air proudly joined South Buffalo residents to reclaim the air and noise quality in the neighborhoods surrounding a concrete demolition company. After ten years of being ignored, our work is now gaining the support of key decision makers. U.S. Senator Charles Schumer visited the neighborhood to call for a solution to the constant and harmful presence of dust pollution.

We have continued to fight alongside the workers at the DuPont Yerkes facility to improve technology that will protect the safety and health of workers inside the plant, and residents who live near it. Partnering with organized labor in the fight for air quality and corporate accountability is both a Clean Air priority and essential to our success at DuPont, as well as in each of our campaigns.

Going forward, Clean Air will continue its fight in and around Western New York to ensure residents have a voice in their own health and air quality.

Sean E. Cooney
Clean Air Board Co-Chair



CIVIL RIGHTS

The problem

Excluding communities impacted by air pollution in trucking infrastructure planning

Buffalo knows something about building huge highways through neighborhoods without speaking to the people who live there. In the 1960s, New York State Route 33 was built through the middle of the East Side, a historically African American neighborhood, with little input from the people who live there. The West Side's story isn't much different. Despite being highly impacted by the international truck crossing, residents have been systematically excluded from decision making about the proposed expansion of the plaza and the day-to-day operations of the Peace Bridge Authority. So when we heard the Department of Transportation was planning to spend \$40 million in highway infrastructure on the West Side, a community of color with a large number of non-English speakers, Clean Air engaged to ensure that the people most impacted by the project would be included.

The action

Clean Air led a massive public outreach effort that included over 3,000 phone calls, 1,500 door knocks, and over 2,000 pieces of mail. We stepped up our efforts when NYS DOT refused to translate outreach materials, provide translation at public meetings, or publish meeting notices within the timeframe required by law. Clean Air hosted bilingual workshops for residents to learn more about the projects and supported residents developing comments. Three Clean Air members also filed a civil rights complaint against the NYS DOT with support from 150 residents who believed they had been cut out of the process.

The solution

As a result of the civil rights complaint, the NYS DOT dramatically changed their public outreach process. Over 3,000 invitations were hand delivered to impacted homes in six different languages, meeting notices were translated into six languages, the state hired an outreach director, translated meeting posters that were posted in the community, and provided translators at public meetings.



GREEN BUFFERS

The problem

Air pollution and asthma on Buffalo's West Side

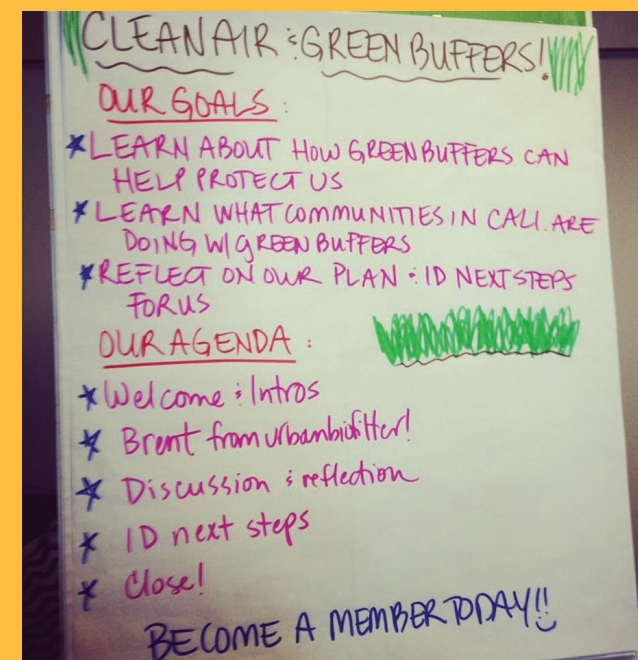
Studies have found that nearly 45% of West Side households have someone with a respiratory illness. Diesel exhaust has been declared a human carcinogen by the World Health Organization. Every day, 4,000 trucks and 20,000 cars pass through the neighborhood to and from the Peace Bridge Plaza, the nation's third-largest land port. The West Side of Buffalo is an environmental justice neighborhood; the people who live there are majority low-income and people of color. Two-thirds of international truck traffic in the region is processed in their neighborhood.

The action

In 2014, our membership hosted Urban Biofilter, an Oakland-based organization that designed and implemented green buffers to protect vulnerable neighborhoods from air pollution. Green buffers are vegetation that protects neighborhoods from diesel exhaust, noise and light from traffic. We held a community workshop and facilitated meetings between Urban Biofilter and the NYS DEC, Peace bridge Authority and Buffalo Common Council. Our members met with all nine Common Council members and earned over six media hits on air pollution problems.

The solution

This fall, the Peace Bridge Authority announced it will spend \$3 million on green infrastructure to improve air quality and buffer the neighborhood from diesel exhaust. A groundbreaking on the project is expected in 2015.





JUST TRANSITIONS

The challenge

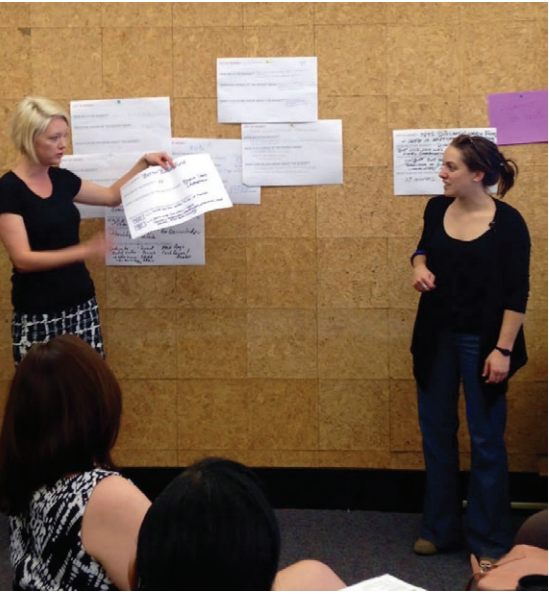
For decades, people who live and work in Tonawanda have both benefited from and seen the costs of burning coal. The Huntley coal plant has generated power, provided union jobs and contributed significantly to the region's tax base. But the plant has also contributed to the region's high levels of air pollution and chronic illness. In 2014, Clean Air issued a report showing the plant is losing money and is at risk of retirement. How do we ensure that the closure of the plant isn't on the back of the workers and community members?

The solution

In response, Clean Air has led a movement of workers and community residents in developing a transition plan that will improve the environment, protect workers and ensure strong schools and local governments for years to come.

In 2014, Clean Air convened a series of community assemblies to give residents and workers who would be impacted by the plant closure a voice in the future of the site. Volunteer delegates from these assemblies have since come together to move forward the various projects, services, and landmarks that community members would like to see shape the future of their neighborhoods. Clean Air also held the first local Just Transition Conference in June, bringing together world-leading experts on movement building, coal finance, renewable energy, and sustainable and democratic community development to provide us with tools, techniques, and case studies that can support our fight for a Just Transition in the Tonawanda area.





PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

When the judge sentenced Tonawanda Coke to \$25 million in fines, Clean Air began organizing to ensure the voices of the people most impacted by the plant had a say in how those funds were distributed. More than 700 residents and workers organized to brainstorm and vet projects, finalize a ballot and vote on the projects they wanted to see funded.

Through the process in Tonawanda, we realized that budgeting is central to all the work we do. Often our work is about redirecting resources – whether it's getting enough funding to the NYS DEC to ensure they have the manpower to enforce laws, or to our neighborhoods to rebuild roads that trucks have destroyed.

In 2014 we led the movement to bring Participatory Budgeting to the City of Buffalo. Our members spoke at the PB conference in Oakland, California, and worked to get the Buffalo Common Council to pass a resolution to explore how to implement PB in Buffalo. We now have a working group made up of residents from all nine Council Districts.

“I'm most looking forward to our victory with Participatory Budgeting. All of the talking in freezing cold weather, taking grandkids everywhere, going to meetings, and helping people at the office would mean so much more as the project comes together as a whole, piece by piece, and seeing it come full circle.”

—Tangia Delk

TONAWANDA COKE SENTENCING

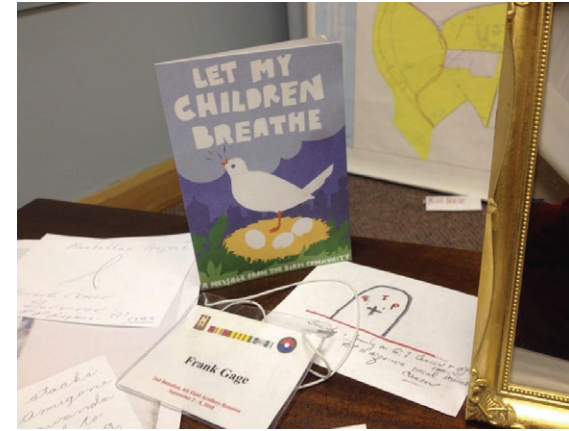
The challenge

In 2013, the Tonawanda Coke Corporation was convicted of violating 14 environmental laws and needlessly putting the lives of people in Tonawanda and the surrounding areas at risk. In addition to jail time for the plant's environmental control manager, the sentencing included possible fines of up to \$200 million. In June 2013, Clean Air organized Participatory Budgeting assemblies so that the community could have a say in how up to 25% of the fines would be spent – ideally, in the community on projects that would remediate or prevent pollution in the neighborhoods directly affected by Tonawanda Coke and other polluters like it, instead of solely being sent back to the U.S. Treasury. Residents of Tonawanda, Grand Island, and surrounding areas gathered together to brainstorm, develop, and then vote on projects like pollution prevention workshops, worker safety training, and tree plantings.

The result

In 2014, after many months of anticipation and many years of community organizing, Judge William Skretny sentenced Tonawanda Coke to pay more than \$25 million in fines and sentenced Mark Kamholz, the company's environmental control manager, to a year and a day in prison, plus a \$20,000 fine.

While the sentencing was an historic event and important victory for the community, Clean Air will continue to fight outside of the courtroom to obtain funding for and implement projects that reflect residents' needs and desires.



“My favorite memories from 2014 were the trip to the Participatory Budgeting Conference in Oakland and all of our meetings at City Hall. They contributed a new perspective on what money we can pull in for PB!”

—Tangia Delk





AMIGONE

The challenge

For over 20 years, residents of the Tonawanda neighborhood near the Amigone Crematory on Sheridan Drive have experienced foul odors, noise, ash, and smoke coming from the facility and landing in their backyards. Many residents were unable to open their windows or spend time in their backyards due to the suffocating conditions, and it was common to find cars, patio furniture, or toys covered in human ash. In 2012, Clean Air and members in the neighborhood successfully organized to have operations at the crematory ceased. However, in 2014, Amigone made moves to reopen the crematory, even though very little had been done to prevent the experiences of human ash on barbecues and smoke coming in windows from being repeated again.



The solution

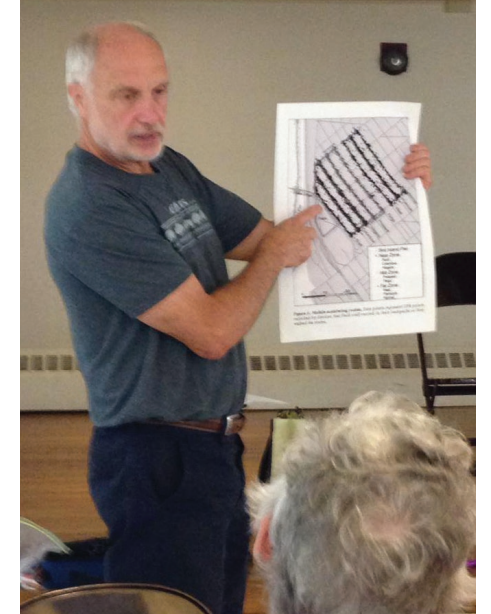
Members immediately began researching ways to keep the crematory from impeding their quality of life, and soon found that the crematory was only allowed to operate in a residential neighborhood because the Erie County Legislature had granted the business a cemetery zoning status nearly 25 years prior. The crematory would not be allowed to reopen if a resolution was passed to reverse that decision. Members worked tirelessly, meeting with members of the Legislature, phone banking, getting signatures for petitions, and working with the media to support the passage of the resolution. In October 2014, with rousing support from Legislator Kevin Hardwick insisting that lawmakers are bound to “put people over profits, people over politics,” the resolution passed and the crematory was prevented from reopening permanently!



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“ I have worked with Clean Air for over seven years and during that time have found myself increasing my support in terms of time, energy, and financial contributions. In over 35 years of working on community health issues, I have not worked with an organization that is even close to Clean Air in terms of true grassroots and membership-driven operation and tangible, substantive benefits to the communities in which it works. I believe that Clean Air’s emphasis on participatory democracy is vital in solving the pressing issues of our day, many of which are environmental, and that the broad-minded, inclusive problem-solving approach Clean Air uses in addressing environmental problems in our communities is an important key to long-term positive change. I am looking forward to many more years of working closely with Clean Air to create a healthier environment and a more just society.”

—Bill Scheider



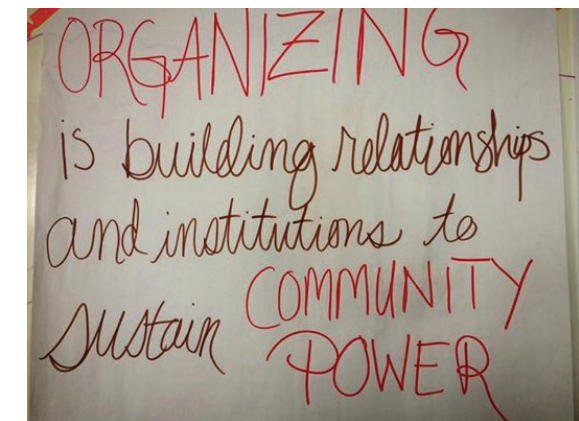
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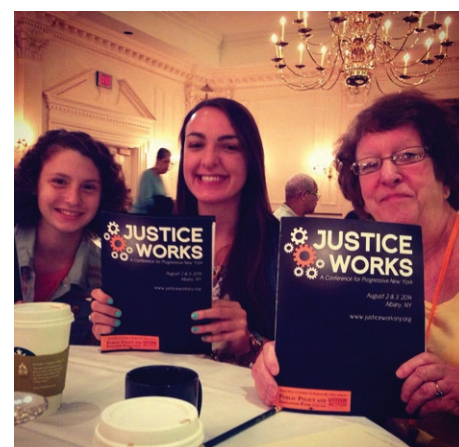
“ In 2007 the Board of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo committed to the protection and restoration of the environment as one of its four principal programmatic focus areas.

Since that time, the Foundation has ‘connected people, ideas and resources’ to foster environmental stewardship in WNY. This includes the formation of the Western New York Environmental Alliance and support for its ‘Shared Agenda for Action.’ Central to this agenda is environmental justice and the protection of our residents from the impacts of toxic pollution.

The Clean Air Coalition has proven itself to be one of the most effective environmental organizations in WNY and through its tenacious efforts, has greatly impacted the health of our community and its environment.

As a board member of the CFGB, I take great pride in the Foundation’s continuing support of Clean Air.”

—Richard Stockton



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Thank you to:

Rachel Bridges
Terry Mickelson, Kallie Campbell, and Staff at Allen Street Consulting
James Heaney at Bicycle Creative




“My favorite memory in 2014 was going to the Justice Works Conference in Albany with the Clean Air group and seeing the different people from all over the state coming together and working on one common goal!”

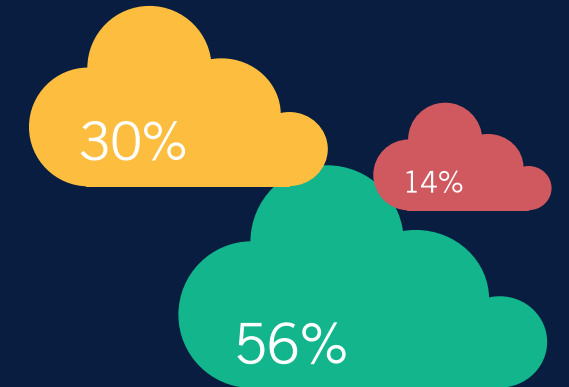
—Sue Kelly

WHAT WE RAISED

INCOME

\$283,062.89



-  Individuals and Special Events
\$85,013.22 (30%)
-  Fee for Service
\$38,366.10 (14%)
-  Grants
\$159,700.00 (56%)

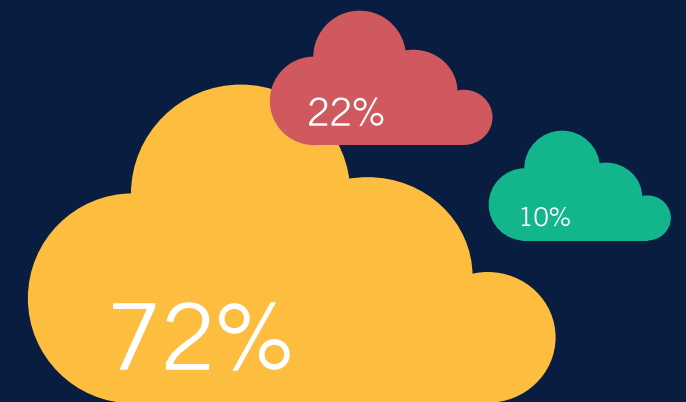


WHAT WE SPENT

EXPENSES

\$254,655.76

-  Programs
\$184,663.43 (72%)
-  Management and Admin
\$57,389.72 (22%)
-  Fundraising
\$26,444.71 (10%)



The progress we've made in 2014 has been incredible—and none of it would have happened without you!

Our supporters and members make it possible for Clean Air to take on the big, tough fights for a healthier Western New York. Go to cacwny.org/donate today to become a sustaining supporter of our work in 2015 by contributing \$5, \$10, or \$20 a month.

We promise there are great things to come!