



Ohio Student Environmental Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

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Ohioans for Health, Environment and Justice (OHEJ)

March 4, 2010

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OH Film Festival Puts Green Twist on Social Justice

Columbus Film Festival Showcases Local Talent & Communities in Peril

Columbus, OH - On Thursday, March 4th, filmmakers from across the state will compete to create the most compelling documentary of an Ohio Erin Brokovich story. The Environmental Justice Short Video Contest Awards Ceremony will be held at 11am, Thursday at the Vern Riffe Center in Columbus. The contest has given participants – primarily university and high school students – the challenge of telling community stories of environmental health threats.

The contest is sponsored by Ohioans for Health, Environment and Justice (OHEJ) and the Ohio Student Environmental Coalition (OSEC) and supported by Ohio state legislators and national environmental health organizations.

State legislators and contest participants will walk the red carpet for environmental justice outside the Vern Riffe Center High Street entrance just three days before movie celebrities will step onto the famed red carpet in Hollywood. Ohio Reps. Tracy Maxwell Heard and Dan Stewart will walk the red carpet in support of making environmental justice a priority for the Ohio State government.

Ohio Representative Tracy Maxwell Heard (District 26), an advocate for environmental justice in Ohio, said, "I am so excited about this event and the opportunity to honor the awardees for their hard work documenting such an important topic. The issues raised by this thought-provoking work are not only

relevant to my district, but to the entire globe. It is with great pleasure, then, we take the time to celebrate this meaningful work in a meaningful way."

OHEJ and OSEC sponsored the Ohio Environmental Justice Short Video Contest as a collaborative effort to inform state legislators and the public about the need to make environmental health hazards a priority in Ohio and to gain support for an environmental justice bill that was developed in response to the concerns of citizens affected by environmental threats from across Ohio in 2007 and 2008.

Summaries (http://www.ohioej.org/newsreleases/film_festival_summaries.htm) of the films and the winning videos (<http://www.youtube.com/chejtv>) are available online. For more information, please see: <http://www.ohioej.org/>

Representatives of the impacted communities featured in the film festival will also be in attendance and available for comment.

"This has been going on for 20 years or more...it could have been stopped before it got that bad," said Phyllis Weber, a resident of Mc Cook Field neighborhood, in Dayton, OH. Carcinogens from a former Chrysler plant have leaked into the ground beneath her neighborhood. The Dayton area community, the subject of a video entry by University of Dayton students, has been designated by the US EPA as Ohio's 48th Superfund Site and one of the worst contamination sites in the country.

"The regulatory system and structure of law denies citizens the right to protect themselves in their own communities and legalizes harm," stated Sherry Fleming, a rural resident from NW Ohio, who submitted a video on the impacts of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) upon rural communities.

A cluster of children with cancer in Clyde, OH are featured in another short film. Jenny Long, Nurse, North Coast Cancer Care worries: "There is something in the environment that's affecting our kids...I don't know that (officials) are doing enough until we do know what it is...they need to continue to try to find answers for us. It's causing a lot of fear in our community."

Southside Columbus has been ranked among the five percent of the country most at risk from industrial air pollution and was the subject of a film produced by Ohio State University graduate students, which revealed a location hit hard for decades by the presence of multiple industries clustered in a relatively

small geographic area. “We’re raising families, we’re raising children...we have to value human life,” stated Barbara Wood, Southside resident and Ohio Citizen Action board member.

About Ohioans for Health, Environment and Justice: OHEJ is a statewide, grassroots alliance of diverse allies working to empower the people of Ohio through education and citizen action to create environmental, economic and social justice for their communities.

About Ohio Student Environmental Coalition: OSEC is a statewide network of student groups working for a clean, safe, and just future for all.