

DAILY PRESS

OPINION

Wednesday, April 27, 2016 19

PUNCH LINES



"WHAT'D I TELL YOU? A MILLIONAIRE AND A BILLIONAIRE!"



"HURRY, DEAR... THE WALKING DEAD IS ABOUT TO START..."

Submit your op-ed piece. Email your submission to cwjohanson@dailypress.com or mail to: C.W. Johnson, Daily Press, 703 Mariners Row, Newport News, VA 23606. All submissions are subject to editing.

IMPROVING COMMUNITY HEALTH

MAKE CLEANER AIR A PRIORITY

Climate change is quickly moving from something that we once characterized as a problem for future generations to one that we see increasingly affecting our daily lives and health right now. The American Lung Association's annual "State of the Air" report was released last week and includes some positive signs that we are on the right track here in southeast Virginia, but much work remains.

The 17th annual "State of the Air" report analyzes air quality by compiling data from 2012 - 2014, the most recent data available spanning a three-year period, monitoring two of the most widespread air pollutants: ozone pollution and particle pollution. The report gives counties' report card grades of "A" through "F" and ranks them and metropolitan areas.

Both ozone and particle pollution are dangerous to public health and can even lead to death. They also have a disproportionate impact on some of the most vulnerable populations - especially children, older adults, people of color and those with asthma or other lung diseases.

Even though the report found that the Hampton Roads area improved to its best-ever performance (Hampton, Norfolk and Virginia Beach cities posting straight "A's" in the category of the daily measure of particle pollution), no data was collected in the cities of Portsmouth and Newport News, which have significantly high death and hospitalization rates due to asthma, according to the latest Asthma Burden Report released by the Virginia Health Department. In addition, the Hampton Roads area still experiences days with unhealthy levels of ozone. Such unhealthy ozone levels puts residents at risk of increased asthma attacks and

even premature death. The lack of available data in cities such as Newport News makes it difficult to truly understand the impact of outdoor air quality as it applies to the disproportionately high rates of respiratory diseases seen in communities such as the Southeast Community of Newport News. Especially considering such significant local sources of diesel emissions (particle pollution) from Interstate 664 and the marine terminal. This is why the Southeast CARE Coalition, (a broad, grass-roots, community-based organization of residents, business, academic institutions and organizations) continues work on our Right to Know air quality campaign to have official state and federal air monitors installed in our community.

There are also decidedly mixed results nationwide as the report found that while air quality improved overall, more than half of the population in the United States lives in counties that have unhealthy levels of either ozone or particle pollution. What's worse, the findings of this year's "State of the Air" report provide evidence that warming temperatures due to climate change will make it harder to protect human health from air pollution in the future.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe has supported efforts here in Virginia to adopt a strong clean-power plan and that work must continue. Steps taken under the Clean Air Act to reduce pollution from power plants would also reduce co-pollutants associated with power plant emissions. Such reductions are extremely important to environmental justice communities and the health of all Virginians.

That is why it is so important that the Clean Air Act remain strong, fully implemented and enforced.

The full report can be found at stateoftheair.org. Holloman is coalition coordinator for the Southeast CARE Coalition.

BUSINESSES BUILDING BETTER FUTURES

The City of Newport News needs businesses and organizations who would like to provide work opportunities to young people ages 16-24 through the Summer Training and Enrichment Program at no cost to the business.

- The training opportunity is a 10 week commitment for 25-30 hours per week
- Businesses will help provide career training and exposure to the world of work
- ALL funding for STEP is provided by the City
- Businesses will be publicly recognized as a program partner at the completion of the program

Businesses and organizations interested in providing work sites can find more information and register online under the STEP tab at ygvpinn.nnva.gov
For questions, contact the 311 Contact Center at (757) 933-2311 or 311@nnva.gov

BUILDING BETTER FUTURES
Newport News
PENINSULA COUNCIL For Workforce Development

CityofNewportNews
CityofINN
#STEPNN2016 #YGVPINN