



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MACOG Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon lauds local efforts**

*Regional air quality improvement 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) 2018 Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon in Elkhart Wednesday.

"This year's award winners represent a broad array of options for achieving both economic and environmental success," said MACOG Executive Director James Turnwald. "Their leadership and initiative serve as outstanding examples for others wishing to make a positive impact on air quality as well as quality of life. We applaud their efforts."

Award winners include:

- **Goshen College:** Goshen College was recognized as a leader in energy conservation and land management. Over the last several years, Goshen College has converted 12 out of about 55 acres of lawn to native landscaping, which improved air quality and reduced mowing, irrigation and use of chemical herbicides. Goshen College has also steadily reduced its energy consumption through energy efficiency improvements such as smart LED lighting and digitized energy management and added solar thermal and geothermal technologies. The campus electrical consumption has returned to 1992 levels and gas consumption is 30% less than it was at that time, all while increasing building square footage by 60 percent.
- **Plymouth Products:** Plymouth Products serves as an example of how small, local businesses can contribute to cleaner air while reducing electricity costs through a variety of efficiency and renewable measures, thereby providing for increased financial stability. Plymouth Products cut its electricity use by 65 percent through the replacement of florescent lighting with LEDs throughout its factory and office. The NIPSCO Energy Efficiency Rebate Program reduced electricity costs by 37 percent, with a payback period of one year. Plymouth Products replaced its remaining electricity needs with a 25 kilowatt solar array.

"My initial motivation for this project was environmental, to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels which negatively impact the ground and air," said Don Wisniewski, president

and CEO of Plymouth Products. "As I researched it further, I found that it was also a smart financial investment."

- **Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation:** Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation (TVSC) in Kosciusko County has a long-standing energy conservation program which positively impacts both its budget and the air. Past projects include Guaranteed Energy Savings projects, geothermal applications and a wind turbine. Last year, TVSC installed a 425 kilowatt, 1,440-panel solar array at Mentone Elementary School, which will generate about \$70,000 in electricity cost savings annually. The school corporation continues to work toward reducing utility costs and energy use with a school-wide conversion to LED lighting planned this summer at Mentone Elementary.

"We continually explore opportunities that help our schools maintain educational programs and services by reducing utility costs in new and different ways," said Brett Boggs, superintendent of TVSC. "We're also proud of this project because it benefits the wider community by using local installers and manufacturers and generates cleaner electricity for our facilities."

- **Indiana Toll Road:** ITR Concession Company was recognized for a broad range of improvements promoting cleaner air since 2015 including designing the Travel Plaza Master Plan to exceed standard practices. ITRCC is reducing vehicle emissions by replacing 42 plow and dump trucks with clean diesel, right-sizing the fleet by seven vehicles and converting 11 diesel generators to compressed natural gas. The Indiana Toll Road also planted 700 trees and converted more than 1,000 light fixtures to LEDs. The new Indiana Toll Road administration building is on track for LEED Gold Certification and includes a 73.5 kilowatt solar array. The array joins the four other solar arrays, including 35 kilowatt solar arrays being installed on each of the upgraded Elkhart travel plazas.

"At the Indiana Toll Road, we're proud to invest in efforts that promote a cleaner environment," said Nic Barr, president and CEO of ITRCC. "We strive to be a good neighbor and we are continually looking for new ways to use clean technologies to support a more sustainable future."

The awards were presented during the event at the Matterhorn Conference Center in Elkhart, Indiana Wednesday. The luncheon also featured presentations by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the City of South Bend Office of Sustainability, Warsaw Community Schools and Catalyst Partners.

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.

Returning to the awards luncheon this year was an alternative vehicle display presented in collaboration with South Shore Clean Cities and the Midwest EVOLVE project. The Midwest EVOLVE (Electric Vehicle Opportunities: Learning, eEvents, 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.

South Shore Clean Cities, Midwest EVOLVE and MACOG will again team up May 4 for an Electric Vehicle Ride & Drive as part of Downtown South Bend's First Fridays. The event will take place from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. next to the Gridiron, 122 S. Michigan St. in South Bend.

The Partners for Clean Air Awards Luncheon was sponsored in part by NIPSCO and South Shore Clean Cities.

More information about the MACOG Partners for Clean Air program is available at [www.macog.com/sustainability.html](http://www.macog.com/sustainability.html).

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**CUTLINE:** Michiana Area Council of Governments' 2018 Partners for Clean Air program presented awards at its annual luncheon Wednesday. Accepting awards were Don Wisniewski on behalf of Plymouth Products, Alyssa Staley on behalf of Indiana Toll Road Concession Company, Glenn Gilbert on behalf of Goshen College and Todd Glenn and Randy Dahms of Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation. Also pictured is Zach Dripps of MACOG (far right).

**About the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG):**

The Michiana Area Council of Governments is a metropolitan planning commission serving Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall and St. Joseph counties in northern Indiana. The voluntary organization of local governments studies and attempts to resolve, for the benefit of each member and the region, areas of interlocal issues, which includes but is not limited to transportation, transit, economic development, environment and other issues that impact the region. To learn more, go to [www.macog.com](http://www.macog.com).

**About South Shore Clean Cities:**

South Shore Clean Cities is a 501(c)(3) organization managed by Legacy Environmental Services, Inc., a woman-owned, certified Women's Business Enterprise. The U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Cities coalitions are organizations designed to reduce petroleum consumption in the transportation sector by advancing the use of clean fuels and vehicles, idle reduction technologies, hybrid electric vehicles, fuel blends and fuel economy while reducing dependence on imported oil. To learn more, go to [www.southshorecleancities.org](http://www.southshorecleancities.org).