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## Press Release

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# Local Non-Profits Receive Grants to Address Air Pollution and Asthma

### *Grants address children's asthma rates in West Eugene*

Eugene, OR 10/5/2011: Two local non-profits are joint recipients of new grants focusing on researching children's asthma rates in West Eugene and offering programs to help alleviate asthma triggers. Oregon Toxics Alliance and its partner Centro LatinoAmericano are winners of a prestigious Environmental Justice grant from the US EPA to tackle issues of high rates of asthma and the relationship of respiratory illness to air quality. Centro LatinoAmericano is the lead organization to win a second grant from Providence Health Care to help provide asthma self-management education, with the Toxics Alliance as its partner.

The grants follow upon the partners' 2010 project to study the Eugene residents' concerns about the effect of air quality on their health. Results of that study, also funded by the US EPA, revealed that rates of childhood asthma in West Eugene are higher than state and national averages. It was also learned that residents in West Eugene commonly experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches, and irregular heartbeats when they smell noxious odors from nearby industrial polluters. Over ninety-five percent of all Eugene-based toxics air emissions are in West Eugene.

Community partners who will also contribute to the project include the Bethel School District, Active Bethel Citizens, the Red Cross, West Eugene Community Advisory Group and business partners such as Coastwide Labs and Swedish Engineering Auto.

"We presented the results and recommendations from our Environmental Health study at more than sixteen events statewide," said Lisa Arkin, executive director of the Oregon Toxics Alliance. "The results show that people living in West Eugene are well aware that air quality and health are related, and they would like cleaner air for their families."

"Our partnership wants to reach out to Latino families in West Eugene, who face linguistic barriers to access important information regarding asthma education," said Marcela Mendoza, executive director of Centro LatinoAmericano.

The project started in 2009 as a result of community concern over how a new biomass plant might worsen air quality for downwind neighborhoods. Those concerns still exist.

"In light of the recent news that the Seneca Sustainable Energy plant was found in violation of their air quality permit, Eugene residents are right to be concerned about the air they breathe," said Arkin.

The results of the first study can be found on the website of Oregon Toxics Alliance, <http://oregontoxics.org/ej2/resources>