



2022 Greater Cincinnati Earth Day Festival

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2022 Environmental Award Winners Announced

CINCINNATI – Each year, the Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition recognizes and honors those in our community who have actively made ecology, environmental study, and sustainability a way of life. Nominations are submitted, reviewed, and voted upon by the Coalition's board members. During the Earth Day Festival, the Coalition honors one person or organization from five categories: student, teacher, volunteer, business, and government agency.

This year, we will honor Amanda Hanger as the Environmental Student winner, along with Dr. Susan Pinney, Ph.D. as the teacher honoree, Jeanne Nightengale as the winner of the volunteer award, Taft Law and Rob Bilott in the business category, and the Cincinnati Climate, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee as the honored government agency.

When asked about her current field of study, Amanda had this to say, "I've been interested in learning about and caring for the environment for as long as I can remember. For a long time, I didn't know what I wanted to do with this passion or how I could use my knowledge and concern for the better."

Starting her college education in Environmental Science, she eventually began working as a farmer and realized that she has a passion for the environment and for growing food. In her current farming role, Amanda is implementing regenerative organic agriculture. This farming method takes a rehabilitative approach to growing food, focusing on soil health, animal welfare, and social impact. She is learning how to give back to the earth while putting her passion for growing food to work.

Past honorees of the Environmental Student Award include Lynn Lorio for her work in advocating for and mentoring young environmentally-focused students toward green careers, as well as Rebecca Kiefer, who started the US Green Building Chapter here in Cincinnati.

The 2022 Environmental Teacher Award honoree, Susan M. Pinney, Ph.D., FACE, is a Professor in the Department of Environmental and Public Health Sciences in the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati, the Director of the Center for Environmental Genetics, and the Cancer Risk, Control and Prevention Program Leader for the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center.

Dr. Pinney conducts a variety of large molecular epidemiology studies. Her research focuses on the environmental factors that influence the age of pubertal events, such as breast development and the risk of breast cancer later in life. Susan also conducts cohort studies of the gene variants that result in a greater risk of lung cancer and the health effects of uranium exposure. Since 1990, she has been the Research Director of the Fernald Community Cohort, with data and biospecimens collected over 20 years used for over 87 research studies.

Previous years' honorees of the Environmental Teacher Award include Stephanie Carter. This homeschool teacher incorporated environmental sustainability into teaching her students. Colleen McSwiggin, the 2017 honoree, organized and chaired the Sustainability Committee at Mount St. Joseph University in 2018.

Sierra Club board member and founding member of Cincinnati Rights of Ohio River Watershed (CROW), Jeanne Nightingale, is the Environmental Volunteer Award winner for 2022. Though interference of Covid and Ohio State legislation put a hold on Jeanne's "Cincinnati Past Plastic" movement, her persistence has not diminished. Cincinnati Past Plastic calls for businesses and consumers alike to end their use of single-use plastics. Numerous Cincinnati Council Members have supported the efforts of the Sierra Club, Cincinnati Past Plastic, and Jeanne Nightingale for being a constant force in getting House Bill 242 passed, and for their prompt to locally head-quartered Kroger to end their use of plastic bags by 2025.

Ms. Nightingale is honored among previous Environmental Volunteer Award winners Jennifer Ballard, an eco-warrior and Green Mom who educates students about proper recycling methods in her children's classrooms, and Heather Sturgill, who planned and organized the Apple Street Market in Northside as the Community-Owner Board Representative.

Business Award - Taft Law

Taft Partner Rob Bilott Inspires Story Behind Major Motion Picture "Dark Waters" and Authors New Book, "Exposure"

The film's story is based on Nathaniel Rich's The New York Times Magazine exposé, The Lawyer Who Became DuPont's Worst Nightmare.

"Dark Waters" sheds light on a monumental legal battle led by Bilott and the Taft team against one of the world's largest corporations. First approached in 1998 in his Taft Cincinnati office by a Parkersburg, W. Va. farmer, Bilott uncovers and publicly reveals DuPont's role in contaminating local drinking water with toxic waste. The contaminant—a man-made, "Forever Chemical" known as PFOA—can now be found in the blood of virtually every living creature on the planet.

Variety calls the film "the first corporate thriller that's a call to action because you'll emerge from it feeling anything but safe."

Bilott also recently published a new book documenting his story, titled "Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer's Twenty-Year Battle Against DuPont." The book is published by Atria/Simon & Schuster and has been called by the New York Times Book Review a "David and Goliath tale with a twist.... Bilott skillfully tells the story of his epic battle with DuPont."

Participant, the leading media company dedicated to entertainment that inspires audiences to engage in positive social change, this week launched the "Fight Forever Chemicals" campaign to coincide with the film "Dark Waters" and Bilott's new book "Exposure." The campaign will bring the fight against forever chemicals from the margins to the mainstream, demanding stronger protections from leaders in office.

"Fight Forever Chemicals" is challenging companies to remove forever chemicals from their products and shelves and will engage a network of influencers to amplify key messages about industrial pollution.

Bilott's instrumental PFOA legal work has led to class-action suits on behalf of thousands of individuals in the U.S., with active litigation still ongoing in prominent Midwestern cities like Columbus, Ohio. Bilott remains actively involved in various legal proceedings across the country relating to PFOA and the related family of PFAS chemicals. He is a frequent speaker nationally and internationally on PFOA and PFAS-related issues, including recent testimony before the U.S. House.

The 2022 Environmental Government Agency Award winner is the Cincinnati Climate, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee. Committee Chair, Meeka Owens acknowledges that there are dozens of opportunities to address climate change locally. Her suggestions include adding green space to neighborhoods, preparing for an emerging electric vehicle market, and improving water and air quality. Vice-Chair of the Committee, Mark Jeffereys, says that climate change is not just a global issue. "We have a role on climate change at a city level, a municipal level," he states.

Officials are working with the Committee to update the city's Bike Plan this year, which was last updated in 2010. In addition, work will begin on another version of the Green Cincinnati Plan, scheduled for an update every five years. It's set for an update in 2023, but the complicated process means staff wants to get a solid head start.

In past years, the Coalition has honored such government agencies as the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District for their efforts to prioritize clean watersheds and minimal runoff pollution, as well as the home to the Earth Day Festival, Blue Ash Summit Park, for their focus on environmentally-centered events, sustainable approach to park-management, and emphasis on Green Living.

All Environmental Award Winners will be awarded a recycled-glass "Environmental Stewardship" plaque on the main stage of the Greater Cincinnati Earth Day Festival at Summit Park in Blue Ash, Ohio, on Saturday, April 23, between 12:30pm and 1:30pm.

Don't hesitate to contact us for interviews, articles customized to your audience, and appearances on radio and television!

About the Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition

The Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition is a 501(c)(3) community of not-for-profit organizations, businesses, government agencies, and individuals from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana tri-state region who work cooperatively and actively to promote the beauty and environmental quality of the tri-state area.