

## **2021's Largest Environmental Advocate Gathering in Indiana Honors Environmental Heroes**

*Greening the Statehouse, in its 14th year, held its second virtual and fourteenth annual conference*

Hoosiers from across Indiana gathered for the second-ever virtual, and fourteenth annual, Greening the Statehouse (GTS). GTS has historically been Indiana's largest annual gathering of environmental-minded Hoosiers. The conference, hosted by the Hoosier Environmental Council, aims to prepare attendees to be as knowledgeable and as skilled as possible heading into the new legislative session. One of the most popular elements of the conference is the "GTS Awards," which recognizes exemplary grassroots leaders and grassroots organizations from across Indiana.

The 2021 Greening the Statehouse likely brought together the highest number of organizations and green businesses in the history of this fourteen year conference – 47 non-profit and green business sponsors.

"We're so grateful that we could honor such amazing community-minded grassroots leaders and grassroots organizations from six different regions of our state. It is a tribute to the extraordinary commitment to environmental protection that exists throughout our state. The grassroots activists and leaders that we recognized all reflect incredible persistence, compassion for their fellow citizens, and an intelligence to do things right and with impact. We are truly grateful for their selfless contributions," remarked Jesse Kharbanda, Executive Director of the Hoosier Environmental Council.

### **The 2021 GTS Award Winners are the following...**

#### **1.) Awardees based in Indianapolis**

**\*Dr. Gabe Filippelli** - Improving Kids' Environment Award - for his many years of work to fight childhood lead poisoning, his fostering of citizen science and community resilience building, and his relentless commitment to community-based partnership.

**\*Greg Bright** - Distinguished Service Award - for being a highly respected consulting environmental scientist who has generously donated his time to advance water quality, sustainable agriculture, and protections from coal ash.

**\*Indiana Trails** - Organization of the Year – for building the Milwaukee Road Transportation Trailway out of Bedford, raising concerns about the proposed Mid States Corridor highway, pushing to shift INDOT's car-centric conceptions, coordinating the Southern Indiana portion of the American Discovery Trail, and teaching bicycle safety to students and civic groups.

**\*Jacklyn McMillan Gunn** - Frontline Advocate of the Year - for being deeply involved in advancing environmental justice and community development in Martindale Brightwood as a highly educated and accomplished business professional.

\***Jill Hoffman** - Sustainable Champion of the Year - for her remarkable ability to bring diverse stakeholders together to dialogue and problem solve for the advancement of water quality and watershed protection, and, in addition, for being a central thought leader and coalition leader in trying to stop the anti-wetlands bill, SEA 389.

\***Kyle Hendrix** - Civil Servant of the Year - to honor his exemplary career in brownfields remediation, including having managed approximately 250 brownfield sites during his career with the State of Indiana, including the Circle City Industrial Park, the City of Jeffersonville's new gateway, and Newport Landing in LaPorte. Kyle tragically passed away this year, and in his loving memory, we are renaming this award, the "Kyle Hendrix Award for Indiana Civil Servant of the Year".

\***Robin Miner** - Volunteer of the Year - for spending countless hours since 2018 working with the Hoosier Environmental Council staff to dig through mountains of documentation on the disposal of coal ash and research costs associated with coal ash disposal, and to write up a detailed technical critique of one of Indiana's coal ash sites for submission to the EPA.

## **2.) Awardees based outside of Indianapolis**

\***Confront the Climate Crisis** (Lafayette) - Mal Atherton Award: Climate Advocate of the Year - is a grassroots organization of young people fighting for climate justice in Indiana. Launched in September 2020 in West Lafayette, this group currently engages over 150 students from communities across Indiana, including Indianapolis, Evansville, Terre Haute, Fort Wayne, Gary, Hammond, Carmel, Alexandria, and Kokomo. This dynamic grassroots group is currently working with Republican State Senator Ron Alting on bipartisan legislation to initiate strong climate action in Indiana.

\***Gary Public Transit** (Gary) - Environmental Justice Advocate of the Year - for having improved existing bus service (while expanding service) and worked with food scarcity organizations to study grocery shopping accessibility and schedule transit-adjacent farmers markets. The agency is discounting bus passes, is creating bikeshare programs with downtown developers, and is working to improve landscaping to reduce the heat island effect – all aimed at advancing equity.

\***Helen Hudson** (Crawfordsville) - Lifetime Achievement Award - has been a community voice for natural living and local food through columns in the Crawfordsville Journal Review. She is also a member of Sustainable Initiatives, the Community Local Food Summits Team in Montgomery County, and the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County Climate Team. Alongside husband Marc, they recently established a "Solar Power to the People Fund" at the Montgomery County Community Foundation. Helen and her students created "PBL: Amtrak", a project for which students cleaned up and maintained the tiny but busy local train station, planted a perennial garden, and did award-winning advocacy work for public transportation.

\***Indiana Beyond Coal** (Evansville) - Mal Atherton Award: Climate Advocate of the Year - has, for nine years, been concentrated on decarbonizing Indiana's power sector. Driven in part by their relentless advocacy, 22 coal-fired power plants have been retired in Indiana, representing 62 percent of the state's total coal capacity. Nine coal plants remain, and as they continue to work for the retirement of those plants, this organization is also pivoting to stop utilities from rushing to replace coal with fracked gas.

\***Jennifer McNealy** (Greensburg) - Sustainable Agriculture Advocate of the Year – has, armed with a master's in management from Indiana Wesleyan and a bachelor's in communication and history from Hanover College, committed nearly a decade to raising awareness and educating others about factory farms and their devastating impact on our rural communities, health, and environment. In addition to attending dozens of local planning and zoning meetings and sharing the information that she has gathered about factory farms with board and audience members, this person has helped to facilitate educational events on this all-critical topic.

\***Lisa Bough** (Bringinghurst) - Frontline Advocate of the Year - has been tirelessly speaking out to her state and local officials on the need to reform our laws and regulations to protect her community in Carroll County (where 360 million gallons of hog waste are applied annually) and Hoosiers statewide from the devastating effects of factory farms.

\***Tom Saunders** (Lewisville) - Statesman of the Year - for his tireless effort to pass common sense legislation to protect our environment and rural communities from the devastating effects of factory farms, for which his district, alone, has 60 of them. In the process, he has courageously stood up to the powerful livestock industry and his own party.

\***Earthjustice** (Boston, MA) - Environmental Lawyer of the Year - is the premier nonprofit environmental law organization in the U.S. and it represents HEC in several critically important legal cases, aiming to protect Indiana communities, our water resources, and our unique and beautiful environment from pollution from fossil fuels, particularly coal ash.

*Note to reporters: If you would like to interview awardees, please contact 317-981-3205.*