

Clean Air Initiative

Catawba Center for the Environment Launches Air Initiative

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The Catawba College Center for the Environment is spearheading a Clean Air Initiative for Rowan and the Central Piedmont.

The project's purpose is to educate the public about air pollution and foster programs to mitigate that pollution. It will begin in Rowan County with a model program, but the Center's intention is to involve neighboring counties as well.

The catalyst for the project was the American Lung Association's 2003 report which cited Rowan as the 16th worst county in the nation for air quality. "This is a situation that impacts the health of every citizen in the county," says Dr. John Wear, center director. "The health of the local economy and the overall quality of life that residents enjoy are also negatively affected."

The project will focus on educating the public through conferences, a lecture series, brochures, press releases and speeches to community groups. Topics will include the importance of smart growth, alternative transportation and

fuels, the preservation of forest land and establishment of urban forestry programs, and ways to decrease dependency on the automobile and reduce emissions.

The Center will partner with the Rowan Sustainable Community Development Commission as well as regional organizations to foster strategies to combat the problem.

The Catawba Center for the Environment has taken a leadership role in educating the public about environmental matters since its inception in 1995, according to Wear. "It is most fitting that we commit our expertise and energies to an issue as important as this," he says. "We owe it to our children and grandchildren to change our behaviors and clean up the air."

The Center is currently raising funds for the Clean Air Initiative. Initial sponsors for the project include Catawba College, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the County of Rowan, the City of Salisbury, F&M Bank, Central Carolina Bank, Wachovia Bank and Fred and Alice Stanback. ■