

# ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2019  
JULY 2018 - JUNE 2019



CLEAN AIR, HEALTHY FUTURE

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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## Dear clean air advocates:

On behalf of Air Alliance Houston (AAH), I am pleased to present this report on our activities over the past year. While the Houston region continues to face significant air quality challenges and persistent environmental injustices, AAH is making strides toward delivering cleaner air and greater accountability from our local officials and industry.

Last year we were busy helping mobilize residents that will be impacted by the planned North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP), also known as the I-45 expansion. We informed them about the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Transportation Policy Council vote that would enable the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to move ahead with the project. And, because of our collective efforts, more than 55 Houstonians rallied on July 23, 2019 to express their concerns and voice their opposition to the project. This collective action resulted in Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner submitting a letter to the Council stating that he would not move forward with the project if TxDOT did not adequately address the communities' concerns.

Our research is providing information that Houstonians need about the quality of the air we breathe. AAH's health impact assessment of the I-45 expansion has supported the advocacy efforts of many groups, which resulted in over \$50 million for community mitigations to address the documented adverse health and safety impacts that were identified. Along with other mitigations, these funds can support strategies that aim to reduce exposure to air pollution from the planned highway expansion.

Our advocacy work in partnership with communities is ensuring that your voices are heard. We equipped residents with their own air monitors to help them engage regulatory agencies in addressing neighborhood level air quality issues. We successfully advocated with our partners at Harris County Commissioners Court to vote in favor of investing a



**BAKEYAH S. NELSON, PH.D.**

total of \$11.6 million to modernize and better equip the County agencies responsible for protecting our environment and public health each day, as well as in times of disaster. The allocation of these funds is one step toward ensuring communities are better protected from environmental hazards.

And when disaster strikes – like it did at the ITC plant in Deer Park – we provided critical information to communities, communicated directly with public officials to monitor the impact on air quality and health, and provided media outlets with data to inform the public about the potential health impacts of these incidents. We will continue our unwavering advocacy to prevent future incidents.

These successes would not have been possible without the support of our generous donors.

**Thank you for supporting public health and environmental justice for Houston communities!**

Appreciatively,

Bakeyah S. Nelson, PhD  
Executive Director

An aerial view of the Houston skyline with a highway in the foreground. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the image, containing the organization's mission statement.

**Air Alliance Houston envisions healthy communities with clean air, every day, for everyone.**

**Our mission is to reduce the public health impacts from air pollution through applied research, education, and advocacy.**

## STAFF

**Bakeyah Nelson, Ph.D.** | Executive Director

**Paige Powell** | Director of Operations

**Leticia Ablaza** | Director of Government Affairs and Community Outreach

**Juan Flores** | Community Outreach Coordinator

**Corey Williams** | Research and Policy Director

**Harrison Humphreys** | Transportation Policy Advocate

**Riikka Pohjankoski** | Communications Manager

**Zachariah Ebrahim** | Project and Administrative Assistant

Advocating for clean air is a team effort.

AAH would like to thank all of our interns, volunteers, and community members for their important contributions to this work.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Susman Godfrey, LLP

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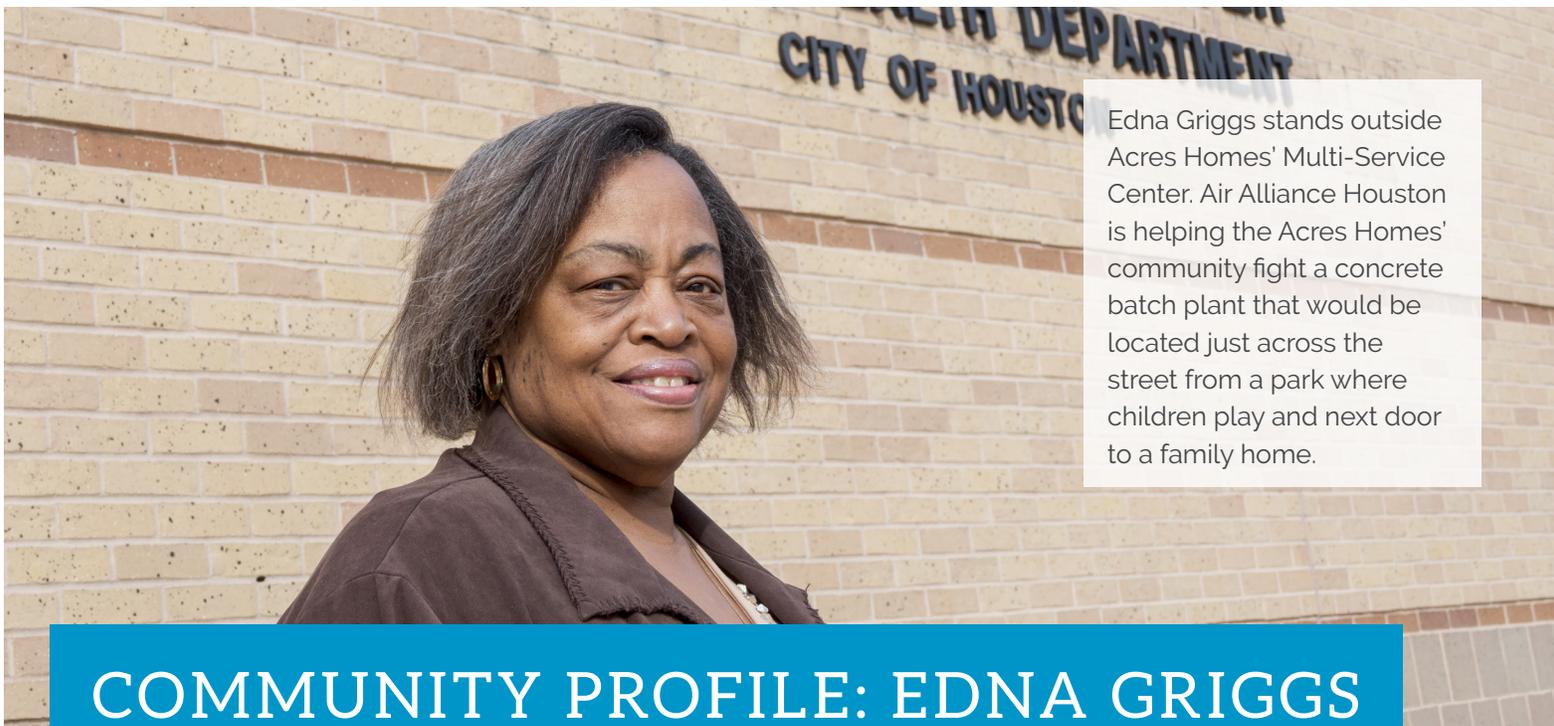
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**Thomas Stock, Ph.D.**  
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JKM Consulting



Edna Griggs stands outside Acres Homes' Multi-Service Center. Air Alliance Houston is helping the Acres Homes' community fight a concrete batch plant that would be located just across the street from a park where children play and next door to a family home.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE: EDNA GRIGGS

### FIGHTING A CONCRETE BATCH PLANT IN ACRES HOMES

Edna Griggs has lived in Acres Homes, a historic community of color in northwest Houston, for 68 years. Two years ago, she learned that a cement mixing company has applied for a permit to build a concrete batch plant in her neighborhood. The prospect of having a pollution-emitting facility right in the middle of a community that is already suffering from high asthma rates and other health issues has made Edna worry about the future.

"There is actually a park that's directly across the street from where they're trying to open," tells Edna. She is particularly concerned about the children whose health and quality of life will be affected, as well as the elderly who will be put at risk of being hit by trucks driving on residential streets.

Very often communities learn too late about industrial facilities' plans to locate in residential areas, or they are unable to organize enough opposition to fight a permit request. "The problem is that they don't know what's happening, they don't understand how a lot of these things work," Edna explains.

Since the submission of the permit application in Acres Homes, Air Alliance Houston has been tirelessly supporting Edna and fellow residents' efforts to block the plant by educating and rallying the broader

community around the issue. The neighbors' fierce opposition has gotten a number of elected officials and the Mayor involved in speaking out against the company's plans.

Edna is grateful for all the help and resources Air Alliance Houston has been able to provide to the community. "Air Alliance has really come in and actually opened our eyes to be able to understand the significance of what's going on that we didn't know about," she says.

“WITHOUT YOU ALL, AND DOING THIS, WE WOULD BE IN TROUBLE, WE WOULD BE REALLY IN TROUBLE.”

She feels that the community has had great success so far with the case and is optimistic that with continued support they will be able to help others with similar problems and come out as winners.

**January 2020 update:** In a huge win for healthy neighborhoods everywhere, the company withdrew its application thanks to the resolute opposition of AAH, community leaders like Edna, and Houston's elected representatives.



Molly Cook on North Street Bridge, where residents organized a banner drop to protest against the I-45 freeway expansion.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE: MOLLY COOK

## ON A MISSION TO STOP THE I-45 EXPANSION

"Projects that are this big affect the air quality for all of us," explains Molly, a Houston resident and a community activist opposing the expansion of the I-45 freeway proposed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

As an ER nurse, she regularly sees people who struggle to breathe or have inexplicable health problems. "We place a lot of the onus on the patient to take care of themselves, but in reality, it's not always within their control," says Molly. "That's frustrating to me, and we need solutions on a systemic level."

She learned about the I-45 expansion and got involved in the community organizing around the project by attending a breakfast event led by Air Alliance Houston in early summer 2019. "It pretty much just snowballed from there," she tells.

**"IT WAS ALL SO EASY. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS TO SHOW UP AT A BREAKFAST. IT MADE PARTICIPATING IN HOUSTON ADVOCACY SUPER, SUPER SIMPLE."**

After months of intense activism, the community has scored several wins on the project, including pushing back the official timeline and getting more funding allocated to community engagement and mitigation.

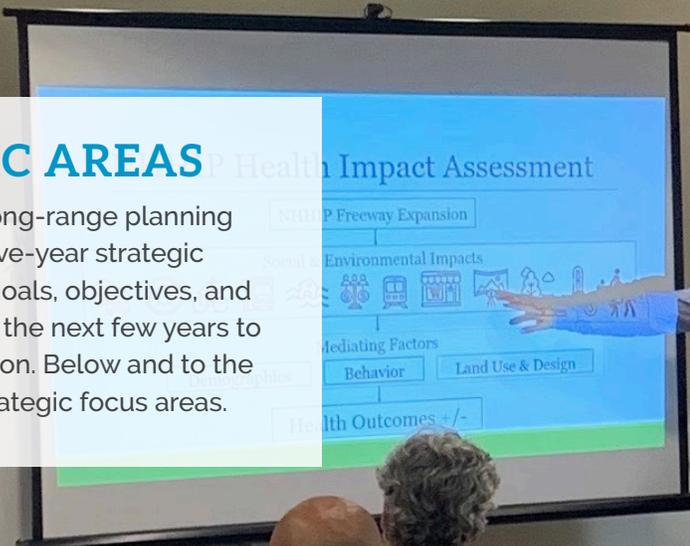
Air Alliance Houston has been supporting residents by providing a Health Impact Assessment, liaising with government and TxDOT officials; and making sure that the community stays informed about meetings and timelines, and has access to talking points and calling scripts.

For Molly, it is important that the community has sound data to support their asks. "I don't want to take part in something unless there is a reason for it and numbers behind it," she says. "Air Alliance Houston has been the leader in providing data, a health impact assessment, and so has lent a lot of credibility to the movement."

Molly adds that she appreciates there being an organization that is active in the community and that she can count on. "It's really cool to know that I'll see you guys out there and I can trust you, and that you're going to be in support of the things that Houston really, really needs, and be in support of making Houston a healthier and more equitable place."

## PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

This year we completed our long-range planning process and unveiled a new five-year strategic plan. The plan describes the goals, objectives, and strategies we will pursue over the next few years to deliver on our mission and vision. Below and to the right, we have outlined our strategic focus areas.

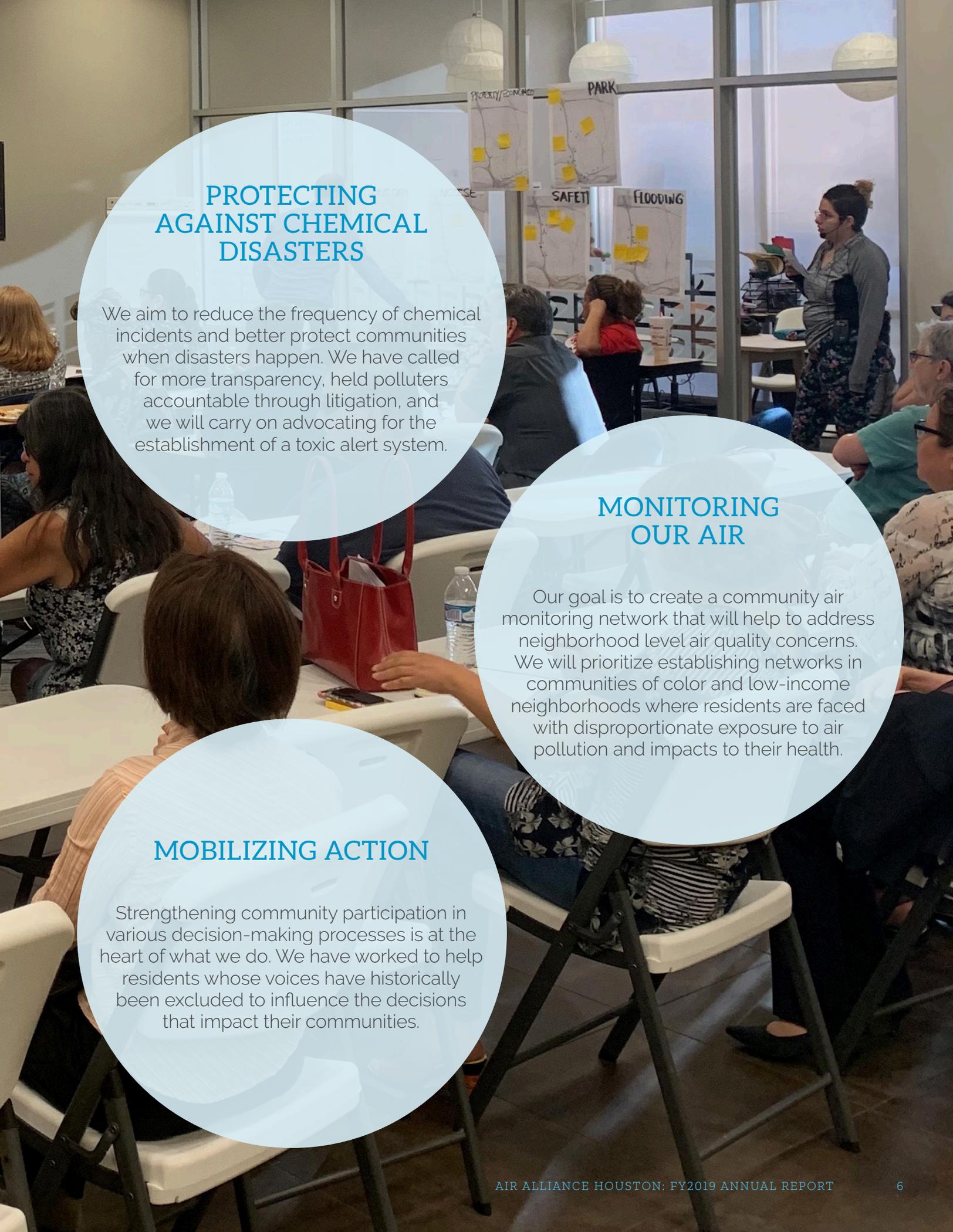


## BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We want to ensure that the places where we live, work, learn, and play are free from harmful air pollution. We will work locally and at the state level to advocate for policies and practices that reduce exposure to air pollution in our region.

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE & EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION

Our vision of a sustainable and equitable transportation system is one that is safe and gives people the freedom to choose how to travel. We will advocate for policies that shift transportation funding investments toward multi-modal options, decrease reliance on car travel, leverage electrification technologies, and support health equity.



## PROTECTING AGAINST CHEMICAL DISASTERS

We aim to reduce the frequency of chemical incidents and better protect communities when disasters happen. We have called for more transparency, held polluters accountable through litigation, and we will carry on advocating for the establishment of a toxic alert system.

## MONITORING OUR AIR

Our goal is to create a community air monitoring network that will help to address neighborhood level air quality concerns. We will prioritize establishing networks in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods where residents are faced with disproportionate exposure to air pollution and impacts to their health.

## MOBILIZING ACTION

Strengthening community participation in various decision-making processes is at the heart of what we do. We have worked to help residents whose voices have historically been excluded to influence the decisions that impact their communities.



Dr. Latrice Babin is the newly-appointed Director of Harris County Pollution Control Services.

## PUBLIC SECTOR ADVOCATE: DR. LATRICE BABIN

### TOWARD BETTER AIR QUALITY MONITORING: COLLABORATING WITH HARRIS COUNTY

In spring 2019, the Houston-area saw a string of petrochemical disasters, including a massive fire at the Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC) storage facility in Deer Park. The fire burned for days, casting a thick plume of toxic smoke over the region, causing shelters-in-place, and halting traffic in the Houston Ship Channel.

Harris County residents, particularly communities of color and low-income neighborhoods, have borne the brunt of the risks posed by polluting industries for years. Many don't know what is in the air they are breathing.

In response to the devastating fires, and in a big win for communities, Harris County this year invested an historic \$11.6 million toward improving its emergency response capabilities, including building out a network of air monitors in designated vulnerable areas.

"The purpose of the enhanced monitoring is to provide information that families can use to make health-based decisions," Dr. Latrice Babin, Director of Harris County's Pollution Control Services Department, explains. "The information can also be used by policymakers to address issues to improve the quality of life for residents."

Air Alliance Houston is excited to be able to work together with Dr. Babin and the County on the development of the air monitoring network. AAH has been participating in all county-led stakeholder meetings to inform discussions about the network, as well as advocating for the formation of a permanent Environmental Advisory Committee of community members to ensure that those who live with disproportionate risks have a platform to share their concerns.

For the County, having Air Alliance Houston on board has been valuable. "Participating in this process and transmitting the first-hand knowledge of the specific community's concerns is beneficial as those concerns and issues could become factors in the decision-making process," Dr. Babin says.

“AAH IS A VOICE FOR COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS.”



## GET INVOLVED

**EXPLORE** our new website at [airalliancehouston.org](http://airalliancehouston.org).

**SIGN UP** for our newsletter to receive action alerts, news, and events.

**JOIN** the conversation on:

 @AirAllianceHOU

 @AirAllianceHouston

 @AirAllianceHouston

**SHARE** your story! Tell us about your experience with air pollution in Houston and help inspire action for clean air. Email [info@airalliancehouston.org](mailto:info@airalliancehouston.org).

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

**DONATE** through our website or send paypal funds to: [info@airalliancehouston.org](mailto:info@airalliancehouston.org)

Checks can be mailed to:

Air Alliance Houston  
2520 Caroline Street  
Suite 100  
Houston, TX 77004

**DESIGNATE** Air Alliance Houston as your charity with

- » Kroger Community Rewards
- » Amazon Smile

**HOST** a "friendraiser" to introduce AAH to your social networks and get them involved with our community of clean air advocates.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT (FY18-19 cash receipts)

## INCOME



## Income

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| Foundations | \$ 614,640.00 |
| Nonprofits  | \$ 213,967.00 |
| Individuals | \$ 77,539.01  |
| Government  | \$ 72,127.42  |
| Events      | \$ 34,700.00  |
| Other       | \$ 17,454.88  |

**Total** **\$ 1,030,428.31**

## Expenses

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Programs       | \$ 666,689.13 |
| Fundraising    | \$ 56,532.37  |
| Administration | \$ 108,165.72 |

**Total** **\$ 831,387.22**

## Net Income

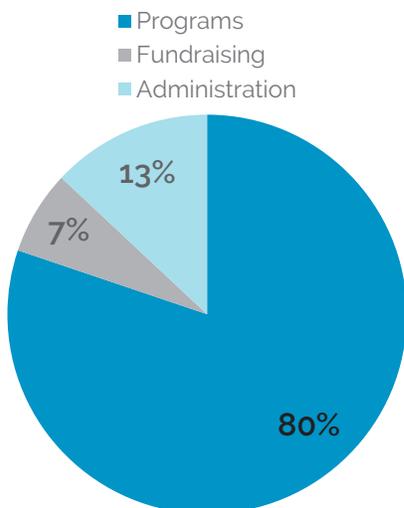
**\$ 199,040.09**

## Assets

|                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Bank Accounts       | \$ 807,192.44 |
| Accounts Receivable | \$ 688,843.00 |
| Fixed Assets        | \$ 9,659.31   |
| Other Assets        | \$ 2,708.91   |

**Total Assets** **\$ 1,508,403.66**

## EXPENSES



## NET INCOME



# MAJOR DONORS (FY18-19 cash receipts)

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**\$100,000+**

## Houston Endowment

**\$50,000-\$99,999**

Aetna Foundation  
Environmental Defense Fund  
The Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation  
Metabolic Studio  
Public Citizen Foundation  
Texas Organizing Project  
The University of Texas Health Science Center  
The Urban Institute

**\$15,000 - \$49,999**

Houck Foundation  
Ann Lents, JD

**\$5,000 - \$14,999**

Mary Beth Maher  
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**\$2,500 - \$4,999**

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Lucy Randel  
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Rockefeller Family Fund  
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**\$1,000 - \$2,499**

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Texas Children's Hospital  
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BECAUSE EVERYONE BREATHES



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