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Onorato Announces Celebration of Lights Is Going Green

Annual light show begins Nov. 21, but runners and walkers can get sneak preview on Nov. 19

INDIANA TWP., Pa. — Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato today announced the 17th Annual Celebration of Lights at Hartwood will be a carbon-neutral event as part of the Allegheny Green initiative.

“We are committed to promoting sustainable practices within County government and through countywide policies and programs, and the Celebration of Lights is a perfect opportunity to prove our commitment,” said Onorato. “Each year, thousands of people drive through the three-mile display of nearly three million lights. By purchasing carbon offsets for the carbon dioxide generated, we are taking the first step in improving the Celebration of Lights for our residents and the environment.”

Courtesy of NativeEnergy and Sustainable Pittsburgh, the estimated greenhouse gasses associated with lighting the displays and each vehicle’s journey through the park will be balanced with high-quality carbon offsets to ensure a carbon-neutral event.

The Celebration of Lights, presented by Rite Aid, Allegheny County and WTAE-TV, will be open for viewing from Friday, Nov. 21, 2008, through Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009, including Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Hours are 6 to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 6 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

This year, the Celebration of Lights will feature a new jumping snowmobile display that measures 134 feet long and 30 feet high and includes 4,200 lights.

Visitors should enter the park from the Saxonburg Boulevard entrance. The suggested donation is \$12 per car, \$3 per person for non-profit organization buses, and \$5 per person for for-profit organization buses. Proceeds are donated to WTAE-TV’s Project Bundle-Up and other local charities. More than \$3.1 million has been raised in the 17-year history of the event.

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Sneak Preview for Runners & Walkers on Nov. 19

The 4th Annual “Run the Lights,” a 5K run and walk through the Celebration of Lights will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2008.

“This is a unique opportunity for people to see the Celebration of Lights from a different perspective,” said Onorato. “To walk or run three miles through three million points of light is a breathtaking experience.”

The course will be closed to traffic so runners and walkers of all ability levels can enjoy the lights. Participants will receive free glow sticks and jingle bells before the start of the fun run. The run begins at the Hartwood Middle Road parking lot near the Celebration of Lights exit. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. and the race will begin at 6:45 p.m.

Refreshments will be served in the parking lot at the finish of the race. A donation of \$10 is suggested per runner or \$5 per student and \$15 per family. All proceeds benefit Project Bundle Up and other local charities.

Strollers are welcome, but for safety reasons, dogs and bicycles are not permitted. For additional information please contact runthelights@verizon.net.

For more information and directions to Hartwood, visit www.alleghenycounty.us or call 1-877-LITE-UP-4.

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Sustainable Pittsburgh accelerates the policy and practices of sustainability in our region by bringing sustainable solutions to communities and businesses. For additional information, visit www.sustainablepittsburgh.org.

NativeEnergy makes it easy for individuals, businesses, organizations, agencies, governments and authorities in Southwestern Pennsylvania to be leaders in acquiring carbon offsets and/or renewable energy credits. For more information, go to www.nativeenergy.com/sp.

Allegheny Green is a comprehensive initiative to promote sustainable practices within County government and through countywide policies and programs. The key elements of the plan are the hiring of a sustainability manager reporting directly to the County Executive and creation of the Allegheny Green Action Team, a group of experts and stakeholders who will help the County to meet its green objectives and goals.