



**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Sue Cutsforth, 402-319-5308  
scutsforth@mapacog.org

Lisa Ellis, 402-960-3565  
[lisa@emspacegroup.com](mailto:lisa@emspacegroup.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Little Steps Cleaner Air: Campaign Breathes New Life Into Air Quality Awareness**

Aug. 25, 2020 (Omaha, NE) – Get wind of this: our community has an air quality problem. However, all Omaha-area residents have the power to fix it.

Formerly known as Little Steps Big Impact, the Little Steps Cleaner Air campaign aims to build awareness around air quality. The campaign, managed by Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA), is being relaunched in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area today with the new name, brand, website and communication tactics to reflect the evolved conversation around air quality this year.

“This campaign started in 2011, and we see this as a natural next step to build more buzz and action around improving our air quality,” said MAPA Information Officer Sue Cutsforth.

On warm days, the Omaha metro is sometimes close to or exceeds EPA guidelines on healthy levels of ground-level ozone. There have been 14 moderate or unhealthy days in our area since March. While ozone is an important component of our atmosphere and protects us from harmful ultraviolet rays, it is dangerous to breathe down on the ground. Ground-level ozone is caused by emissions from vehicles, pollution from industrial plants and evaporated gases from chemicals, among other things.

“With a renewed focus on improving air quality, we are confident we have significant wind in our sails to inspire people to start new habits in their lives,” Cutsforth said. “We’re asking everyone to drive less, walk more, take public transportation, use ethanol blends when filling gas tanks, converting to electric engines, and other lifestyle adjustments.”

To illustrate the ease of making these small changes, the campaign is installing a new series of temporary, vinyl footsteps on sidewalks and trails around the community. Inspired by the [Burma](#)

[Shave outdoor advertising campaign](#), the footsteps have examples of little steps, air quality information and other inspiring poems imprinted on them.

“We encourage all area residents to join our campaign by sharing our messages on social media, trying out some of the little steps, and officially joining our movement by taking the clean air pledge on our website,” Cutsforth said. “The clean air pledge is a simple commitment to take little steps to improve air quality in our community.”

Educators, after-school program staff and scouting leaders have the opportunity to teach groups through a comprehensive curriculum about the science of air quality. The curriculum aligns with Nebraska and Iowa science standards, and is available on the Little Steps Cleaner Air website. Parents and teachers alike can also access fun activities, resources and tools on the website, too.

“With fewer people driving in recent months due to the pandemic, we have seen the encouraging effects of decreased vehicle emissions: air quality has universally improved in large cities around the world,” Cutsforth said. “We hope this clean air trend continues.”

### **About Little Steps Cleaner Air**

Little Steps Cleaner Air is a public awareness campaign aimed at inspiring people in our community to take steps to improve our air quality. When everyone makes small habit changes, we can all breathe a little easier. The campaign is managed by Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) and funded by grants from the Federal Highway Administration and the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Learn more at [littlestepscleanerair.com](http://littlestepscleanerair.com).

###