

[Back to regular view](#) • [Print this page](#)

Local lung association splits with national group

(<http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/health/384542,CST-NWS-lung14.article>)

May 14, 2007

BY [JIM RITTER](#) Health Reporter jritter@suntimes.com

A Chicago-based group that has been fighting lung disease for more than a century is bolting from the American Lung Association.

As of July 1, the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago will break from the ALA and become the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago.

What prompted the split was the ALA's decision to consolidate 78 unwieldy chapters into multistate regions.

1,000 volunteers

The local chapter, which covers Cook County, did not want to be lumped into a six-state Midwest region.

"We believe our effectiveness is based on a strong local presence," said chapter CEO Joel Africk.

It's another big blow to the ALA, which also has lost the New Hampshire chapter and five California chapters.

The ALA of Metropolitan Chicago, 1440 W. Washington, has 50 staffers, a \$5.5 million budget, 1,000 volunteers and 20,000 donors. Nothing will change except the name.

Runs Hancock Hustle

The chapter led successful efforts to pass public-smoking bans in Chicago and Illinois. It runs programs in asthma, women's lung health and chronic obstructive lung disease.

It also runs the popular Hustle up the Hancock fund-raiser.

But the ALA isn't ceding Cook County.

"There's going to be competition," said lung association CEO John Kirkwood, who once ran the local chapter. "The ALA is a very strong brand. Any independent organization is going to have to deal with that."

The local chapter dates to 1906. Its original mission was fighting tuberculosis. When TB cases declined during the 1950s, the mission expanded to include all respiratory diseases.

The group began lobbying for tougher air pollution controls in the 1960s. Hustle Up the Hancock began in 1988.

"We wish the ALA well," Africk said. "We just have a divergent view about the best way to serve lung health in Chicago."

All in a name

1906: Chicago Tuberculosis Institute

1937: Tuberculosis Institute of Chicago and Cook County

1972: Chicago Lung Association

1993: American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago

July 1, 2007: Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago

© Copyright 2007 Sun-Times News Group | [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)