



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Illinois woman loses husband to lung cancer, raises awareness for radon
January is National Radon Action Month

Joe Linnertz was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2006. When his wife, Gloria, asked his oncologist what could have caused the cancer, he told them that smoking and radon gas were the leading causes. Joe hadn't smoked for 27 years. He died just six weeks after being diagnosed.

Shortly after Joe passed, Gloria learned that their home had a radon level of 17.9 picocuries per liter – more than four times the EPA mitigation level. The combination of smoking and radon exposure significantly increases a person's risk for developing lung cancer, and it certainly played a role in Joe's death.

January is National Radon Action Month, a time to raise awareness for the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Radon is an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas that is released by the decay of uranium, a rock in our soil. As it is released, radon can seep through cracks in the foundation of a home and damage lungs upon inhalation. According to the U.S. EPA, radon exposure causes an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

The only way to know if a home has unsafe levels of radon is to conduct a simple test. Kits are available at most hardware stores for between \$15 and \$25, and a new test should be conducted every two years. Cook County and its collar counties are in a moderate zone for radon potential, so testing is important for anyone who lives in a single family home or in the basement, first or second levels of multiunit buildings. If unsafe levels of radon are detected, a number of steps can be taken to mitigate the problem depending on the level of exposure and its source.

"Communities need to test their homes for radon, then contact their legislators and encourage them to promote policies that support radon awareness," Gloria said. "Testing for radon is life-saving. It's easy to test and it's not difficult to fix."

In cooperation with students from Columbia College Chicago, Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has released radio and television public service announcements to alert people to the dangers of radon and call for residents to test their homes. The 30-second PSAs can be viewed and heard at www.lungchicago.org/radon-psa.

To learn more about radon, visit www.lungchicago.org/radon.

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago (RHAMC) has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today, the association addresses asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. To learn more, visit www.lungchicago.org.