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New Library Resource Provides Indoor Air Quality Information for Richland County Residents

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Learning about the quality of the air you breathe should be as easy and inexpensive as checking a book out from your local library. As of August 1st, it will be for Richland County residents. Carnegie Mellon University researchers have provided free [Speck air quality monitors](#) to 100 public libraries nationwide. Mansfield is one of the fortunate cities to benefit from this program. The Speck sensors, which detect particulate air pollution in the home will be ready for check out at the main branch of the Mansfield/Richland Public Library, on August 1st.

CMU's [CREATE Lab](#), which developed Speck, and spinoff company Airviz, which makes and markets the device, donated three Specks, informational materials and training to the Mansfield/Richland Public Library this summer. The monitors are available to their card-carrying patrons either by stopping by the main branch of the library at 43 W. Third Street in Mansfield, or by requesting them at any of the other branches throughout Richland County.

“The Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, in partnership with the Moms Clean Air Force of Mid Ohio, is excited to be able to lend SPECK Air Quality Monitors; in the hopes that access to these items may help Richland County residents in their efforts to lead healthier lives”, says Mary Frankenfield, Collection Development Coordinator for the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library.

The CREATE Lab and Airviz introduced the Speck personal air quality monitor a year ago at the SXSW Interactive Festival in Austin, Texas. The monitors are affordable, retailing at \$149, and accurate. Speck monitors rely on low-cost infrared sensors to detect the pollutants in the indoor air. Additional machine learning algorithms are employed to recognize and compensate for distracting "noise" in each detector, boosting accuracy.

Laura Burns, Ohio Organizer for Moms Clean Air Force, was the first person to test the monitor in her home. "I thought I was doing well by reducing the toxins in my home, but I was surprised to discover just how poor our indoor air quality really was. I took the information gathered by the Speck monitor and used it to help me clean my house more efficiently and learn when to leave my windows open and when to close up the house. Ohioans who struggle with respiratory conditions are challenged even more as our state has continued to stay at the top of the list for worst air quality according the yearly State of the Air report from the American Lung Association. By providing our residents with this tool to monitor the changes in their home air quality, we can give them answers they wouldn't be able to have otherwise and tools to protect their families."

Speck is designed for use indoors, helping users realize when polluted outside air is coming into the house, or to recognize pollution sources within the home. It is also Wi-Fi-connected, so air quality data can be uploaded for analysis and shared, if desired, via the Internet.

In addition to three free Speck monitors, participating libraries also receive a 15 percent discount on purchases of additional Specks for their local loan programs.

Richland county residents can also get involved by helping their neighbors understand their air quality risks. "We also want to build a community of local experts who can work with their neighbors and the libraries to use Speck," said Bea Dias, project director for the CREATE Lab. People selected for the Speck Air Quality Advocate Program will receive a free Speck and training in return for providing 10–20 hours of service annually. Individuals who are interested in becoming an advocate can apply at specksensor.com/advocates/apply.

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