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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Benjamin Watson Inspirational Award**

*Honor Bestowed to Kentucky Clean Cities Partnership Executive Director Melissa Howell*

GOLDEN – (August, 2017) – Melissa Howell, executive director of [Kentucky Clean Cities Partnership](#) has been voted this year's Benjamin Watson Inspirational Award recipient. The award was presented at the 2017 National Clean Cities Coordinator Training Workshop held at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Golden, Colo.

"Melissa is our longest serving coordinator," said Dennis Smith, director of the program. "She has been a persistent force to be reckoned with."

Described by her peers as someone who is always offering help to others and unwilling to accept business as usual, Howell is retiring at the end of this year, after serving as a Clean Cities Coordinator for nearly 25 years. She was instrumental in the designation of the Kentucky Clean Fuels Coalition and has been growing alternative fuel and vehicle use the state ever since. With a mix of tough love, broad experience, great connections, and a sense of humor, Melissa has changed the transportation conversation in Kentucky and reached beyond her state to help rejuvenate numerous coalitions. She regularly supports other coordinators with her positive energy; she walks them through tough times in dealing with the organizational challenges of being a coordinator. Among her many awards, she was inducted into the National Clean Cities Hall of Fame in 2011.

"Melissa embodies the true spirit of the Clean Cities program: a natural leader with an impressive project list," Thurstin said. "She embodies the spirit and criteria of the award."

The Benjamin Watson Inspirational Award is in honor of the late Benjamin Watson, who played a vital role in the creation of the Department of Energy's Clean Cities program and helped plan the very first Clean Cities Conference held in Kansas City. He was a founding member and long-time coordinator of Kansas City Regional Clean Cities, whose engaging personality and spirit left an indelible stamp on the Clean Cities program and established the true character of the organization. The award is presented by the Clean Cities Coordinator Council each year to the Coordinator who provides inspiration and motivation to other coordinators, and strives to create a fun, engaging, and unified team spirit within our program.

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