

## Air Quality Champion in our Community

**Name:** Dr. Janet Phoenix

**Title:** Assistant Research Professor

**Organization:** George Washington University



### How does your work relate to air quality?

I manage an asthma home visiting program. We provide education and tools for families to use to improve the health of their children with asthma. We provide vacuum cleaners to reduce allergic dust particles in the home, pest management for roaches and mice and dust mite covers for the bed. Many of the families we serve live in areas of the city where air quality is poor, because of close proximity to roadways. I also teach graduate students at George Washington University about how poverty and poor environmental conditions can contribute to poor health outcomes.

### What motivates you to come to work every day?

It motivates me to know that the work we do helps families keep their children healthy. I also like training the future health care workforce.

### How did your education lead you to the position that you have today?

I majored in Anthropology in college, and I studied how culture, beliefs and health intersect. That was a great foundation for medical school at Howard University. After medical school I studied at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.

### What is your workspace like?

My office at George Washington University is in the middle of a densely populated urban center: Washington, D.C. When I am not conducting research, I am out in the city working with families of children with asthma. I also collaborate with organizations and agencies in the city that deal with asthma. Some of these agencies are responsible for improving housing conditions that make asthma worse like leaks and mold. I also work with agencies to write laws and enforce environmental regulations in order to keep people safer.

### What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I am proud of forming a coalition called the Healthy Housing Collaborative. This group is working to improve housing conditions related to health for DC residents.

### Is there something important that you want to share that we haven't asked?

I underestimated the role of good public policy (laws and regulations) when I began my career. Without these laws and regulations, it is difficult to keep communities safe from pollution sources that make the air hazardous to breathe. Elected officials don't always know how to keep the air clean. They depend upon citizens and experts to help them write and support environmental laws. It is important for you to understand the laws in your community, so you can make improvements and create new laws that are needed.