

Cherie Summa

OF ST. LOUIS RADON

Cherie Summa graduated with a geological engineering degree from the Missouri University of Science and Technology. After graduating, she spent several years working as a civil engineer, covering everything from project and construction management of large residential home developments to quality control and management of heavy construction projects like interstate highways. Her career took a turn in 2015 when she purchased St. Louis Radon. Her background in geological and civil engineering is vital in understanding radon and how it moves through groundwater and soil and in designing the highest quality radon mitigation systems. This knowledge allows her to better serve her clients by providing them with solutions that will work best for their specific needs. She loves this career change because, in her words, “This was a great transition that kept me in the construction and engineering field, but it’s also something I could do to give back to the families in our community.”

For Cherie, being a successful business owner isn’t just about making money. It’s also about giving back to her community and industry. She’s an active volunteer with the American Association of Scientists and Technologists (AARST), the Missouri Lung Cancer Coalition and Lung Cancer Connection. These organizations allow her to stay up-to-date on the latest research and developments in lung cancer and radon mitigation and measurement so that she can provide her clients with the most effective services possible. For Cherie, it’s the perfect blend of using her professional expertise to help her industry and our community. This month we’re going to highlight these organizations. But first, here’s a quick review of what radon is and why it’s dangerous.

What is Radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is odorless, tasteless and invisible. Though it is part of the environment and generally isn’t harmful outdoors, long-term exposure to high radon levels inside can put you at risk of developing lung cancer, especially if you smoke. In addition, it’s the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

Radon can be found in any building, such as your home, workplace or school. Since you spend the majority of your time in your home, a good portion of exposure takes place. However, all buildings should be tested for radon.

Real estate and other industry professionals can help reduce the risk to families by encouraging buyers to test for radon during the inspection period or after they close on their house and, when needed, to have a certified radon professional install a mitigation system.

AARST

The American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST) is committed to ensuring its members provide radon services of the highest quality and ethical performance. AARST provides continuing education to radon service providers. Additionally, they provide other industry resources, such as technical standards and legislative initiatives. Through these efforts, AARST seeks to expand state testing and mitigation and improve the consistency of radon services across the industry. In order to achieve these goals, AARST relies on the dedication and expertise of members like Cherie. She is also a member of the Heartland Chapter and serves as its vice president for Missouri.

Missouri Lung Cancer Coalition

Dedicated to preventing lung cancer and improving early detection, the Missouri Lung Cancer Coalition is a statewide coalition of healthcare professionals and other key participants. The nonprofit has four primary goals: 1) building awareness of lung cancer, risks and prevention; 2) improving access to tobacco cessation services; 3) increasing early detection and screening, and 4) advocating for legislative policies.

Cherie is an advocacy team member working with stakeholder groups to find policy paths, discuss solutions and strategies, and advocate for better access to lung cancer screening and treatment. This work includes supporting improved and new policies that make people more aware of environmental risk factors and give them better tools for preventing lung cancer. The team also advocates improving access to high-quality, affordable lung cancer screenings and treatment.

As part of the team, Cherie worked with the St. Louis County Library to provide virtual presentations to educate residents on the dangers of radon and how they can protect themselves. Attendees even received free testing kits, and the library received bookmarks to share with library members. She also helped set up a social media campaign for National Radon Action Month.

Lung Cancer Connection

Cherie is a member of the Lung Cancer Connection Board of Directors. The nonprofit was founded as a result of two lung cancer patients, Myrtle Chidester and Cheryl Lamprecht. After being diagnosed with cancer, the ladies learned how few support resources existed for patients and their caregivers. As a result, the organization was created to provide resources for these community members.



▶▶ partner spotlight

Article by Maggie Peterson
Photos by John Kaddouri

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Each year, they host two major events. They just completed their annual spring event — a music trivia night. The fall event is a Run/Walk/Breath event. The next event will be on Nov. 5 in Chesterfield. If you wish to support the walk/run, registration is open on their website, lungcancerconnect.org. St. Louis Radon would love for you to join their team.

“Sometimes it’s hard to separate the work I do for each organization,” Cherie says. “There is so much overlap in my efforts.” For Cherie, the most important part of her work is creating an environment where everyone is more aware of radon and its dangers. Someday, it will be common knowledge that radon causes lung cancer, just as it is with smoking. And since radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, she also works to support efforts that lead to better screening and treatment. “I want to make sure that people have all the information they need to protect themselves and their families,” she says.

St. Louis Radon is a long-time partner with *Real Producers* magazine and often provides educational articles on the dangers of radon and how to mitigate related risks. Cherie would love the opportunity to speak at real estate offices, HOA and PTA meetings. Cherie also teaches CE classes for REALTORS®. She can be reached at 636-200-2875 or stlradon.com.