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Red Bank Kids Say “Turn It Off!”

3rd Graders at Red Bank Primary School Embark on School Campaign to Stop Vehicle Idling



Red Bank, NJ—Third graders of the Red Bank Borough Primary School are putting their newly acquired “persuasive writing” skills gained from their Language Arts class to good use this week. They are applying their newly acquired skills to stop unnecessary vehicle idling on school grounds. The kids spoke with parents and bus drivers about the harm idling causes and the money they could save. They also put up no idling signs along the curb, handed out no-idling flyers, personalized letters and essays to parents and bus drivers. Cookies were given to drivers as a sign of thanks to those agreeing to comply.

“Parents and bus drivers have responded very positively to their message by turning off their engines,” stated **Richard Cohen, Principal of the Red Bank Borough Primary School**. “Most importantly, our students are learning while at the same time feel they are making a difference in their community and the world.”

“Having our children in leadership roles as early as third grade is a powerful statement about their character and their understanding of civic responsibility,” stated **Laura C. Morana, Superintendent of the Red Bank Borough Public Schools**. “Our district is well represented by our students’ efforts. I support them and the wonderful approach taken to enhance their literacy development!”

The Red Bank Primary School conducted this project in collaboration with the NJ Environmental Federation’s (NJEF) state-wide *Idle Free New Jersey* campaign. According to New Jersey law, the idling limit is 3 minutes for diesel (trucks, school buses, etc.) and gasoline vehicles (cars, light trucks, etc.). NJEF’s campaign encourages schools, municipalities, businesses and individuals to go beyond the law and adopt 10 second idling limits in “idling hot spots” such as schools, parking lots, and drive-throughs.

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The New Jersey Environmental Federation (NJEF) is a state chapter of Clean Water Action. NJEF has 85 member groups & 100,000 individual members. For more information on NJEF’s campaigns, visit www.cleanwateraction.org/njef

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“The best way to warm up your vehicle is to drive it,” said **Amy Goldsmith, NJEF State Director and parent of a Red Bank Primary and Middle School child.** “Idling for more than 10 seconds actually uses more fuel than restarting the engine. Tests show no more than 30 seconds is needed to circulate engine oil.”

“In addition, ten minutes of idling, the typical length of time a parent or bus waits for the kids to be dismissed, is the gas consumption equivalent of driving 5 miles,” **continued Ms. Goldsmith.** “With the turn of an ignition key, you can counter global warming, reduce expensive gas costs, and improve air quality and public health. It’s that easy.”

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), vehicle related air pollution can cause asthma and other respiratory problems and allergies, especially in children who breathe at a faster rate than adults. According to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), up to 25% of NJ's school age children are asthmatic-the #1 leading cause of school absenteeism and increased visits to the emergency room on hot summer days. Vehicles also release potent greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

“A healthy school environment means healthy children, teachers and staff,” concluded **Ms. Morana.** “That means more time can be spent learning in the classroom and playing during recess.”

NJEF has expanded on the original Idle Free efforts of the Chatham Environmental Commission. To date, NJEF been working with several towns to adopt Idle Free New Jersey resolutions (e.g. East Windsor, Hazlet, Madison YMCA, and Summit). The resolution calls for broad education of the public about the health, environmental and economic impacts of vehicle idling, ways to reduce vehicle idling, and requires the maintenance of municipal vehicles to eliminate any visible exhaust and harmful air pollution. The resolution also encourages *all* vehicles to turn off their engines if they are idling more than ten seconds.

At NJEF’s request, the Red Bank Borough School District switched to green cleaning practices in 2004. The district took the initiative to put a comprehensive recycling program in place this year. The Borough Council at the recommendation of the Environmental Commission recently adopted NJEF’s model Pesticide Free Zone resolution for its parks and recreation areas. The Borough will be considering adoption of other NJEF initiatives in the near future.

For more information:

Idle Free New Jersey: www.cleanwateraction.org/njef/campaigns-noidling.html
or call Jenny Vickers at 732-280-8988 or email jvickers@cleanwater.org

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Photo attached : Idle Free New Jersey logo sign of NJ Environmental Federation
3rd Graders conducting no idling campaign