

Groundwork Lawrence holds first Environment Expo

By Crystal Bozek, Staff Writer



Groundwork Lawrence Green Team members, Wanny Munoz, 16, facing, and Wilnely Rivera, 17, both of Lawrence, demonstrate what the pollution from diesel engines looks like by heating up a piece of aluminum foil during the Environmental Expo in Lawrence Saturday afternoon. "Lawrence has the highest rate of kids with asthma and respiratory problems in the state," Munoz said.

Roger Darrigrand / Staff photo

LAWRENCE — Wanny Munoz held the lit candle up to a sheet of aluminum foil for a minute or so, as a group of teens looked on. Taking the flame away, they could see a black residue had formed on the foil.

"That's what attaches to your lungs when you breathe in diesel fumes," the 16-year-old said. "Gross, right?"

While the teens were still grimacing, Munoz launched into her spiel, explaining how breathing in the fumes can cause asthma, how Lawrence has a high rate of respiratory disease — the highest in the state, actually — and what people can do to reverse this.

"There are these retrofits that you put on a muffler that filter," she said. "They're already looking at retrofitting school buses. There needs to be more support."

That's how Groundwork Lawrence's first ever Environmental Expo went yesterday.

Teens from the group's Green Team were stationed at different tables, showing people how they can help the environment, whether it be by recycling, buying local produce or making your own cleaners and beauty products. They encouraged boycotting toxic products and calling legislators.

"There's a lot of heat in the legislation around all this stuff," said Danielle Connor of Lawrence's Clean Water Action. "We want to show people what personal actions they can take and how they can help reform the system."

Groundwork Lawrence and Clean Water Action put on the event together. They hope this becomes an annual event.

Yvette Garcia, 17, showed onlookers how many of the cosmetics and bath products they use everyday contain toxins like lead.

"There's lead in lipsticks, toxins in bubble bath, perfumes. We've called the companies," Garcia said. "They say they don't want to lose money."

Another exhibit showed how people can make safe cleaning products mixing water and vinegar. The teens said it was a shock learning about all the dangers out there.

"When you find out, you just want to take action," Munoz said. "When we tell people now, they're surprised. We just have to get it out there, educate people. It's amazing that all this stuff hurts us, and most people don't know it."

The event was held at Groundwork Lawrence's headquarters at 60 Island St. and included a capoeira performance, a hybrid of martial arts and dance that originated in Brazil.

Groundwork Lawrence is a nonprofit that works with the city and community groups to do things like building new green spaces, setting up outdoor education programs and farmers markets, and organizing large-scale volunteer cleanups. Clean Water Action is a national citizens' organization.

Lobby for the environment

To get involved locally, call Groundwork Lawrence at 978-974-0770

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