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Pflugerville students help ozone, help themselves to ice cream

By James Rincon
Pflag Reporter

Pflugerville Middle School students jumped into action last week to help protect the ozone layer, and earned a taste of the sweet spoils of their work.

More than 100 PMS students, teachers and parents

made a pledge to Ozone Action Heroes in a five-county contest created by the Capitol Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, which they won.

The school won an ice cream party provided by Amy's Ice Cream for pledging the most participants to the program on Ozone

Heroes.com. Advancement Via Individual Determination program teacher Brandi Gandy spearheaded PMS's ozone awareness effort.

"One of my student's mom contacted me about this and asked if the AVID students would want to head [the pledge drive] up, and I love for

them to get to help with community," Gandy said. "I had a number of kids who did small public service announcements telling what you can do to help the ozone, what the contest was about, and they shared different tips and encouraged the other kids to apply."

Gandy's students filmed

announcements to play for the school's daily video announcements and some of them made posters and announcements in their individual classes to encourage their classmates to help protect the ozone layer.

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know that they can have an affect on ground-level ozone," said Deborah Jennings, account executive for PGC Creative, whose company is overseeing the Ozone Action Heroes campaign. "We're shooting for volume by asking tons of people to do small things like turn off their lights and refuel their cars after 6 p.m. when the sun's not out - just little tiny things can have a really big impact."

Ground-level ozone gasses decrease the air quality and can have serious health effects that included aggravating asthma, which can be particularly harm-

ful in children, said CAMPO environmental program manager Cathy Stephens.

"We have a significant amount of children in our region who have asthma. So this really hits home for them. It's a very personal message to that age group. So having them do things to reduce emissions is helping themselves and helping their friends," Stephens said.

Minimizing ground-level ozone is also an important part of keeping the region's air quality in compliance with federal standards, Stephens said.

"There are big impacts to

transportation if an area goes non-attainment for air quality," Stephens said. "Non-attainment means you are in violation of federal ozone standards. There would also be some requirements that kick in that make transportation much more difficult to do and makes it more difficult to implement projects and build new roads, etcetera."

Anyone can make the pledge to be an Ozone Action Hero, but Jennings said it is particularly important to educate people at an early age about what they can do to help the environment.

"The key thing is to get to them before they have their life long habits engrained. These are just small little habits you can adopt now as a kid and if they retain those habits their entire life they can have an even bigger impact."

PMS will continue to do its part to educate and turn its students into Ozone Action Heroes, Gandy said. And since winning the pledge contest, they have been getting their just desserts.

"We're totally psyched because we get an ice cream party now," Gandy said.