

It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air

Hi! I am Lucille, a cilia lining a breathing tube of a third grader. My job involves keeping watch for the air pollution that tries to sneak past me into the lungs. When I catch the tiny culprits, I push them back up, along with mucus, so they get swallowed into the stomach.

My student achieved ranks at camp last summer. God created the fresh clean air near the Atlantic Ocean. The sea breezes pushed the sailboats so that there was no need for engines. No cars revved up except the ones that dropped us off and fetched us. No counselors smoked cigarettes or cigars. No volcanoes or power plants nearby make me work hard. Even the cilia of the campers with lung problems like asthma had it easier than at home. I sailed, swam, made crafts, played tennis, and hunted for shark's teeth. What a vacation!

Last year my student also visited the big city of New York. What a huge difference it was from camp or where she lives in the country near Fayetteville, North Carolina! We drove our gas guzzling Chevrolet suburban into the city's morning traffic congestion. We drove around the same block four times to be able to turn into the parking garage.

Once "the grande" took a couple of spots, we stopped polluting the air as much by walking and taking the subway. Many crowds of people rushed to work on the wide sidewalks. The buses looked very full. Delivery boys bicycled with packages hanging from their handlebars. It was a very busy place. I worked hard to keep the tiny piece of air pollution moving up and out of my student's breathing tube.

Back at home, my student has learned how important it is to keep me, Lucille, healthy so that I can keep her healthy. Her dad added a catalyst to the wood burning stove that heats the downstairs of the house. The catalyst thing makes the wood burn cleaner. This winter, the upstairs thermostat has been turned down to 63 degrees Fahrenheit. This way, the local coal-burning plant doesn't have to send as much energy to our house or send as much smoke into the air. We drive the smaller van instead of the gas guzzling suburban whenever we can. My student's mom does a bunch (like 5-10) errands at one time instead of spreading them out over a few days.

The air was cleanest at camp, pretty clean at home and not so clean in the city. The air quality colors were probably green for camp, yellow for home, and orange for the city. But by cutting down on all of the cars, keeping the cars working their best, walking more, and using less energy at home, my job as cilia gets easier. It all adds up to cleaner lungs and cleaner air!

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Second Place winner \$75 for the Air Quality "It all adds up to clean air" Essay Contest

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