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J.T. Williams Montessori to Hold Ozone Garden Dedication Ceremony

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Students, staff, and community members will gather at J.T. Williams Montessori this week to dedicate a new ozone garden. The school's ozone garden will alert families and residents to the presence of ozone pollution, a dangerous problem that will grow as summer advances. The ceremony will take place on Wednesday, May 15, from 1:30 PM to 2:00 PM.

Ground-level ozone is the most prevalent form of air pollution in Charlotte. Breathing ozone irritates the lungs, causing chest pain and coughing, and making it more difficult to fight off respiratory infections. It is especially dangerous for people with existing respiratory problems, including the 1 in 10 children in North Carolina who live with asthma.

Because ground-level ozone cannot be seen or smelt, most people are unaware of its presence. Ozone gardens address this problem through plants that are highly sensitive to ozone damage, providing visible markers of this invisible pollutant. The garden at J.T. Williams includes cutleaf coneflower, a bioindicator for ozone. Read more about ozone gardens here:

<https://cleanaircarolina.org/programs/clean-air-for-kids/>

The dedication ceremony at J.T. Williams Montessori comes as ozone levels in Charlotte are on the rise. Ground-level ozone primarily forms in the summer months as sunlight interacts with emissions from vehicles and factories. As the days continue to heat up, local ozone levels will continue to climb.

Due to their ability to make invisible air pollution visible, ozone gardens are commonly used tools in environmental education. In addition to alerting residents to the presence of a dangerous pollutant, the ozone garden has provided an opportunity for students at J.T. Williams to learn about ozone and its effects.

“Although air pollution in Charlotte is not as bad as places like Los Angeles, it can still reach dangerous levels, especially in the summer,” said Mary Stauble, who has planted ozone gardens at several CMS schools through the Clean Air for Kids program of Clean Air Carolina. “Our growing population and the effects of climate change also mean that air pollution is likely to worsen, unless effective steps are taken. Our young people need to understand the challenge that lies ahead.”

The dedication ceremony will be held at the site of the ozone garden near the school drop off circle, weather permitting, and will include brief remarks from educators and partners. Clean Air Carolina partnered with J.T. Williams Montessori to build the ozone garden with funding provided by the Charlotte Rotary Club.

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