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**Pittsburg Unified School District Becomes First East Bay School District  
to Help Reduce Air Pollution with Idle Free Zones**

**Pittsburg, CA...Thursday, September 22, 2016** – Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD), City of Pittsburg, and the Contra Costa County Spare the Air Resource Team hosted a community event at Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School to kick off a campaign to “Turn the Key. Pledge to be Idle Free.” The Idle Free event commences a partnership to help reduce air pollution at Pittsburg schools.

“Establishing idle free zones around schools is an excellent way to reduce local air pollution and protect the health of our children,” said Jack P. Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. “Pollution from idling vehicles in and around schools can have significant impacts on the sensitive lungs of children and all efforts to curb this pollution will improve air quality conditions for both the children and the community alike.”

PUSD is the first school district in the East Bay to launch Idle Free Zones throughout the school district, encouraging staff, parents, and students to be Idle Free at work, school, and play. “We are proud to be a leader in the realm of wellness and sustainability for our community,” said Matt Balasco, Director of Maintenance,

Operations, and Transportation, Pittsburg Unified School District. “By working collaboratively with the City of Pittsburg as well as other organizations, we can amplify the effects of reduced engine idling and be a “best practice community” for others to see and hopefully follow suit.”

Spreading the word about this program began in late August with community outreach. PUSD’s parent liaisons, volunteers, and staff from the City of Pittsburg hosted Idle Free tables at Back to School Nights, sporting events, parent meetings, and school activities

In addition to the community event and outreach efforts, the school district began a social media campaign, to spread awareness about becoming Idle Free and how idling causes air pollution. Selfie stations and Idle Free signage were placed at all of the schools throughout Pittsburg, urging residents to take the Idle Free pledge by taking a selfie and signing a banner. Participants show their support by tagging @PittsburgUSD and using the hashtag or pound #IdleFree on Facebook and twitter. PUSD has motivated all of its schools to help spread the word about becoming Idle Free by hosting a challenge for the most dedicated “Idle Free” school in the district. PUSD’s Idle Free challenge began on Thursday, September 22 and will end on Friday, November 18. The most dedicated Idle Free School to showcase participation, outreach, and enthusiasm for the Idle Free campaign will receive an ice cream party!

The Idle Free campaign and collaboration is important to PUSD, the City of Pittsburg, and Spare the Air because it is about raising awareness about car exhaust and air pollution. “The City of Pittsburg is happy to be part of this innovative program,” said City Manager Joe Sbranti. “Idling wastes fuel and pollutes the air. This awareness campaign could really make a difference for our kids.”

According to research by the Bay Area Air Quality Air Management District:

- A single vehicle dropping off and picking up kids at one school puts three pounds of pollution into the air per month.
- Car exhaust can cause or worsen: asthma, allergies, heart and lung disease, and cancer.
- Children breathe 50% more air per pounds than adults.
- An idling car contributes to smog. Car exhaust is the single largest contributor to air pollution in the Bay Area.
- Idling can waste about \$1 in gas every day.
- 30 seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.

The ultimate goal of the Idle Free initiative is to improve air quality near and around schools throughout Pittsburg Unified School District.

### **About Pittsburg Unified School District**

Awarded the College Board’s Gaston Caperton Opportunity Honor Roll award in 2016 for expanding access to college, Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) is one of 130 school districts across the nation recognized for creating opportunities for traditionally

underrepresented students. PUSD is a K-12 district serving the community of Pittsburg, California. Founded in 1933, the school system is committed to providing an excellent opportunity for all students to learn. Comprised of eight elementary schools, three junior high schools, one comprehensive high school, one alternative education high school, an adult school, independent study, alternative learning experiences, and early childhood education services, the school district serves more than 10,500 students. PUSD is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, fifty minutes outside of downtown San Francisco.

### **About Bay Area Air Quality Management District and Spare the Air**

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District ( [www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov) ) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area.” For more information about the Contra Costa County Spare the Air Resource Team, please visit: <http://www.sparetheair.org/contracosta>

### **About City of Pittsburg**

City of Pittsburg is a community of 70,000 located in eastern Contra Costa County along the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. For more information, please visit: [www.ci.pittsburg.ca.us](http://www.ci.pittsburg.ca.us)

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