

The clean vehicles program is important to me because of the people I love. My son Colin was born full term. He was very healthy and in fact never got sick until he was 19 months old. At this time, he had his first asthma attack. Asthma is on the rise. Since 1980, asthma has increased by over 160% in children under the age of five years old. As of the year 2004, 8.9 million children in the US have asthma.

I have never experienced anything more heart wrenching or painful than watching my little boy struggle to breath. And because I am his mother, he looked to me to fix it, to make everything better, but I was powerless to help him. Colin's first asthma attack lasted three days with two of those days spent in the hospital. Imagine struggling to breathe for three days with no understanding of what was happening to you or if it would ever stop. 10% of children in the US have asthma, but Colin is 100% to me, he is everything to me.

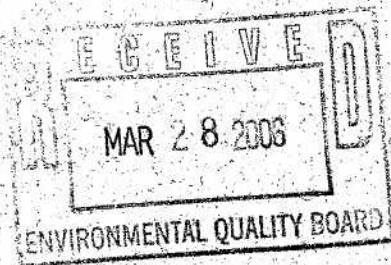
Clean air is of the utmost importance for Colin. For Colin, clean air means not just health, but freedom. Freedom to breath deeply without the fear of another asthma attack. Freedom to be a typical little boy.

My niece Jennifer is another person who was greatly affected by clean air. Unfortunately, Jennifer is no longer with us. Jennifer died at the age of 24 from complications due to cystic fibrosis. Cystic Fibrosis is a disease affecting a person's lungs and digestive system. Jennifer's lungs were filled with mucous. Despite her condition, Jennifer was generally healthy most of her life with few trips to the hospital. But in the last few years of her life, her condition became worse and her lungs finally failed her in October of 2004.

Would Jennifer still be alive if the air she breathed was cleaner? I do not know for sure. But perhaps if she had less scar tissue, her lungs would have been able to recover much easier. Sadly, it's too late for Jennifer, but it is not too late for her two brothers who also have cystic fibrosis. For her brothers, Bryan and Matthew, clean air means life.

Pennsylvania's cities are ranked as some of the worst areas in the country for air pollution. Let's start taking responsibility and not let this smart solution that other states have successfully adopted pass us by.

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