

Picher students using bike ride to educate people about Tar Creek

By Patrick Richardson

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A group of Picher students are taking a stand on the environmental problems facing residents of the 40-square-mile Tar Creek Superfund site.

To wrap up the 2003 Tar Creek Conference, a group of seventh and eighth grade students from Picher-Cardin Junior High, in cooperation with members of the Tribal Efforts Against Lead project, have organized a 19-mile interactive bike ride that will begin and end in Picher. The goal is to introduce participants to the environmental issues present in and around the former Picher mining district.

The students wrote letters to Gov. Brad Henry asking him to attend the Tar Creek Conference. And, according to Kristin Thomas, director of Tribal Efforts Against Lead, Henry wrote back saying he would send a representative because of the letters the students sent him.

One of the student organizers of the tour, Cody Aldinger, 13, said if there was one thing he wanted those attending to take out of the ride it is "that it's (the damage) pretty bad. That it's probably not going to be able to get fixed."

Kali Basset said the message she was trying to get across is that "people need to stop putting stuff in (the mine shafts).

"The more they do that the worse it's going to get."

Alyssa Inman, 14, had a contrasting view.

"It's not all that bad," she said. "People over exaggerate about it.

"It's (the tour) going to help people see that our town is better than they think it is."

The ride will cover areas of the site including Picher, Cardin, Treece, Hockerville and Douthat. Rest stops will be available approximately every three to four miles along the route. In addition to providing the riders with water and snacks, the students will also provide information related to their portion of the tour.

Registration will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday and the actual ride will begin at 10 a.m. The cost of the event is \$10 which includes a complimentary event T-shirt, water bottle and bandanna. Helmets are required and off-road bikes are "highly recommended" as 75 percent of the ride is unpaved. Parent or guardian consent is required for all riders under the age of 18.