A Raleigh Woman's Fight Against Noisy Leaf Blowers

by Evan Amber and Ted Rueter

Ali Mabel is appalled by the constant noise due to the year-round use of gas-powered leaf blowers. She has found that blowers are operated all day, every day, even in areas recently cleared! Further, many residents and lawn care professionals are quick to use blowers for simple tasks such as moving cigarette butts, clearing a step of twigs or removing a dusting of snow. Ali serves on the advisory board of Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet (noisefree.org) and works as a senior planning analyst at a local health center.

There are negative health consequences of the noise pollution produced by these blaring machines: “The noise is deafening and causes stress,” Ali explains. “Gas-powered leaf blower noise penetrates everything. It is inescapable and extremely distracting.” She also notes that they pollute the air with dust, dirt and emissions, which is harmful to respiratory health.

Noise control is left to state and local governments—which rarely give the issue serious consideration. Wake County has a noise ordinance (Code of Ordinances, Article III), yet Raleigh is full of high-decibel emitters. While vehicles and amplified music are at least covered, if only loosely enforced, by the noise ordinance, lawn care equipment is specifically exempt during daytime hours.

To address the issue, Ali plans to create awareness through blogs, articles, talks, an easy-to-use app and a Facebook page. She will also promote clean and low-decibel battery-operated leaf blowers as a cost-effective solution. Ali is confident that, together, we can create a quieter, healthier community.

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Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.
—Albert Einstein