

Environmental activists urge leaders to think '350'

Bioneers conference continues today

October 25, 2009 12:00 AM

NEW BEDFORD — More than 400 people gathered downtown on Saturday, rallying around a magic number: 350. That's what some scientists say should be the upper limit of carbon dioxide parts per million in the atmosphere.

According to www.350.org, the Web site for the International Day of Climate Action, carbon dioxide is currently at 390 ppm, a concentration that is high enough to cause global warming and natural disasters.

"We are joining thousands of other actions around the world," said Tem Blessed, emcee of the event.

"We can start the global transformation we so desperately need."

Organizers said New Bedford's 350 rally was one of 5,200 events happening in 181 countries across the world today. The events aim to draw attention to the goal of cutting carbon in the atmosphere to under 350 ppm prior to the United Nations Climate Negotiations in Copenhagen this December.

The 350 Day of Action event was one attraction of Bioneers By the Bay: Connecting for Change, a three-day conference sponsored by the Marion Institute. Through a series of seminars, workshops, and exhibitors, Bioneers aims to increase personal and civic action for a more sustainable planet.

At the rally, participants were asked to sign a petition pledging to reduce their carbon emissions and asking world leaders to force others to do the same.

Callum Grieve, a board member of the Marion Institute, said certain parts of the world — such as Mozambique and Darfur — are experiencing natural disasters that he attributed to climate change. He said people should act before it affects them.

"Climate change may not have come for us yet, but we cannot wait, we cannot stand by while others suffer," he said.

Robin Chase, founder and CEO of GoLoco, an online ride sharing community, also spoke at the event, asking people to turn to their neighbor and say one thing they are doing, and one thing they plan to do, to reduce their own carbon emissions. Some participants said they would drive less or stop buying bottled water.

Blessed and other performers kept the rally high-energy with raps and chants. A pair of sisters, Alixa and Naima, who call themselves climbing poeTree, recited a powerful poem in unison, to the cheers

of the crowd.

Speaker Marty Diggs blamed the "free market forces" for climate change, saying it is unsustainable. "Our future is ultimately in our own hands," he said.

Bioneers by the Bay continues today in downtown New Bedford, with the last events ending at 5 p.m.

undefined