

## Kiwanis OKs outdoor classroom

Members of the Kiwanis of Blue Ridge have voted unanimously to go ahead with plans for a permanent outdoor classroom at North Jefferson Elementary despite their concerns about the stone insulation factory being built nearby.

Roger Ethier, the Kiwanis member who is serving as team leader for the project, expects construction will begin in a couple of weeks, as soon as a shade structure arrives.

"It was a tough call," Ethier said. "Despite what Rockwool says relating to the planned construction of their factory across the street, no one want to take a chance exposing kids to toxins from the stacks of the Rockwool or diesel fumes from a large number of semi's

**RIGHT:** Fourth-graders at North Jefferson Elementary marvel as a Monarch butterfly they tagged takes to the air.

supporting the factory." But Kiwanis leaders say they looked at kids' needs.

"Kids are learning everywhere and all the time, and the outdoor classroom expands their learning experiences vastly," Ethier said. "It's our hope these experiences at the outdoor classroom will provide additional pathways for them into further education and improvements of their lives into the future."

Ethier cited a study showing that after schools introduced outdoor classrooms, science scores rose and absenteeism dropped.



## Answers

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entitled to their own opinion, but nobody's entitled to their own facts." I am very pleased that Mr. (Eric) Lewis took his car in a weekend to Milton unannounced and did his own due diligence up there. I did not ask him to do that. Nobody asked him to do that.

We produce a very environmentally friendly product that helps us fight climate change, and we do it with an absolute minimum impact on the environment and I have the evidence to prove it, because we have existed for 80 years.

Now, I can give an example: When I had to build a new production line in Wales, we spent money relocating wildlife, catching it and relocating wildlife around my site, and those fields were so biodiverse. There was a very rare lizard living there that's called a common lizard — it sounds common but it's rare. It has its name because it lives on shared land. But it's a rare lizard. We had to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds relocating these lizards. We had to maintain a certain wood line, because there were badgers there. We had bats, one called the lesser horseshoe bat, which is very rare, we had to do surveys for that. There was a pond, that was so clean that the local environmental authority asked me to remove the fish from the pond, so that what is called a greater crested newt could come back in the pond, and then it could be declared a special area of interest.

And there's a riding school less than a mile away. Our production manager whose daughters were pony show jumpers, and in the Welsh

The interview with Rockwool's Bjorn Andersen and Marco Boi will continue in the Oct. 3 edition of the *Spirit of Jefferson*

national team for ponies, lived less than a kilometer away from the plant with her horses. So this doomsday scenario that's put up is simply nonsense.

I think what is important to say is that we really want to be a valued member of the community. We are offering very well-paid jobs, we truly believe in upskilling our own employees. We are defining a training program now where we invest more than \$2 million in upskilling the people before we start operating the plant. We will be working with local colleges to do that.

We are paying taxes, despite what people are saying. The pilot agreement is not a full tax abatement so we are still paying taxes. We'll have contributed \$4 million in the next five years. We want to be a valued member of society. And I'm sure once we are established, and none of these concerns will disappear with time, you're going to see who we are.

*Cook: I think the concerns of the residents are that they're worried about pollution that is harmful that wasn't known at the time.*

Andersen: Even if the standards were tightened, for instance, we would still be below, because we are one-sixth of the standard on PM 2.5, compared to the standard. And what happens is, once the standards are reviewed and then they come in and say now we have to apply new standards, then you have to get in compliance with the new standards.

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