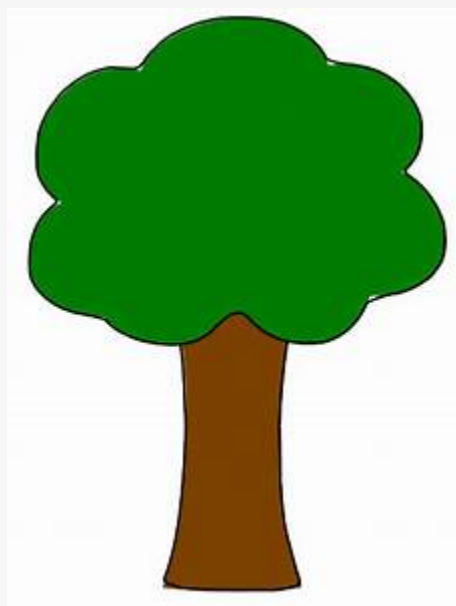


# **The National High School Climate Forum**

***April 2021 Newsletter***



**Inspirational Quote of the Month**

*"The wildlife and its habitat cannot speak, so we must and we will."*

- Theodore Roosevelt

## What is the National High School Climate Forum?

*If you have been a part of the forum awhile, there is no need to re-read this section, as it occurs in each newsletter. For our newer member schools, however, use this as a central guide to the forum, its goals, and its opportunities.*

For those of you reading this who may not be familiar, here is a little recap on what the mission of The National High School Climate Forum is, who we are, what we do, and what we hope to accomplish in the future.

The National High School Climate Forum was established in 2020 to increase environmental awareness amongst high school students and to foster an exchange of community and school-based sustainability and climate-action initiative ideas between student environmental leaders across the country. We accomplish our mission in three main ways:

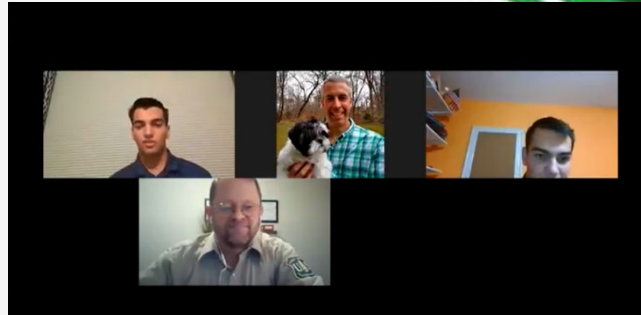
1. **Communications:** Our communications are a primary way through which we strive to facilitate the exchange of ideas between schools across the country. These communications include our monthly newsletters, like this one, articles posted on our website, [nhsclimateforum.org](https://nhsclimateforum.org) (Check it out!!), and our monthly committee meetings between student environmental leaders at our member schools. Each newsletter going



forward will feature information on specific schools' activities and initiatives, as well as ways the rest of us can help out. In addition, student environmental leaders have the opportunity to discuss and learn from each other at our monthly committee

meetings. Finally, our website provides updates on what is happening in the forum, as well as articles written by students, like you, on important environmental topics.

2. **Speaker Events:** In addition to our facilitation of an exchange of ideas between students, the forum also believes that education is a fundamental aspect of making a difference in our society and that knowledge truly is power! With this in mind, we hold several speaker events throughout the year, each focused on specific topics, with the goal of educating our members on environmental events, issues, technology, etc. These speaker events provide students the opportunity to ask their own questions of our guests and to learn about many of the most important topics in environmental fields right now and going forward.



*Our Webinar, "Wildfires: An Inside Look at 2020's Hottest Environmental Issue", took place on December 9<sup>th</sup>, via Zoom.*

3. **Annual Summit:** The last way in which we hope to foster an exchange of ideas in our forum is through our annual National High School Climate Forum Summit. This summit will provide students at our member schools the opportunity to present the work of their group in a live format, answer questions, and inspire others to pursue similar work. In addition to this, we hope to host a variety of speakers at our annual summits, exposing students at our member schools to many unique perspectives on the environment, as well as to prominent individuals in climate-related fields. Our annual summit will occur each year around Earth Day in either April or May and all associated schools are invited.

## Important Reminders for Committee Members:

**The National High School Climate Forum cannot run without the input of all of you, our fellow student environmental leaders! If you ever have any ideas to improve the forum or any initiatives that you believe the forum could help you with, don't hesitate to reach out. As always, you can contact Alex Noviello at [abnoviello23@lawrenceville.org](mailto:abnoviello23@lawrenceville.org) or Andrew Noviello at [acnoviello23@lawrenceville.org](mailto:acnoviello23@lawrenceville.org). Thanks!**

**Please keep your eyes out for emails regarding our late April/early May pre-summit committee meeting, as well as our upcoming summit itself on Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup> from 2-4pm ET. Let us know if you have any questions regarding these upcoming events!**



## Sustainability Tips from the National High School Climate Forum:

*Thanks to those schools who gave us these great ideas!*

1. **Sustainable Practices with Your Oven** – There are many ways to use your oven, and other cooking appliances, more efficiently. With the bulk of the energy used in baking spent on warming the oven up from scratch, one easy way to do so is to bake multiple meals at the same time. Furthermore, after you are done baking, try to leave your oven open - this can help to heat your home, particularly in colder regions, and offset the massive energy consumption of traditional home heating systems.



2. **Tips on Food Waste** – This is a rather broad topic for a tip, but we will focus on two specific ways to cut down on your food waste. First, try to finish any leftovers you might have. Letting perfectly good food sit in the fridge (this also uses excess energy) for way too long leading to it spoiling is wasteful and harms the environment both directly and indirectly. However, sometimes it can be hard to avoid this waste, especially if you have lots of food in the house. To ease these challenges, try to shop more frequently to buy smaller quantities of food. Although this can be inconvenient, it is very sustainable and cost-effective.



3. **Use Audio and E-Books** – These electronic forms of reading material help to reduce paper consumption, decrease shipping emissions, and eliminate manufacturing waste. Nowadays, almost all books have online versions available, so reading sustainably won't be detrimental to your content options. In fact, try recommending your English teachers to utilize e-books in class and encourage their students to follow suit!



## Summer Opportunities Spotlight:

Each month we will feature a few different opportunities for summer internships in environmental science or conservation. Here are the two internship opportunities for this month.



***Drexel Environmental Science Leadership Academy:*** The Drexel Environmental Science Leadership Academy (DESLA) is an opportunity to gain leadership skills, in addition to learning the job of an environmental scientist. As part of the program, you may travel to several different locations around the country to conduct research and learn about the natural world. The application deadline for the program is May 1. You can find more information here: <https://drexel.edu/coas/academics/high-school-programs/desla/>

***National Student Leadership Conference Environmental Science and Sustainability Program:***

This is an opportunity to engage in a variety of environmental science and sustainability-based



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projects over the summer, such as laboratory research, conservation projects, and more. Not only will you learn a lot more about environmental issues facing our planet in the present and near future, but you will have the opportunity to work toward fixing these issues. You can find more information about

the program here: <https://www.nslcleaders.org/youth-leadership-programs/environmental-science-sustainability/>

## Member Schools Sustainability Initiatives Spotlights:

*In order to fulfill our mission as a forum and truly foster an exchange of ideas between each of our member schools, we will be featuring the work of the members of the Writing Subcommittee in each of these newsletters, in addition to on our website. These pieces are from March 2021. Please take time to read through these sections and learn about what other schools in the forum are working on. Perhaps you might even get an idea for your own, similar project!*

### **Stuart Country Day School – Princeton, NJ**

**Author: Emma Claisse '21**

In COVID times, Stuart Country Day School's student organization BRANCHES (Bringing A Necessary Change Enabling Sustainability) has turned to activities that both students who attend school in person and students who attend online can participate in. One of these activities is virtual movie nights (through Teleparty), which are followed by group discussions. BRANCHES' movie nights have featured films such as David Attenborough's witness statement *A Life on Our Planet*, which shows the beauty of the natural world, while also expressing the urgency of the climate crisis and its potential solutions from his own perspective as a natural historian. Another impactful documentary that BRANCHES has recently showcased to the club was *A Plastic Ocean*, which illustrates the true gravity of the global ocean pollution crisis. This documentary is very relevant to BRANCHES, as one of its goals is to dramatically reduce the amount of single-use plastics being used at our school. In support of this goal, BRANCHES has an ongoing "Bring Your Own Utensils Initiative" which encourages students to bring silverware from home for their school lunches. While Stuart has ended the inclusion of plastic utensils in their pre-packaged lunches, plastic utensils are still available to and occasionally used by students and faculty and thus the initiative remains relevant. Studies estimate that in just the United States, around 40 billion plastic utensils are thrown out every year. The most simple solution to this problem is for us to stop using them, and bring our own utensils not just to school, but everywhere we go! Another way BRANCHES plans to combat the issue of plastic pollution in our own community is through local trash cleanups. Now that the weather is getting warmer, trash pick up events are an easy way to engage your club and make a visible positive impact.

BRANCHES is planning for its next movie night to feature the upcoming documentary *Seaspiracy* which releases on Netflix this March. The Netflix original is a follow-up to the groundbreaking 2014 film *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret*, which calls attention to the shocking environmental impacts of animal agriculture. *Seaspiracy* will focus on commercial fishing's immense negative effects on the ocean and our planet as a whole. The environmental impact of overfishing is often overlooked: not only is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch largely made up of discarded fishing nets (an astonishing 50%), ecologists predict we could have fishless oceans by 2050 if significant change is not made. BRANCHES recommends that every environmentalist watch the films mentioned in this article, all of which are available on Netflix or Youtube: David Attenborough: *A Life on Our Planet* (2020), *A Plastic Ocean* (2016), *Seaspiracy* (2021), *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (2014).



## ***Menlo School – Atherton, CA***

***Author: Jack Rosenberg '22***

The Menlo School Climate Coalition, the student environmental group on the Menlo School campus in California, splits into subcommittees multiple times a year to complete a myriad of projects. After the completion of their four fall initiatives, in early 2021 the Menlo School Climate Coalition began their spring projects in preparation for April's EcoAct week. Held annually, EcoAct is a weeklong event, filled with assembly speakers and presentations from coalition members. This year, as only half the school will be on campus during the week, the assemblies will be online, coupled with some in person activities. The projects included in this year's EcoAct in addition to an assembly with an environmental justice lawyer, as well as an activist working within the movement include: three presentations and infographics of case studies of environmental racism near the school community in the Bay Area of California, a group discussing the various effects COVID-19 has had on the climate, and a sustainable fashion project. Additionally, the Coalition is creating a sculpture series centering around the animals that will go extinct during the 6th wave of mass extinction, built using recycled materials. The main assembly will be broadcasted to the entire school community through both pre recorded video, as well as live zoom panels. Previous speakers in prior years at EcoAct have included the CEO of Impossible Foods, the Head of Global Product Innovation at Levi's, and The Zero Waste Chef. Another subcommittee within the Coalition has begun analyzing President Biden's climate actions with the Biden Tracker, a subsection of the website they plan to update as Biden takes additional action against climate change. Lastly, the Coalition hopes to soon take their school resolution to the board in order to be passed. If passed, the piece of legislation would establish fighting climate change as a priority for the school, thereby opening the administration up to working with students on more sustainability projects. Through the rest of the school year, the Coalition will continue their projects and involvement, and look forward to putting on the EcoAct week.



## ***Rye Country Day School – Rye, NY***

***Author: Gabriella Jolly '22***

The Rye Country Day Environmental Club has had an uncommon year. Surprisingly, not due to the coronavirus. This year our school's sustainability council entered in the Bedford 2020 Greenlight Award. Throughout the past four months, the Environmental Club has been working to reduce the amount of single use plastics during lunch. In the past years, Rye Country Day School has been a zero waste school, but due to the pandemic, the cafeteria changed to pre-packaged lunches, instead of reusable tableware, to ensure the safety of the students. Our goal is to lower the amount of single-use plastics at lunch, mainly focusing on water bottles. The first step involved asking the staff of the cafeteria to stop asking if students wanted a water bottle during lunch. Students started refusing the plastic, and therefore there was a 30% decrease in the amount of water bottles during the first week. Our next step was to lower this number. Our council was split up into two different groups. Some members were involved in the planning of our project and others in the advocacy. Some members made a form, with a corresponding QR code, asking if they did or did not take a water bottle during lunch. Those members also placed the QR codes around our campus, so that way after lunch, students could quickly fill out the form on their way out of the cafeteria. Our council rotated between different members who would set up and man a station outside of the cafeteria. They encouraged people to fill out our form, stop taking water bottles, and offered alternatives to discourage unsustainable habits. Other members, who were responsible for advocacy, sent out emails informing our community about the harms of plastic and micro plastics on our social media pages to prevent students from taking a water bottle. They also created posters advocating the harms of global warming with tips offering ways to create sustainable habits such as preventing and refusing single use plastics and more. Our council has seen drastic changes in the amount of water bottles that have been taken during lunch and in our peers' habits. Many students started bringing reusable water bottles and always remember to fill out the form. At the end of our project, the grade which takes the least amount of water bottles will be granted a prize which has not yet been decided. Even though our project had to be skewed and took longer than expected to get started due to the coronavirus, our council is fortunate to have been able to be accepted into this project and eager to create better habits in our community.



This fall, our committee arranged a beach cleanup at our local beach, Edith Read Sanctuary. Around twenty students and five faculty members gathered and picked up 120 lbs of trash! Our committee did not enjoy seeing a large amount of trash on the beach, and therefore sent out emails to our peers about ways they can make small, yet beneficial changes to better the environment.



## ***Georgetown Day School – Washington, D.C.***

***Author: Annabel Williams '22***

Georgetown Day School and its students are committed to improving school sustainability and educating the school community on eco-friendly practices and environmental justice. The school's HS Enviro Club focuses on various sustainability initiatives like compost, e-waste drives and more, and holds weekly meetings with students who want to discuss environmental issues as they relate to policy, our lives, and current events. GDS also has another student-led club called the Environmental Task Force (ETF), which aims to connect all the different bodies and groups (of students and faculty) within the school to collaborate for sustainability goals. The ETF also has subcommittee groups working on connecting groups specifically to focus on waste, food sustainability, education, infrastructure, and more. GDS also recently built a new LMS campus that is platinum LEED certified! The school also has solar panels on both the lower and high school roofs, and our cafeteria is implementing a reusable takeout container system for lunches. Various clubs like the student government, the school store, and even the theater department are actively seeking ways to make the school more environmentally friendly. We have a lot of ongoing initiatives but are always looking for new ways to reduce the net carbon footprint of the school and its students and staff!

## ***Shady Side Academy – Pittsburgh, PA***

***Author: Dorteia Geroulakos '21***

The Shady Side Academy Environmental Club created its first-ever thrift store popup. Old classmates' clothing helped raise money for the Wildfire Relief Fund and awareness about the clothing industry's pollution. A thrift store was a unique way to start a conversation about sustainability in the fashion industry, a topic that has only recently become mainstream along with thrifting's popularity in Gen Z. Before launching the thrift store, the environmental club led an assembly educating the student body about the environmental impacts of fast fashion that perpetuates workers' rights atrocities but also provided better alternatives. Media often pushes consumerism as a magic fix. During quarantine, many spent their time online shopping as a way of retail therapy. Education is essential to combat this mentality.

While many are hesitant to buy used clothing, this provides a better environmental footprint. Thrifted clothing is unique! The student body and teachers were asked to donate old clothes they no longer wore, just like they would to Goodwill. The environmental club then collected them to sell for others to wear and enjoy. Cookies in exchange for a donation were a great incentive to encourage donations.

We set up shop in an empty classroom over the course of two days where we hung up our clothing across the room and put on some thrift store beats for our shoppers throughout the day. Although big thrift stores like Goodwill are amazing in that they promote the reuse of old clothing at affordable prices, it is impossible for them to sell all of their abundant stock. As a result, the excess clothes are sent to landfills, burnt, or sent abroad in huge bails. The Environmental Club's initiative ensured that everything would go to use. It was a great way to get clothing directly to the target consumers such as students and teachers since our selection was tailored to their age ranges. Environmental Club raised more than \$250 for those devastated by the recent wildfires in California. The clothes that were not sold will be part of a new initiative in conjunction with the Gender Sexuality Alliance where students take a piece of clothing and give another in exchange. Repurposing initiatives are also to come. This was a fun fundraising idea at no cost. If anyone has any questions about starting their own school thrift shop feel free to reach out at [geroulakosd@shadysideacademy.org](mailto:geroulakosd@shadysideacademy.org).

## The National High School Climate Forum Going Forward:

*As many of you know, we have big plans for the National High School Climate Forum going forward. First of all, we hope you all enjoyed our March speaker event on college sustainability! Going forward, we will be hosting our first annual summit on Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, from 2-4pm ET. In the future, many of our goals include forum-wide projects that all member schools could choose to participate in, such as federal legislative work or specific sustainability initiatives. As mentioned before, we welcome all ideas for improvement of the forum and are so excited to be continuing this journey to help our environment with all of you.*

*Sincerely,*

*Alex Noviello, Andrew Noviello, Holly Teti, Hope Jerris, Abby Weinstein*

*The National High School Climate Forum Founders*



## **Links to Interesting Articles, Research, and More:**

*Here are some links to interesting articles in topics related to the environment. Enjoy!*

Here are some articles surrounding Earth Day:

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/earth-day#:~:text=The%20brainchild%20of%20Senator%20Gaylord%20Nelson%20and%20inspired,students%20that%20could%20be%20reached%20on%20university%20campuses.>

<https://time.com/5570269/earth-day-origins/>

# ***Thanks for Reading!***



- ***The National High School Climate Forum***