

Presented By:

WILL STEGER
FOUNDATION



You're gonna miss it when it's gone.

THE **LONGEST SUMMER TOUR**

OCTOBER 13 - 22

ORGANIZATIONS

- Earthkeepers, Marquette, Mich.
- Environmental Law and Policy Center, Chicago, Ill.
- Global Exchange, East Lansing, Mich.
- Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, Minneapolis, Minn.
- National Wildlife Federation Campus Ecology Program, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- SEED, Chicago, Ill.
- Saint Paul Public School District, Saint Paul, Minn.
- Superior Watershed Partnership, Marquette, Mich.
- Urban Ecology Center, Milwaukee, Wis.
- West Michigan Environmental Action Council, Grand Rapids, Mich.

POST SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minn.
- Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Mich.
- Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Mich.
- Northland College, Ashland, Wis.
- Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.
- Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Mich.
- University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
- University of Minnesota-Duluth, Duluth, Minn.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Illinois Student Environmental Coalition, Chicago, Ill.
- Michigan Student Coalition, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Michigan Tech Graduate Student Council, Houghton, Mich.
- Sierra Student Coalition, Washington, D.C.

GOVERNING UNITS

- Commissioner Moore, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, St. Paul, Minn.
- Office of Lt. Governor Quinn, Ill.
- Office of Mayor Heartwell, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Office of Mayor Peterson, Houghton, Mich.
- Office of Mayor Tollefson, Marquette, Mich.
- US EPA Great Lakes National Program Office, Chicago, Ill.
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Lansing, Mich.

CORPORATE PARTNERS

- Clif Bar, Berkeley, Calif.
- ELEVEN, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Fischer Edit, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Gasket Studios, Minneapolis, Minn.
- GreenMark, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Hell's Kitchen, Duluth, Minn.
- Jill Palmquist, Copywriter, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Toyota City, Burnsville, Minn.

SUMMARY

With generous support from the US EPA Great Lakes National Program Office, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Toyota City and over 40 organizations, the Will Steger Foundation was able to execute a 10-day Tour of the Upper Midwest, across four states and seven cities from October 13-22, 2008.

The “Longest Summer Tour” (Tour) provided an opportunity to highlight and elevate the great resources and efforts on climate change already underway in the Upper Midwest. Since there is already significant progress in this region on clean energy and climate change solutions, the Tour highlighted regional leadership from a cross-generational perspective and the strategies and policies already in place at the regional, state, and local level that reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the Tour provided vivid accounts of the impacts of global warming to the Arctic and the Great Lakes, and examples of citizen solutions. Ultimately, the Tour aimed to introduce climate change solution strategies geared towards individuals, communities, campuses and faith-based organizations.

The Longest Summer Tour brought eyewitness footage of global warming from extreme polar expeditions, opportunities to dialogue with policy-makers, scientists and climate experts, and solutions from young climate leaders on the forefront of an international movement to solve the climate crisis. The Tour galvanized more than 2,000 people across the Upper Midwest to lead the transition to a clean energy economy.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Will Steger Foundation partnered with numerous organizations, educational institutions, student groups, mayors and corporations to visit university campuses and major cities in the Great Lakes Region to galvanize college students, civic leaders and engage citizenry in climate change solutions. A major success for WSF through these partnerships was the ability to bring unlikely allies and unlikely partnerships together.



Tour members with Commissioner Moore and youth leaders in Duluth, MN



"The one thing that brings us all to the table to work on issues like Climate Change is our love for the place where we live. One organization that is working to reduce the carbon footprint of our area is the Superior Watershed Partnership. The Watershed Partnership is trying to cross traditional social lines to bring people together to work on the issues of climate change. Their Earthkeepers initiative has brought me, a liberal college hippie, to the church services of conservative rural Baptist churches so we can sit down and talk about making their place of worship more energy efficient. So far through these efforts we have estimated that we have reduced the UP's carbon emissions by more than 3.5 million pounds."

– Michael Rotter, Student, Northern Michigan University, Longest Summer Tour blog



Longest Summer Tour in Grand Rapids, Michigan at Grand Valley State University with Steve Chester, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

The Will Steger Foundation executed a total of 20 events during the 10-day Tour, with major highlights in Michigan.

ILLINOIS:

Chicago

University of Chicago – 75
Northwestern University – 100
Environmental Law and Policy Center - 30
Environment Illinois Press Release Event

MICHIGAN:

Grand Rapids

Green Drinks – 100
Grand Valley State University – 100
Cornerstone University Breakfast – 25
Cornerstone University Forum – 120
Calvin College – 65
Calvin College Lunch – 15

Marquette

Skandia United Methodist Church – 25
Grace United Methodist Church – 65
Earthkeepers Round-Table – 10 (Lutheran Clergy from across the Upper Peninsula)
Superior Watershed Partnership – 200

Houghton

Michigan Technological University – 500

WISCONSIN:

Milwaukee

Urban Ecology Center - 65
Ashland
Northland College – 100

MINNESOTA:

Duluth

College of St. Scholastica - 120
University of MN Duluth - 120
Final wrap-up party - 50



Tour crosses the Mackinaw bridge to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

*"Why is UMD excited for the Tour? **The Longest Summer Tour** will help show the Duluth community that UMD cares about the effects of climate change. The Tour will show that UMD is investing resources into changing the way the university operates, as well as finding options for all of us to live better. I see UMD as a place that can bring the community together to fight global climate change. The university can be a place where organizations and individuals come together to make real change. This Tour will, in my mind, help jump-start the change that needs to happen. Hopefully, professors and students, area organizations and community members will all come together to work for our common goal, to save our world.."*

- Brian Bluhm, Environmental Service Learning Coordinator, UMD, Longest Summer Tour blog

FORUMS

The Longest Summer Tour forums were a huge success largely due to our collaborative approach. We worked with over 65 hosts, moderators, speakers, and partners over the course of 10 days.

FORUM GOALS:

Educate on the effects of climate change in Arctic and global implications

Educate on the regional implication of climate change on the Great Lakes region and the leadership role the Midwest can play in National solutions.

Inspire participation in and support for local, statewide, regional, and national youth climate initiatives

Connect student leaders with policy makers and climate experts for future collaboration and partnership.

"Using Will Steger's presentation to provide a global perspective and the other speakers to give regional and local perspectives was an effective strategy for the Tour."

— Tour Participant from Longest Summer Tour survey

FORUM OUTCOMES:

We were able to meet these goals thanks in large part to the extraordinary people we had the opportunity to work with along the way. Will Steger received excellent feedback on his *Eyewitness to Global Warming* presentation as evidenced by the thoughtful questions that followed each presentation. Our climate experts played an important role in connecting the impacts in the Arctic with the Midwest and bringing the issues surrounding climate change home to the Great Lakes. It was our student speakers that were however, the most inspiring, not only in their articulate presentations, but also in their urgent call to action. Their vision for solutions went far beyond the basics of recycling and buying local to massive statewide student organizing efforts, national youth climate summits, green jobs campaigns, and the list goes on. These students were our ambassadors for solutions, and were extremely effective in reaching and engaging their peers. It was wonderful to read their stories and reflections in the blog and podcasts on the Longest Summer Tour website before and after our forums.

It was extremely rewarding on our part, to connect these students with high profile policy makers and climate experts in support of cross-generational dialogue and partnership on solutions. This included Steve Chester, Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality who joined our forum at Grand Valley State University, Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn who joined our forum at the University of Chicago, Mayor Eric Peterson who joined us at Michigan Technological University, and Commissioner Brad Moore of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency who joined us at both the College of St. Scholastica and the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Our hope is that students and faculty will continue to build on these initial contacts to work together towards a common goal.

Because of the mix of speakers in our forums we were able to draw a fairly diverse audience, depending on the venue location and time, spanning several generations. Our high profile experts and policy makers tended to draw more faculty and adults from the general public while our local and national youth climate speakers, especially those well-networked on campus, tended to draw a younger engaged student audience. Will Steger's reputation as a non-partisan advocate for climate change solutions preceded us at every venue and helped us recruit individuals that were not necessarily interested in global warming before the presentation. This made for consistently interesting conversation during our question and answer sessions, touching on everything from the economy, to international relations, national security, and energy independence.



In Upper Peninsula of Michigan (L to R): Tobias Thorleifsson (Norway), Will Steger, Abby Fenton (WSF)



Longest Summer Tour with youth climate leaders and tour partners in Houghton, Michigan

The Longest Summer Tour – a seven-city campaign to bring a message of sustainability and clean energy to thousands throughout the Great Lakes Region – garnered national, regional and local media attention, from national newswires to community newspapers to local blogs.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

ONLINE

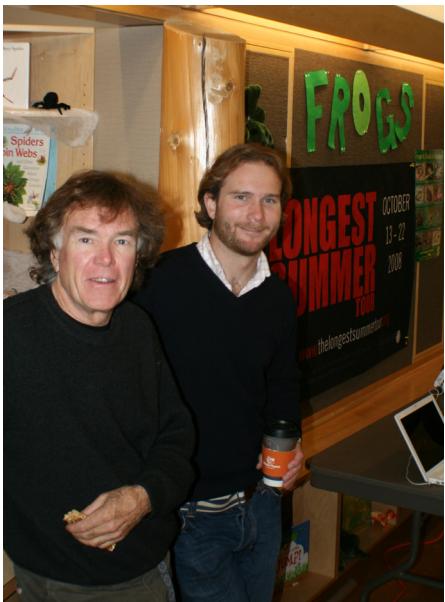
Grand Rapids Press: Jim Harger featured the Longest Summer Tour's visit to Grand Rapids
Medill Reports: This Northwestern Graduate School wire featured two stories about the Tour – the first outlined the Tour's purpose and itinerary; the second detailed the Tour's first stop at the University of Chicago with Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn.

WIRE

Press Release of 10.14.2008: Several major media outlets ran the release announcing the start of the Longest Summer Tour, including the Wall Street Journal's Market Watch, MSNBC, Google News and the International Business Times.

TELEVISION

WDIO-TV / ABC: The Duluth-based ABC affiliate covered the Tour's stop at the College of St. Scholastica and the University of Minnesota-Duluth in its evening news broadcast.



Tour members enjoy a northern Michigan tradition - eating pasties!

LONGEST SUMMER TOUR QUOTES FROM MEDIA COVERAGE

NRDC SWITCHBOARD

"Will Steger is the first person to have made his way across the Antarctic on foot, a daunting terrain of ice waves and howling winds. There were no dogs, no company at all. Just endless white, a man and his wooden sled, wind, ice, and bitter cold. Now he is taking on what might prove to be an even harder challenge. In his "The Longest Summer" Tour, he is traveling the Midwest to talk about the big energy choice we are poised to make - will we choose solar, wind and other renewable sources of clean energy or energy even dirtier than conventional fossil fuels, further imperiling our fragile planet? It's hard to believe that there is even a debate. It seems so obvious. Choose clean energy!...The time for that debate is now and it should start with a look at the role of the tar sands – as well as oil shale – in the Midwest's future. Thanks to Will Steger, that debate will get a new injection of the right kind of energy."

– Liz Barratt-Brown

DAILY NORTHWESTERN

"Steger's firsthand experience with climate change made him a unique and dynamic speaker, the firsthand account lends a certain sense of humility to the discussion, it really brings it down to the level of the people."

– Jesse Sleamaker, SEED Co-Chairman at Northwestern University

"I wanted to take the opportunity to be part of the green movement. I do this because I'm concerned about what will happen 20 years from now and what kind of world our children will live in. Steger's speech was important because it illustrated hard evidence of global warming. If you haven't visited the Arctic Pole like Will, then global warming is not visible to you and it never will be. It's not just about saving the abstract polar bear anymore. It's about how global climate change affects the individual."

– Mert Hilmi Iseri, Northwestern University

MEDILL REPORTS

"He's an explorer and he's been there, and I'm interested in what he has to say."

– Michael Carbone, University of Chicago

"... Hearing the eyewitness account was interesting and added something to my knowledge that I didn't have beforehand."

– Christina Melander, University of Chicago

WDIO-TV EVENING NEWS SEGMENT

“...serious action needs to be taken now, because if greenhouse gas emissions continue at this rate, we could reach a point where the effects are irreversible.”

– Brad Moore, MPCA Commissioner

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

Polar explorer Will Steger has an urgent message for those who question global warming: It is real. He has the pictures to prove it, and time is running out on a solution.

Steger, a 64-year-old explorer who embarked on his first Arctic expedition at 15, visited three city college campuses Friday as part of his foundation’s “Longest Summer Tour.”

Carrying a well-worn backpack, the ruddy adventurer showed students at Cornerstone University a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the melting ice shelves he encountered on his most recent visit to the Arctic.

– Jim Harger, Grand Rapids Press



EIGHTY RESPONDENTS SHARED THEIR THOUGHTS ON NEW KNOWLEDGE THEY GAINED AS A RESULT OF THE TOUR:

WHAT NEW INFORMATION DID YOU LEARN ?

“The realities of ice melting in Antarctica.”

“How rapidly the changes are occurring.”

“The signs of global warming are accelerating, even here in the Midwest/Great Lakes.”

“Local effects of global warming.”

“The latest statistics on the most recent status of conditions (ice caps, CO₂ levels, etc) were new.”

“The pictures made it more personal and gave me a firsthand account I had not heard before.”

“The actions being taken here in Wisconsin to help fight climate change.”

“I was impressed to learn that Grand Rapids is a leader among green cities!”

“I learned more about the stance of the EPA and the government on what can realistically be done to reverse and hinder the effects of climate change.”

“How Superior Watershed Partnership had completed projects to protect Lake Superior.”

“Firsthand images of a situation I only knew on an academic level; also learned more about networks available to connect students”

PARTICIPANTS WERE ALSO ASKED TO SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS THEY HAD ABOUT THE TOUR:

“The Tour was eye-opening and extremely intriguing. I hope the Tour continues and evolves even further to make more people aware of the peril we are heading for if we don’t adjust our habits”

“I thought the presentation was very good – they found ways to inform and keep it interesting”

“I loved the event and friends of mine who attended the GVSU presentation were inspired and want to be more involved in the youth climate movement. This Tour definitely made an impact on my community!”



Will Steger and
Toby Thorleifsson
with Grand Rapids
community partners

Overall the Tour was received extremely well in each city. Testimonials from the Tour blogs illustrate the impact of the Tour on the participants and youth partners:

"Having once been the center of steel production, boasting the Midwest work ethic and having a great potential for wind power, these regions could be a powerhouse again in the new green economy. The signs are very encouraging. I was particularly impressed by the developments in Grand Rapids that now have succeeded in reducing emissions by 20% and in doing so became a leader in emission reductions in the U.S. The example of Grand Rapids is also one that I will take with me back to Norway as a source of inspiration. The other main observation that I have made so far is that the student based environmental movement in the Midwest has grown since I was last here in 2007 to become a unified and stronger force with significantly growing momentum. It seems quite clear that the student movements have been successful in reaching outside the university campuses and that they have started a real movement that will have great influence in the upcoming federal election and also in local elections all over the Midwest."

— Toby Thorleifsson, Ellesmere Island Expedition Team Member/Young Explorer from Norway, Longest Summer Tour blog

"The culminating event in Michigan was at the tip of the state in Houghton at Michigan Technical University. Will Steger's name attracted a crowd of over 500 Michiganders. While I was sweating profusely during my entire speech about youth climate activism in Michigan, Mr. Steger and his fellow explorer/friend Toby seemed as at ease in front of the crowd as they do in subzero temperatures surrounded by wolves. Maybe this is because the one thing I really took away from the whole experience is that this stuff matters... I left with a sense of renewed passion for the work I do. The folks at the Will Steger Foundation have all been working for climate justice and fighting for a great global awakening for years and some of them for decades, yet their spirit is as unwavering and determined as ever. Toby at one point commented on "the real world work" that many young activists fear having to enter into, abandoning their foolish and idealistic ideals, saying goodbye to their friends and welcoming a so-called corporate 9-5 lifestyle. If I learned anything this week it was that this is the "real world" and it is the only one we have. Our planet and economy demands that the youth of this country rise up and demand a clean and just energy future. Otherwise as the Longest Summer Tour states, "You're gonna miss it when it's gone".

— Michael Collins, Michigan Student Sustainability Coalition, Longest Summer Tour blog

"Looking back over the past ten days, we remember all the amazing individuals we met along the way, who are working hard on their campuses and in their communities to usher in a more sustainable way of life. These people are students, they are administrators, they are public officials, they are the general public, everyday people committed to being part of the solution. In a time of great uncertainty one thing is clear, people are talking about climate change and looking for a way to engage in solutions. Furthermore, many many people, from all kinds of communities, are already doing their part to move us towards a more sustainable future. As I return home to the Twin Cities, I can't help but feel a sense of hope, pride, and love for the heartland of America, for all that we are and all that we can become. "

— Abby Fenton, WSF Education Program Manager



Will Steger at the University of Chicago



The partnerships with government officials were some of the most exciting outcomes of the Tour as we continue to expand our work across the Midwest. We were pleased to be able to work with three Mayors, the EPA Region 5 office, the Office of Commissioner Moore at the MPCA, Lieutenant Governor Quinn of Illinois, and Steve Chester, Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Their participation in the community forums added a great deal to the quality and depth of the conversations and helped forge valuable connections between student climate leaders and policy makers.

"Your presentation has really given me cause to change my personal habits, and I hope it does so for many others."

- Mayor of Houghton, MI, Eric Peterson

"I was so pleased and honored to share the program with Will. Thank you for all that you, Will and the team at the Foundation are doing to protect our planet from the ravages of climate change."

- Mayor of Grand Rapids, MI, George Heartwell

Overall the Tour was a success for the Will Steger Foundation – from expanding our visibility beyond Minnesota, to forging new partnerships, to reaching diverse audiences across the Upper Midwest with the compelling narrative of the eyewitness voice. Indeed, we are making a tangible impact on public awareness concerning the threat of global climate change. The Tour provided a platform for furthering education, discussion and civic engagement, offering unique opportunities for public interaction with prominent policy makers, scientists, students and climate experts.



Nicole Rom (WSF Executive Director) and Toby Thorleifsson discuss the Tour at the final stop in Duluth, MN



Will Steger with Northland College students in Ashland, Wisconsin

