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**LATE
WEEK**

SINCE 1786

THE PRINCETON PACKET

SOLUTIONS

Huck Fairman

A conference for students, by students

On Sunday, an unusual event took place at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association in Pennington. It was a climate conference presented for students, but also organized, to a large degree, by students.

Three local institutions - students, staff and faculty - worked to make it happen. But additionally, students from 24 central Jersey schools found it important enough to sign up to attend on a Sunday.

Princeton Day School, led by sustainability director Liz Cutler, coordinated with the Princeton University Environmental Institute's Holly Welles and its energy and climate scholars (Ph.D students working toward their doctorates,) and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, which hosted the conference at its state-of-the art facility.

As Watershed Science Director Dr. Steve Tuorto observed after listening to students' comments, the salvation of Earth's environment may lie with this next generation, now in college and high school, in their openness and seriousness in learning about and acting on the ever-growing challenge of our changing climates. And, as PDS head of school Paul Stellato urged in his opening remarks, the time to respond to this challenge is now.

Princeton University energy and climate scholar Ryan Edwards (from southern Australia) opened the conference with an updating of where climate science and our changing climate are. Among his many science-based observations was that our planet's average temperatures have shot way past the long-time, normal temperature variations, whether they date from 1880 when record-keeping began, or from ice core analysis dating back 400,000 years. And Arctic temperatures are rising faster than those around the rest of the globe as the energy-reflecting ice sheets melt and diminish in area.

He also pointed out that the radiation coming from the sun has not increased, and that volcanic eruptions and aerosols reflect solar radiation, causing temporary cooling. That leaves increased greenhouse gases as the only cause of temperature rise.

And the rise in global temperatures has been dramatically steep since 2001, with the last three years being, one after the other, the hottest on record.

But much of this information has been out there for several years. Why, then, were these young students attending this conference? Did they simply want to get up to date, or was there more motivating them?

The following is a selection of their reasons for coming:

Sarah Johnson of the Kent Place School in Summit wrote that she was there "to get a better understanding of climate change and see what I can do to make a difference."

Nathaniel Kruger of the Princeton Learning Cooperative said that he wanted to experience, as expressed by his peers, the passion he has felt for our environment.

Krithika Vasireddy of Princeton Day School wrote: "I'm here because I believe that the world needs more leaders to educate their communities ... an issue that will directly affect our future generations. I want to be able to change the ways of my community so that it will have a smaller carbon footprint."

Sam Cabot of the Lawrenceville School, Jesse Cross of Rutgers Prep, and Isabel Kim of the Kent Place School, all came to learn and find new sources of information about climate change.

Mayowa Ayolek of Princeton High School came to learn more about climate change, as did her schoolmate Juliet Malkowski, who also hoped to learn what she could do to reduce carbon emissions in her daily life.

Noah Levinson of The Pennington School wanted to learn not only about the environment but also about energy.

Molly Kasner of the Hun School came to learn "new things" (and earn extra credit,) while Dayana Ramirez of Princeton Day wrote that she came "because I feel that although climate change is widely discussed, not enough people act and advocate for solutions. I want to change that, and that change starts with me."