

THE PRINCETON PACKET

SOLUTIONS

By Huck Fairman

Students and schools stepping up

What can students do to help slow, and eventually, halt global warming? What can schools do?

Well it turns out, perhaps not surprisingly, many different things.

Some high school students have joined together to march in order to call on leaders, at all government levels, to take meaningful steps to reduce emissions.

In this town, some Princeton Day School students have joined Princeton University grad students in their Princeton Student Climate Initiative (PSCI). The purposes of the PSCI is to educate, engage and connect students with scientists, activists, businesses, governments, and other students in other schools, for the purposes of slowing, and eventually halting, global warming, but also encouraging communities to adopt green policies.

PSCI projects include: researching carbon pricing options; informing the public about proposed natural gas pipelines and propulsion stations; forming alliances and encouraging discussions with businesses and governments; and forging connections with international scientists, activists, as well as businesses.

These ideas and initiatives are not new, however, to the Princeton Day School community. In 2006, the school held its first "brainstorming" sessions on sustainability. Among the conclusions reached was the importance and

feasibility of redirecting school practices and policies in order to become green. It was also evident to those first participants that the school needed to teach "ecoliteracy" on the way to becoming more sustainable. The adopted mission was "to prepare students to act knowledgeably, lead thoughtfully, share generously, and contribute meaningfully." Practically speaking, this meant that the school should "nurture a culture of environmental stewardship," in all aspects of school life, and that current school members (faculty, staff, and students,) should recognize that their use and preservation of resources will affect future generations. Furthermore, in order to realize this goal it would also be necessary to attend to, alter, and improve the school's facilities, the behavior of its members, and its curriculum.

Since then, the school has made remarkable strides toward achieving these goals, as is evidenced by the number of awards it has won. In 2017, it was presented with the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award, adding to awards in prior years. This December recognition continued as its campus food service was awarded the Four-Star Green Restaurant Award. Only three other secondary schools in the nation have won this recognition from the Green Restaurant Association, which was founded at the 1997 Kyoto Climate Summit. There, scientists recognized that the growing hu-

man population needed to turn to more sustainable practices, as humans had already reached, or were nearing, the carrying capacity of the planet.

But what does a sustainable food service policy mean? It means making the effort to attend to: water usage efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable durable goods and building materials, sustainable food, energy, re-usables and environmentally preferable disposables, while reducing chemical and air pollution, and providing transparency and education.

PDS was fortunate in being directed toward these ends by a very capable team of: Sustainability Coordinator Liz Cutler, "Flik" Director (Independent School Dining,) Brian Mochnal, Chef Mason Irving, the Flik staff, the Building & Grounds staff, and dedicated groups of student gardeners (now overseeing the gardens' 10th year,) all working together to produce a highly sustainable food operation.

This bridging of roles and positions has worked very well for PDS, and is an example of the cooperation needed, in Congress, and in state and local governance, if we are to solve the looming climate change issues and the longer-term challenges of sustainability. The PDS model is showing that different ages, abilities, and experience can join together to get needed changes adopted.