

SOLUTIONS Huck Fairman

ARE ADULTS FAILING US?

The New York Times recently printed an Op-Ed piece by Greta Thunberg and colleagues from Mexico, Bangladesh, and Kenya that amplified the “code red for humanity” declared by the United Nations secretary general. They wrote this piece because “climate change is the single greatest threat to our futures.” With this growing awareness, these young authors note “that millions of children and young people have united in a movement ... demanding that decision makers do the work necessary to save the planet from unprecedented heat waves, massive floods and vast wildfires.”

While adults at all levels around the world are aware of the threats we face, and in many cases have responded, and while President Biden, Governor Murphy, and others have taken steps to reduce emissions, the changing weather and climates (now including rain in Greenland for the first time ever recorded,) warn that we are not doing enough, quickly enough.

Moreover, the piece reveals, children and young people are more vulnerable and likely to suffer from weather events and diseases unleashed by climate change. The authors point out that “virtually every child” is exposed to at least one of these hazards and many are vulnerable to several. A UNICEF report states that “nearly half of the children in the world live in extremely high risk countries.”

“The Children’s Climate Risk Index details where and how the crisis affects children. It also ranks nations on their children’s exposure to climate and environmental impacts.

The ten countries with the highest emissions produce “nearly 70 percent of global emissions.” Not surprisingly, these nations include China, the United States, Russia and Japan. And yet children in those highest emissions nations face “lower risks.”

Sadly the countries facing the worst effects of climate change are in Africa and the southern hemisphere, where collectively they emit just 9 percent of global emissions. This vast inequity is a threat not only to those nations but to global cohesion, which is necessary if we are to preserve our world.

The young authors of this Op-Ed are in the process of putting together a network of young journalists and educators to both spread awareness and press for the needed reforms. Among the actions are the organizing of water cleanup efforts to rid water bodies of plastics.

Although in 2015, 195 nations committed to the Paris Climate Agreement, not enough of those nations lived up to those commitments. Now, in November, another UN Climate Change Conference will convene in Glasgow. But science, and these young authors warn that *Now is The Time*. They stress that we are in a climate crisis that will impact the planet and their future. This time, they “will not allow the world to look away.”

