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Change Agents Lead with Love in a World of Need

(Release on July 20, 2019): LOVE results when young leaders connect a community's long-term needs, observations, and volition to bring about evolution, according to the mantra at this year's Nevada County Climate Change Agent Camp.

Middle- and high-school scholarship recipients came away this this and many other life lessons at the overnight camp July 16 – 20, where they prepared for their leadership roles as humanitarian change agents.

They learned that the high-stakes questions facing wildfire communities call for expanding skill sets among the coming generation of forest managers, civil engineers, psychologists, scientists, artists, and communicators. Camp can offer a head start for these bright young leaders who, this year, focused on the relationship of "Love and Wildfire."

2019 Winners

The 2019 new scholarship winners and returning Ambassadors, in alphabetical order, included: Darren Fisher, Jaxon English, Jessica Rivenes, Lian Trowbridge, Logan House, Lucy Carson, Paxx Weitt, Nikayla Mitchell, Riley Cox, Savannah Delgado, Stella Reeves, Taj Greenberg, Tanner Delgado, and Zachary Damewood.

Their community service ranged from teaching others how to negotiate collaborative decisions about forest management, evacuation routes, and ways to preserve the health of both forest and human communities while honoring those who valiantly protect wildfire ecosystems.

Background of the Camp

The Nevada County Climate Change Agents Camp launched five years ago, when Education Committee members of the Climate Change Coalition (now Climate Action Now) defined their mission as an obligation to not only inform the public of current climate-related research, issues and actions but to also prepare the next generation for its role in lending its skills to the evolving reality of a world affected by climate change.

Each year, the camp has addressed a relevant theme, such as drought, water scarcity, the health of local habitats, or climate-related food insecurity. The youth serve the community as they integrate their own life skills with scientific research, visual arts, the performing arts, peacemaking and the preparation of a farmers' market exhibit.

They still find time for new friendships, a cool dip in the water, skirmishes with an owl and a flashlight, and nightly chats around the talking tree.

Acting Both Locally and Globally

The young change agents focus on local transformation goals and also collaborate with global wisdom-exchange partners, striving along with their peers striving to compare notes on life-changing issues in another country somewhere in the world. Their onsite and online co-change agents have hailed from Tanzania, Vanuatu, the Gambia, Cameroon and, this year, from South America and Lesotho.

Broad Support

Current camp sponsors include Nevada County Climate Action Now (NC-CAN), Full-Circle Learning (FCL), Sierra Foothills Audubon, Forest Issue Group, Earth Justice Ministries and Nevada City Retreats. The Nevada County School District publicizes scholarship applications to ensure that teachers have a chance to recommend students who excel in STEAM as well as demonstrating a commitment to positive social skills, ethics and a commitment to community service.

CLIMATE CHANGE AGENTS CAMP PHOTO ESSAY



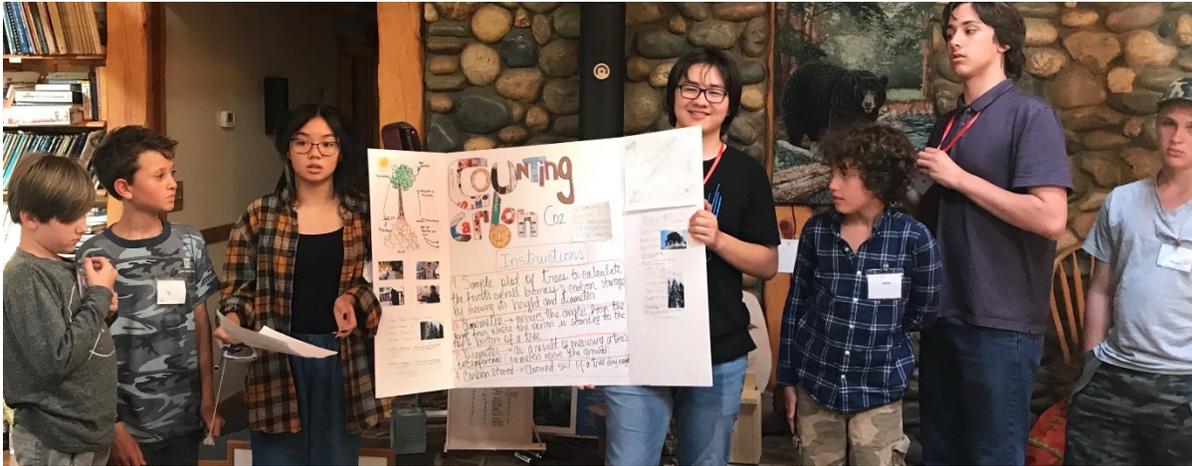


Carrying a Cup of Love

The Change Agents corresponded with three wisdom exchange partners this summer:

1. Ana Maria, a visiting school director/teacher from Colombia, showed them the severity of flash floods wiping out huts in vulnerable communities when snow melts too rapidly in Comunidad de la Sierra Nevada.
2. Lesotho offered the positive example of what a country looks like a decade after students planted trees on a mountaintop to stop deforestation and hunger and promote agriculture and create a new carbon sink.
3. India offered the example of a family who started the trend of putting a flask of buttermilk outside the gate for workmen, pavement dwellers and others who might experience heat prostration due to the temperatures now rising three degrees each summer near Chennai. Based on this example, the Change Agents painted flasks created by ceramicist Rene Sprattling. They gave them as gifts, along with buttermilk, to honor those who reach out to strangers to offer prevention, comfort and aid before, during and after a wildfire. Here, Jaxon English perfects his design, while another student depicts fire against a night sky..

Each of these partner countries received ideas, poems, suggestions, letters of congratulations and/or love from the Change Agents.



Scientists Get their Feet Wet in the Carbon Sink

Breakout groups tackled challenges and then taught one another how to conduct those same exercises. The Guardians and Seekers combined biology and trigonometry to measure the carbon stored in individual trees at the lodge property. They multiplied their calculations to determine the carbon count in an acre and in a forest.



Acting on Concern for Climate Refugees

One breakout group, the Dawning Change Agents, explored the impact of wildfire on various species, mostly by researching the resilience of the animal and its habitat after the fire. They responded lovingly to the needs of displaced chickadees by building a birdhouse to leave at the lodge.



Observing the long-term needs of communities and developing the volition to act contributes to the evolution of society, according to the motto students learned, L (Long-term needs) + O (Observation) + V (Volition) = E (Evolution). One group considered the needs of humans displaced by fire and learned psychologists' strategies for addressing or preventing PTSD, taught by therapist Jana McCrea. The Change Agents then taught these methods to farmers' market visitors such as the Guernseys (pictured on the right).



Planning for a Legacy



Each of four groups depicted a best practices technique, to help the public consider the complex decisions facing forest managers in the age of climate change. Balancing the need for overdue prescribed burns and thinning with the desire to preserve the forests for their potential as a carbon sink affects decisions about replanting as well. On a forest field trip, Jamie Ervin, from Forest Legacy, helped the groups evaluate whether to clear or preserve sections of forest.





Comparing Forest Issues

In honor of the rain forest wisdom exchange connection, one breakout group conducted experiments on leaf transpiration, comparing the impact of smoke versus sun and wind on the resiliency of plants irrigating an ecosystem.

Another group established the relationship of rising temperatures, along with wind patterns, changing forestry practices and increased urban development, on the increase in frequency and intensity of California wildfires.

Meanwhile, teams of student photographers documented each activity, to guide the public education demonstrations they would conduct at the farmers' market exhibit. (Here, teacher Katie Smith makes technical suggestions to Jessica Rivenes.)





Honoring those Who Predict, Prevent and Prepare

The Change Agents honored the nonprofit organization, Firesafe Council, for helping neighborhood and individuals community members predict, prevent and prepare for high-intensity wildfires. Representative Billie gave a tour, described county fire maps and showed equipment that residents can borrow to remove flammable plants such as

Scotch Broom or to use for volunteer projects on an elderly pserson's property. Stella Reeves offered the buttermilk jar she had created, to honor the council for protecting unseen strangers.

Other buttermilk jar recipients included: Gloria Novak, of the Lake Vera Purdon Firesafe Neighborhood Association; Jamie Ervin, of Forest Legacy; three members of the Media Center at NCTV for their public service on fire awarenss; Jana McCrea and two Paradise Fire Survivors; Rudy Darling and Don Rivenes, who taught about bird habitats; Charlie English for building a solar boat; Laksmi Greeberg for a photography lesson; Carol Kuczora, Sharon Delgado, who taught about the youth movement toward climate justice; and the homeless people living in the forest.



Relishing the Talking Tree Tradition

Each night around the madrone tree, the youth reflected on essential questions. Their quest to research, prevent, protect guard, and nurture the community, now and in the future, included their role in supporting and enhancing the lives of one another as members of one human family.



Change Agents Moving Ahead

The week ended with relevant dance performances teaching the public about Colombia and about transcending trauma, and also with tours to teach lessons the community about Love and Wildfire at the farmers' market booth.

Photos in this report by Jeni Tyler and Lily Ning