

CHS SOLARbration Speech

by Mali Gottfried, CHS Green Club Student

According to the IPCC -- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes. We are the *last* generation that can save our home. Our planet's average temperature has risen about 1.4 degrees fahrenheit since 1880. It may not sound like a lot, but in climate terms, 1.4 degrees is enough to take us into the danger zone. It's already starting to cause the mass die-off of coral reefs, the extinction of species, rising sea levels, increased ocean temperatures, and according to NASA, Greenland is losing 281 billion tons of ice every year.

In the past, a one-to-two degree drop was all it took to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age. A five-degree drop was enough to bury a large part of North America under a towering mass of ice. As 16 year old Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg said, **"I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is."**

These changes that we're seeing and experiencing aren't natural. The wildfires, hurricanes, droughts and floods? They're not normal. This change in our world is caused by humans, and we're the only ones who can stop it. And we can, we just need to start now. We need your help in order to have a future. We're 16, 17, 18. We have all of our lives ahead of us. We need you to take action.

This past year, we added solar panels to our school. We raised the money to put up this renewable energy source on the roof. The initial cost of these panels might seem like a lot, but in the long run, not only does it help create a sustainable future, but it also decreases energy bills. The money it saves, if not already for the environmental benefits, is worth the investment.

Other ways to decrease your carbon footprint are simple, like walking more, biking, carpooling or taking the city bus. Turning off the lights when there's enough natural light and whenever you leave a room. Taking shorter showers. Unplugging your devices when they're done charging. If you are able, taking the stairs. There are so many simple and easy ways. We'll make mistakes, and we can't always walk everywhere, but it's not necessarily about being perfect, it's about making a conscious effort and realizing the importance of these acts. We don't have time to start tomorrow, but I am confident that if we all make small steps towards building this new future, we can do it.

Before I joined Green Club, I knew global warming was something real and bad, but I didn't realize the urgency of everything. If we can get the word out to everyone that this cause is important and worth the effort, we can do this. It affects every being on this planet. It's not something that affects certain groups of people, it's something that affects us all.

12 years. That's how long we have. We want to see a world that shifts from dirty fossil fuels to affordable clean energy sources. A world where scientific facts inform our global policies.

Co-Chair for the Poor People's Campaign—a national call for moral revival—Reverend William J. Barber II says, "I am confident that this movement will build a new America where we stop the madness, honor all creation, and change our leaders and our lives to save our children and our world."

Tara Houska, the National Campaigns Director of Honor the Earth, says, "The fearlessness of those willing to sacrifice their freedom or their very lives to defend the futures of our children is inspiring, it is beautiful, it gives me hope that we may yet come together, without agenda or self-interest, to truly stand together and fight the greatest threat facing humankind."

We are here, empowering every generation, to join us in this fight. We can't do it without you, but we are hopeful of what we can do with you. Thank you.

February 20, 2019