

Join Kids Fighting for Climate Justice by Mary DeMocker, Oregon

Scientists say we have only a few years left to slash our carbon emissions by half. If we don't, they warn, the damage to our planet will be catastrophic and irreversible.

This worries most people, but wait! There's good news: Scientists insist it is possible to slash emissions that much by 2030. It won't be easy, but we can do it—if we start now. And there's more good news: What's healthy for the climate is also healthy for people and animals. It's better for our bodies to breathe clean, pure air—not toxic fumes from burning coal. It's better to drink clean, pure water—not water poisoned by fracking for gas. And clean energy is better for our wallets, because wind and sunshine are abundant and free.

All of this has inspired kids worldwide to send leaders an urgent message: It's time to fix the climate! The goal of the growing international youth movement is to pass bold new laws in every country to quickly replace dirty energy (coal, oil, and gas) with clean energy (wind, wave, and solar power). We also need to plant a trillion trees, educate all people about the environment, and farm and ranch in ways that don't destroy the climate.

Ready to join the vibrant movement for a healthy climate? Here are five ways to start:

1) Speak up! Tell your family, teachers, classmates, doctor, spiritual leader, coach, and neighbors you're worried about the climate crisis and need adults to change our laws—not just light bulbs. Remind them that it's your health and happiness on the line, but you can't vote. Try writing a short letter to them. Video yourself reading it, and send the video to every adult you know. Suggest that the gift you really want for your next birthday or holiday is a livable planet! Or, make art or a short song to post online.

2) Learn about the wonders of wind power, which is cheap, safe, and clean. For a great story about a lifesaving windmill in an African village, read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamba (picture book, young reader, or young adult editions).

3) Watch *A Message From the Future With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*, a beautifully-animated story about how the Green New Deal can help heal the climate crisis in a way that's fair to everyone, everywhere on YouTube.

4) For teens, read **Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming**, edited by Paul Hawken, which outlines 100 scientifically-proven

ways to cut or draw down our global emissions.

5) Start a climate club at school or where you worship. Ask for adult help. If you're ready to organize an action group, download *The Climate Resistance Handbook* at <https://trainings.350.org/climate-resistance-handbook/#order>.

Ideas for Parents

Here are ideas from my book *The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution* that you can suggest to parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and teachers:

1) Get honest, accurate climate news—and inspiration!—from free online newsletters such as Yale Climate Connections, Grist, or CleanTechnica. These report on exciting clean energy innovations, as well as victories in the fight for climate justice.

2) Break up with dirty banks! Ask parents: Why give money to big banks that use our money to help coal, oil, and gas corporations build climate-killing pipelines and terminals? Instead, bank at a local credit union.

3) Register to vote in the next election. Register others. And, of course, vote!

4) Support the Green New Deal. Push decision-makers to support it through calls and in-person meetings with representatives (not just “clicktivism”).

5) Demand climate literacy in all schools. This is easiest when parents get together and take their demands to teachers, principals, and school boards.

6) Help amplify kids' voices. Encourage youth expression and leadership, and help kids really be heard by decision-makers.

Creative climate advocacy projects for families:

1) Choose a clean energy candidate to support in the 2020 elections. Make one big, colorful, sign together and display it in public. Inspire others by posting it on social media. Or, make a one-minute video about why we must elect planet protectors, suggesting easy things people can do to help (my book has ideas to suggest).

2) For Halloween, make a cardboard graveyard—for coal, oil, and gas—for your yard, window, or front door (see my website at marydemocker.com for photos).

3) Together, read about the young climate heroes in the sidebar. Find out what other kids are doing in your town or school. What climate groups or activities interest you? How might you join or support other young people's actions to create a healthy future?

Noteworthy North.East. West.South & Taking Action

These young people have taken bold public actions, sometimes alone at first. Now, they're inspiring countless other young people in the race to save the planet. —Mary DeMocker.

• **Greta Thunberg.** Swedish 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, angry at her government for not doing what scientists said we must to slash carbon emissions in time, decided she had to speak up. One day, she skipped school to sit in front of Sweden's parliament building with a hand-painted sign saying “**Skolstrejk for Klimatet**” (*School Strike for Climate*).

That first Friday, she sat alone. The following Friday, other students joined her. Her one small action has now ignited a global student strike movement. Millions of school children worldwide joined Greta on March 15th and again in May in huge strikes that have propelled youth to center stage in the global climate movement.

Now, young people are asking adults to leave their workplaces and homes September 20th to join young climate strikers demanding an end to the age of fossil fuels. If you'd like to start or join a student strike, you can find out more at GlobalClimateStrike.net.

• **The Juliana Plaintiffs:** Another exciting youth-led campaign is a lawsuit waged by twenty-one kids from the US. The “Juliana plaintiffs,” as they're called (their case is *Juliana vs. US*, named after plaintiff Kelsey Juliana) are suing the Trump administration for their right to a healthy climate system. They're also raising awareness about the climate crisis in podcasts, films, and media interviews, inspiring children worldwide to learn about—and demand—their legal right to a healthy planet.

You can find out more about how to support kids taking legal action, or start your own. Visit OurChildrensTrust.org.

• **The Sunrise Movement** is a group of fired-up young people in the US demanding a Green New Deal (GND). It is a set of new laws our officials could pass to slash carbon emissions and transition from polluting energy (coal, oil, and gas) to clean and renewable energy. Sunrise has made a big splash in the media, because they go to representatives' offices and don't leave until they get a pledge of support for the GND. This means youth are disrupting business-as-usual,

even risking arrest when they refuse to leave politicians' offices. This peaceful, direct action and hard work is paying off, though; Sunrise has won support for the GND from over 104 Congressional representatives.

Sunrise has also gotten 21 major presidential candidates to pledge NOT to take money from coal, oil, and gas corporations during their campaigns in 2020. This is crucial for restoring environmental democracy, because coal, oil, and gas corporations regularly give huge donations to candidates, helping them win. Then, these elected representatives pay corporations back by passing laws to help them build more coal, oil, and gas projects—just when we need to be shutting them down.

Thousands of youth are joining Sunrise, and there are now hubs in 48 states. To find or to start a hub in your town, visit SunriseMovement.org.

★ **July was the Planet's Hottest Ever Month!** And, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for swift action: “This year alone, we have seen temperature records shattered from New Delhi to Anchorage, from Paris to Santiago, from Adelaide and to the Arctic Circle. If we do not take action on climate change now,” he said, “these extreme weather events are just the tip of the iceberg. And, indeed, the iceberg is also rapidly melting.”

★ A dozens countries (like Qatar, Israel, Lebanon) in the Middle East and North Africa with hot and dry climates, have chronic water shortages as the supply is low to begin with. Growing demands have pushed countries further into extreme stress. India, with over 1.3 billion people, also on the list of most water-stressed nations. The recent water crisis in Chennai (South India) where taps ran dry this summer, gained global attention, but many other areas in India also experience chronic water stress. With climates changing, glaciers melting, and population growing, water shortages will even get worse in many parts of the world.

★ **Toni Morrison**—winner of the Pulitzer Prize (1988), the Nobel Prize for Literature (1993), and many other honors—died this summer at the age of 88. She was an exceptionally brilliant writer of our times.

★ **Urgent Transformative Changes: *Phasing out fossil fuels. Reinventing our energy system with renewables. Regenerating our soils and forests to cool the earth.***