



CIRCA Report Cover Youth Climate Action Teams

February 2024
New Haven Leon Sister City Project



Connecticut Institute for Resilience
and Climate Adaptation

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New Haven Leon
Sister City Project

Sponsored by a Climate & Equity grant from the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). CIRCA is a partnership between the University of Connecticut and the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. More information can be found at: www.circa.uconn.edu

**New Haven Leon Sister City Project Final Report
CIRCA Climate & Equity Grant**

Summary: Youth Climate Action Teams Project

- Supported five youth led in school climate solutions pilot projects.
- Built student/youth leadership and skills.
- Pushed by example the Board of Education to reduce climate and air pollution, and help reduce climate vulnerability.
- Engaged six youth in summer climate art and climate education projects.
- Educate the public, teachers, parents, and students and climate solutions.

Grant Project Activities:

Below are YCAT overviews written by student interns for January – June 2023; summer arts projects overview; and the September to January YCAT projects.

Youth Climate Action Teams Overview

- by youth YCAT Coordinator Young In Kim

Besides working to support the NHCM Climate Education Committee's work with the New Haven Board of Education on climate mitigation projects, each YCAT intern team is also working on school focused pilot projects. Short descriptions of each pilot project can be seen below.

Transportation Project at Wilbur Cross

Interns: Rosie Hampson (Junior), Manxi Han (Freshman)

Point 2 of the BoE Climate Emergency Resolution, passed last September 2022, aims to reduce GHG emissions from transportation. For our YCAT internship, we focused on promoting healthy transportation in New Haven Public Schools by educating students/faculty and encouraging them to take more environmental transportation options.

The first part of our pilot project was a transportation survey which we distributed throughout NHPS. The objective of this survey was to gather more data on the transportation habits of NHPS students/faculty, assess obstacles they face, and identify changes most likely to impact transportation choices. We hope that, by acquiring this data, we can understand what changes are most needed to create a positive transition toward environmental transportation use among students in different grade levels. We will share our findings with the Board of Education to help them implement the changes outlined in Point 2 of the Board of Education Climate Emergency Resolution.

The second part of our pilot project was specific to Wilbur Cross, with the aim of educating Cross students about available transportation options and encouraging them to create healthier transportation habits. This included having students pledge to adopt

healthier transportation habits, and sending out four school-wide transportation newsletters over the course of two weeks with important resources and information.

Survey: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe6J6Fue61GwRMmXOE-h9waJqJXMH83NJfml3UJv0IVP957XQ/viewform>

Survey graphic (included at end of report):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q7e82XsF1By4b9ZPnC5Np5Bcud0LNTs_/view?usp=sharing

Fact sheet graphic (included at end of report):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ufY8VgMxcGPst_ZgSXhUsnLLkbNoGOIN/view?usp=sharing

Composting at Wilbur Cross:

Intern: Lila Kleppner (Senior)

My pilot project aimed to educate the Cross community about composting and begin a small-scale composting program at Wilbur Cross. This past May and June, a portion of Cross' food waste was processed off-campus through Peels and Wheels, a local composting business in New Haven. In the next few semesters the hope is to expand the composting to include all of Cross' food waste and switch to processing the compost on campus. The idea is to set up the framework for composting in school that can be replicated district-wide. I co-led and worked with the Cross Environmental Club, who hosted a movie showing to raise money for the composting. Members of the club and I talked to people during lunch waves to explain the importance of composting and to show what can and cannot be composted. Domingo Medina, who founded Peels and Wheels Composting, also came to Cross to talk with the Environmental Club twice to educate us on the process of composting. Mr. Medina talked to us about the different steps we need to take, including the possibility of doing a waste audit in the future. For the duration of the pilot period, Mr. Medina collected the compost once a week, and we collected compost 1 to 2 times a week (each day included three lunch waves for the student body of 1700 people).

The composting pilot project was quite successful. Students picked up the idea of only composting food waste quite quickly. They would run after us with their food scraps. We had four students from the Cross Environmental Club each lunch wave, two on each side of the cafeteria with a small compost bucket and compostable liner. There was a larger bucket in the middle of the cafeteria which we dumped the full compost bags into. We then left the compost bags outside for Peels and Wheels to pick up. Once processed by Peels and Wheels, we received the compost soil back, which was used to benefit our school garden.

Note: This project has continued at Cross this school year with support from past YCAT members (as volunteers) and the Cross Environmental Club.

Social media graphic (included at end of report):

https://www.canva.com/design/DAFeqyKRAaE/Sa6wMTORDQp6sbmE4GYcHw/view?utm_content=DAFeqyKRAaE&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

[New Haven Independent story](#) (included at end of report)

Climate Education at Engineering and Science University Magnet School (ESUMS)

Interns: Tenzin Youdon (Junior), Leah Mock (Junior)

Our proposed pilot program focused on the implementation of climate-focused material into the 7th grade English/language arts classes and 7th grade science classes at ESUMS. Students learned the underlying scientific principles of climate change, according to the [NHPS Science curriculum](#), then integrated that knowledge into texts, assignments, and projects in their English classes.

We also compiled a climate-focused list of books for the middle school English/Language Arts teachers to integrate into the mandatory [summer reading list](#). This would prime students to learn about climate change in their classes while encouraging students to interact with environmentally-focused texts. We included various books including those listed in the article [Build Your Stack: Climate Crisis and English Language Arts](#) or [11 Middle Grade Books for Environmentally Conscious Kids](#). We included books that are appropriate for different middle school grade levels, while also conveying necessary information about climate change that emphasizes the urgency of the climate crisis.

Our goal was to identify areas where climate-aligned lessons could be implemented. In the future, we hope to see the incorporation of content from other classes, such as engineering, world languages, or social studies, as parts of interdisciplinary climate-focused activities. This pilot project also helped us to gauge the limitations of what can be implemented, such as time restrictions and the necessity of aligning content to NGSS and CSS standards.

Example science and language arts lessons:

Science: Human Impacts on Climate Change

- Video: [Climate Change: The Human Impact](#) - Newfoundland Conservation Corps
- Activity/Homework: [En-ROADS Global Warming Simulator](#)
- Homework: [Human Impacts on Climate Change Homework.pdf](#)

English:

- Selected Poems: [7th ENGLISH - Climate Poems.pdf](#)
- Evaluation Activity: [Climate Poems Evaluation](#)

Timeline:

- February - March: Interviewing and meeting with teachers, developing plans for spring 2023
- April - May: Continue meeting with teachers, developing plans for 2023-onward
- June: Evaluating progress, successes/failures, student response, possibility for future expansion.

Summer arts interns

We worked with one youth leader and six youth to create public participatory art projects. The main project create Lorax themed installations on City street stumps that called for climate action. The art was researched and designed by the interns who then went to a number of farmers markets to invite the public to help with the art work (cutting, painting). Instagram post [here](#) and [here](#). (Also included at end of report.)

Interns also helped organize an Earth Overshoot event on JULY 31st on the New Haven Green which included the traveling Solar Butterfly display, chalking, outreach to the public, and talks by youth and the City Climate Director. See [Instagram posts here](#) and [here](#). (Also included at end of report.)

Finally, interns worked on World Oceans Day art installation and teach-in on FRiday, June 9th in front of City Hall to call attention to climate change impacts on the oceans. Instagram post [here](#). (Also included at end of report.)

Fall YCAT Interns

We started working with four high school interns in September to research and implement climate pilot projects focused on transportation pollution at Cross and Co-op High Schools. One intern worked with YCAT last school year and one had worked as a summer arts intern.

The Cross students are working to continue the transportation survey outreach and organize a transportation options education and behavior change campaign at nearby Hooker School where they both went to grade school. They will be working with teachers and students to organize events and fossil free days from January-May 2024.

At Co-op, students are working to increase knowledge of and use of CTtransit and shuttle systems and to decrease car pollution. They have developed posters and fliers

to distribute and will implement an engagement plan January-May 2024. They are also encouraging students to complete the Transportation Survey.

Two Cross interns presented on their work and survey results at the New Haven Coalition for Active Transportation's transportation networking dinner with organizations, local leaders, and community members on Wednesday, November 8th at Gateway Community College.

Grant Project Outcomes and Capacity Building Progress:

We felt the project worked well to engage high school youth in researching and developing climate solutions projects. This included working with school staff, recruiting other students, and creating educational materials. The projects successes was also brought to the Board of Education and helped encourage them to broaden climate project implementation, as the YCAT students showed the climate projects had student teacher support and could be impactful.

We were able to:

- engage dozens of volunteers in climate art making.
- reach hundreds through the Earth Overshoot Day event.
- educate 1000 students and teachers on climate change at Cross, ESUMS and Co-op High Schools.
- impact Board of Education decision making on climate investments.
- reach (and hopefully inspire!) hundreds through our street art.

We received a fair amount of support from other students and community members, but the scale of the climate change crisis is daunting. But we believe each project will plant seeds and capacity that will spark further change in climate action ongoing.

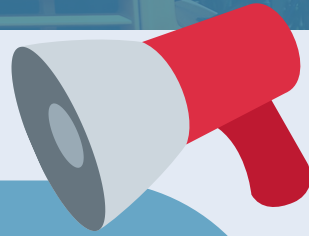
The funding helped us test out the new YCAT pilot project model and we're happy with its impact on youth leadership development and engaging school and BoE in making concrete changes through engaging students in problem solving and project creation. NHLSCOP will be continuing to use project-based learning ongoing.

Associated Pictures, Fact Sheets, News Articles, and Social Media Posts

NHPS

SCHOOL BUS

TRANSPORTATION SURVEY



**YOUR TAKING THIS
SURVEY WILL HELP
US CREATE
POSITIVE CHANGE!**

Over the past few years, our school district is increasing its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Transportation is a big part of this discussion, and it is important to hear the voices of **students and faculty!**

By taking this survey, YOU will help us make a difference!

NHPS

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Transportation

Fact



Sheet

Traditional Transportation

Gas-powered buses and private vehicles generate large quantities of greenhouse gasses. In Connecticut, 38% of all emissions come from the transportation sector. These emissions speed up climate change, negatively affect the environment, and introduce a variety of health risks. However, despite this, nearly 60% of kids in the U.S. get to school by private vehicle.



What we can do:

To decrease greenhouse gas emissions, we can use environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

- Walking and biking to and from school not only reduces our environmental footprint, but also provides a great opportunity to exercise.
- Taking the city/school bus or carpooling are also good options environmentally, and are cheaper than travelling by car!



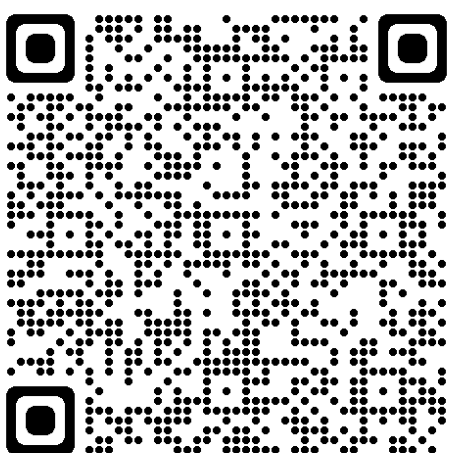
What is the Climate Emergency Resolution?

As part of a resolution that was passed by the New Haven Board of Education in September of 2022, the NHPS district aims to convert completely to electric buses by 2030 in an effort to decrease GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, and to encourage other activities to that end.



Survey

The NHPS Board of Education does not have any complete data about the transportation habits of its students or faculty. In an effort to correct this, YCAT interns that are part of the New Haven Climate Movement have created a survey to gather more information. Responses from NHPS students and families are greatly appreciated.



Student Composters Canvass Cross Cafeteria

by MAYA MCFADDEN | Jun 6, 2023 9:43 am

[\(3\) Comments](#) | [Post a Comment](#) | [E-mail the Author](#)

Posted to: [East Rock](#), [Compost](#), [Environment](#), [Food](#), [Schools](#)



MAYA MCFADDEN PHOTO

Lila Kleppner: Not going to eat that? Into the compost it goes!

When Wilbur Cross High School senior Lila Kleppner saw a classmate walking toward the cafeteria trash bin, she leapt into action — with a five-gallon bucket in hand, intent on diverting that student's food scraps from a landfill-bound pile to a community compost heap instead.

That was the scene in the cafeteria at the city's largest high school this past Friday as the Wilbur Cross Environmental Club set out to collect pounds of discarded food scraps from students' lunch trays.

Last week marked the third week since the East Rock public high school's environmental club launched its composting pilot. The small-scale pilot concluded on Monday as the district's school year comes to an end next week.



MAYA MCFADDEN PHOTO

As the environmental club students have done once for each of the past three weeks, on Friday, they worked to collect food scraps during the school day's three lunch waves.

During each lunch wave, Kleppner, who is also an intern with the New Haven Climate Movement's Youth Climate Action Team, was joined by some of her club peers as they canvassed the lunchroom with two five-gallon buckets collecting students' discarded food.



Next year the students hope to secure more collection bins. Kleppner added that due to the school's issues with rodents, the club only collects once a week to avoid having to store too much food waste that is collected by their project partner — [the pedal-powered community composting program Peels & Wheels](#) — at the end of each week.

When proposing the idea, the students met with the school's facilities team to explain the process and agreed that if the program increased the school's rodent problems, it would have to be reconsidered.

While making rounds of the school on Friday, Principal Matt Brown expressed excitement about the composting pilot and said the goal is to first establish a "small but successful" composting program for the school before expanding to something bigger.

In an email comment Brown added that the composting pilot has not caused any further issues with the schools rodent issues which is "showing people what is possible and giving clear insights and data to plan for what could be as we look to the future."

"I'll Take That For You If You're Not Going To Eat It"



One lunch waves collection of food scraps.

Friday's first lunch wave began around 10:40 a.m.

Students filed into the cafeteria. Most jumped into a food pick up-line on either side of the room.

Kleppner's work began almost immediately as several students threw out their food as soon as they left the pick-up line.

To catch as much food waste as possible, Kleppner started each lunch wave by the exit doors, waiting on those students who came right out of line and threw away their trays of food.

“I’ll take that for you if you’re not going to eat it,” Kleppner said to students just before they tossed their untouched trays in the trash bin.



Club's impromptu food share table after first lunch wave.

On Friday the environmental club’s staff facilitator and English teacher Barbara Sasso also set up an impromptu [food share table](#) for students to drop off their unopened plastic-wrapped food items like yogurt, cookies, and chips.

Sasso also collected some students’ plastic and aluminum bottles and cans to deposit as a club.



Before...



...and after Kleppner gathers food scraps for composting.

Typically pizza is served on Friday, but, on the day this reporter watched the cafeteria composting crew in action, students received hot meatball sandwiches, chips, and fruit like apples, oranges, and bananas. Cold sandwiches were also served as alternatives.

Kleppner said a large portion of the collected food scraps consist of fruits which students are required to take with their meals.

“Just because kids have to take it but don’t want it doesn’t mean it should just be wasted,” she said.

Kleppner added that the goal is to show the district that even in a large high school like Cross, “it can be done.”

Peels & Wheels collects and processes the school’s compost and will deliver the final fertilizer to the school to use in its school garden beds.



To gain momentum and support around the club's climate action work, it's hosted rock painting events to decorate the school's garden beds, hosted a found art competition, and had movie night screening of the move "Dark Waters" during the winter break to fundraise for the composting pilot.



Cross's current garden bed - ready for nutrient rich compost.

To also prepare for the pilot, the environmental club students took trips to visit Common Ground and New Haven Academy's composting programs.

From Food To Dirt



Kleppner's second shift began around 11:20 a.m for the school's second lunch wave.

She took one side of the cafeteria while another member of the club canvassed the other half of the cafeteria.

At each table Kleppner arrived at, she gave a short and efficient pitch to her peers. "Hi, we're composting any food you don't want to turn it into dirt. It's good for the environment," she said.

One student handed her a banana.

"Are you sure you don't want it? For later maybe?" Kleppner asked.

The student declined and the banana found a temporary home in Kleppner's bucket.

For each fruit Kleppner collected she checked them for stickers.

Each lunch wave filled one compostable bag in the collection buckets.

Once filled the students put the full bags into a larger brown bin collecting the day's worth of scraps.



Kleppner educates fellow student Napaul Bacote about composting along the way.

“Why are you putting meatballs in the bucket?” one student asked Kleppner as she spooned two uneaten meatballs into her bucket.

“All the food is compostable, just not the plastics and napkins,” Kleppner said.

“Can we take your banana peel to compost?” Kleppner asked a student.

The student agreed and tossed her banana peel into Kleppner’s bucket.

On the occasions Kleppner isn’t able to catch a student before they dump their food scraps into the trash can, she attempts to pick out as many scraps as possible from the top of the trash cans.



A food scrap free trash can thanks to Cross' environmental club.

After collecting scraps from another table, Kleppner was asked by student Napaul Bacote “What are you doing? Why are you doing that?”

Kleppner, who said the educational piece of the pilot is just as important as the action piece of their work, informed Bacote that the food scraps collected will be made into nutrient-rich dirt that will help grow plants at the school.

“Our garden needs nutrients for plants,” she added.

The schools garden is currently being used to grow beans and other foods that will be given to the school’s culinary department.

Time To Educate



Maskey, Sasso, and Kleppner.

During a break after the first lunch wave, Kleppner and fellow senior and member of the environmental club Sneha Maskey took the food share table items to Sasso's classroom for her students to take or eat during class.

Maskey said she's been taken aback when seeing how much food is being wasted during collection days.

"There's people out there who don't have that food," she said.

She pushed for more education for students to learn about how to put unwanted food to good use.

"While some people know, some people don't," she said.

Kleppner agreed and said most students haven't been exposed to composting and so the issue is not that they don't care, it's that they don't know.

"It makes me angry seeing the lack of action from government. They just choose profit over people," Kleppner said.

She added that she hopes pilots like Cross's and ones happening by other student groups around the district will provide the district with evidence that policy change is needed around food waste and rescue services.

Brown added that the pilot, a first of its kind for Cross, is helping with “growing awareness of waste and its contribution to other environmental challenges like climate change. The Environmental Club, under the guidance of Ms. Sasso, is measuring the compost and making estimates of how much waste could be removed from the waste stream if Cross were able to implement a large scale project.”



The environmental club also created and put up two posters on each side of the cafeteria giving students reminders to “don’t forget to compost your food waste. Look for the bins.”

The club collected about 50 pounds of food scraps per week over the last three weeks.

As Kleppner canvassed the cafeteria she talked students through the process as she scrapped their uneaten yogurts and plastic-wrapped apples into the compost bin.

“I have to take the sticker off because it’s not compostable,” she said. “Neither is the plastic, so I’m taking the apples out the package.”



As she stopped at tables she asked the students first if they were done eating or not. “We want you to eat your lunch, that’s number one,” she said.

One student with a plastic-wrapped peanut butter and jelly sandwich asked Kleppner, “How about this?”

“Yeah, sure, if you take it out the plastic,” she responded.

The student unwrapped the sandwich and tossed it into the compost bin.

In some instances students’ food was rescued by other students.

“Does anybody want this yogurt before I open it and put it in here?” Kleppner asked.

One student took the unopened snack off Kleppner’s hands and out of the trash or compost.



MAYA MCFADDEN FILE PHOTO

While Maskey did her rounds, she reminded students at the start of each lunch wave to find her with the compost bucket once they finished their lunch if they had scraps.

During the third and final lunch wave around 12 p.m. Friday, a student stopped Kleppner yet again to ask what she was doing. "Are you doing community service?" he asked.

"I'm with the environmental club and we're turning food scraps into dirt for the environment," she said.



Once all three lunch waves were over, Kleppner and Maskey took a can full of the food scrap-filled bags to the side of the building and put them in a covered plastic bin for Peels & Wheels to collect later that day.

They added six full bags to their compost heap, then the duo headed off to take final exams.



See below for other recent *Independent* articles about teaching, reading, working and studying inside New Haven Public Schools classrooms.

- [Mauro-Sheridan Lends Its Ears To The Bard](#)
- [Aero Dreams Take Flight](#)
- [Student Art Goes Once, Goes Twice, Sold!](#)
- [Pen + Plastic + 3D Learning = Avocado](#)
- [Uneaten School Snacks? There's A Cart For That](#)
- [Student Engineers Put Pressure To Practice](#)
- [Cross Culinary Champs Bring Home The Gold](#)
- [Barnard's Classroom Garden Springs to Life](#)
- [Ready For College, Hillhouse Senior Persevered](#)
- [New School Murals Honor LGBTQ+ Icons](#)
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- [Student Voices Heard In Citywide Council Vote](#)
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COMPOSTING

YCAT at Wilbur Cross



The project is not only about starting composting. It is about educating students on the needs and benefits of composting.

Peels and Wheels is a local business run by Domingo Medina. They will be processing the compost on their facility. Cross will be able to use the compost for their gardens. Domingo came in multiple times to talk to the Environmental Club about the process of composting and has been a huge support.



The leaders of the Environmental Club visited Common Ground High School, who has been composting for many years, to learn more about how to successfully compost on a school scale.

YCAT Intern

Lila Kleppner is a senior at Wilbur Cross and joined NHCM in fall 2022. At Cornell, she plans to study political science and environmental studies.



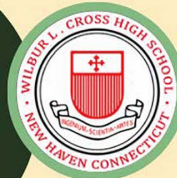
WC Environmental Club

The Wilbur Cross Environmental Club recently had a movie night fundraiser to raise money for composting. They will help organize the compost and educate the students.



We hope to expand the composting to include all of Cross' food waste. Mr. Medina talked to us about doing a waste audit, which we hope to conduct in the future.

We hope we can eventually process the compost on campus, but for this semester, we plan to focus on the educational side.





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Wooster Square



newhavenclimatemovement Thank you to the NHCM members and community members who joined us in art making at the Wooster Square Farmers Market yesterday! We loved getting help from little ones, too 🙌
 ❤️ #newhaven #nhv #art #climateart #lorax #connecticut #climateactivism

28w



therockraj12345 Promote it on



38 likes

July 23, 2023

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New Haven, Connecticut



newhavenclimatemovement We had a wonderful time putting finishing touches on and installing the first batch of our Lorax trees this afternoon in downtown New Haven! Locations so far include:

- 🌱 Broadway Triangle
- 🌱 In front of Yorkside Pizza
- 🌱 In front of BP on Whalley Ave

Tag us if you see a set around New Haven! #newhaven #nhv #art #youthactivism #climatechange #lorax

Edited · 28w



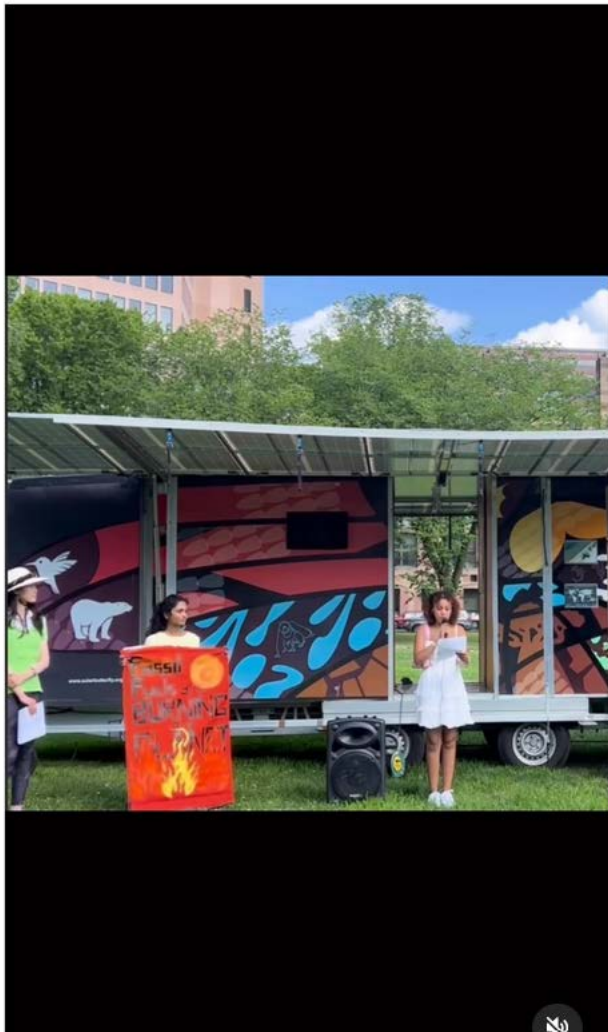
siilverlining Just saw these around east rock! So happy to have found y'all through this action ❤️

27w 1 like Reply



71 likes

July 26, 2023



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Original audio



newhavenclimatemovement Toni, a senior at Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, gave a very enlightening speech on what Earth Overshoot Day is at our Earth Overshoot Day event with @solarbutterflytour.

Toni informs us that Earth Overshoot Day is the yearly calculated limit of the planet. She states that this marks the day that all of humanity's demand for natural resources and services exceeds what the Earth can regenerate in one year.

#earthovershootday #solarbutterfly #newhavenclimatemovement #newhavenct #climatechange #climateemergencv #climateaction



51 likes

August 14, 2023



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New Haven Green



newhavenclimatemovement Pictures from our Earth Overshoot Day event! Thank you to the Solar Butterfly crew for coming out, to our guest speakers, and for everyone else who came! It was such an inspiring event and we can't wait for more events like this in the future!

#climatechange #earthovershoot #solarbutterfly #newhaven #connecticut #climateaction



48 likes

August 4, 2023



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New Haven City Hall

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newhavenclimatemovement Thank you to everyone who came out to our World Oceans Day action last Friday! It was wonderful to have attendees of all ages join us in learning about the connections between oceans and the climate, do chalking, and fill out cards. At the end, we entered City Hall to deliver a cardboard fish cutout of ocean facts to Mayor Elicker and cards expressing our concern for the ocean to the Alders to push for climate



39 likes

June 14, 2023

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