

PE9 Climate-relate Public Events: Youth Initiatives

Rhinebeck High School's Climate Strike and Engagement with Village Government

On September 20, 2019, at 2pm, students at Rhinebeck Public High School walked out in protest, as part of a global call for action against climate change. Scout Pronto Breslin, a member of our CSC Task Force, organized the walk-out, along with other members of her high school's Environmental Club. Mayor Bassett spoke at the event, which was at the municipally-owned Lions Mini Park in Rhinebeck Village. There was then a march throughout the village.



Photo courtesy of SunCommon

“I was amazed at how many people showed up, both adults and students. A few of us gave speeches, and I found that everyone was really listening to us. So many people expressed their support, and we were all happy to see the Mayor, who spoke about the importance of youth in the climate movement. After, when we marched through the village, people showed their support; cars honked their horns and people cheered from restaurants. I felt like we really had a voice, and I hope the kids who attended the strike felt that too.”—Scout Pronto

“It was an honor to give them support and encouragement to do more. Several months ago, I met with the school’s Environmental Clubs and in my parting message to them I encouraged them to not underestimate the power they have for change. It was really great to see them in action.” —Mayor Bassett



Photo courtesy of SunCommon



Photo courtesy of SunCommon



Photo courtesy of SunCommon

Village Mayor and Board Meetings

The meeting referenced above between the school district's Environmental Clubs and the Village/Town Environmental Committee and Mayor Bassett took place on **February 7, 2019** and was an opportunity for the two groups to share information on what they are doing on climate change, their concerns, and explore how students could support the village's environmental aspirations. Mayor Bassett invited students to present to the Village Board at the October meeting on their climate work and encouraged their continued civic engagement. A student presented on her participation in the UN Youth Climate Summit and the climate work of students in the village and town of Rhinebeck. A second student spoke on a plastics challenge she ran within the community.

Video of their presentations can be found on PANDA at minute 14:50:

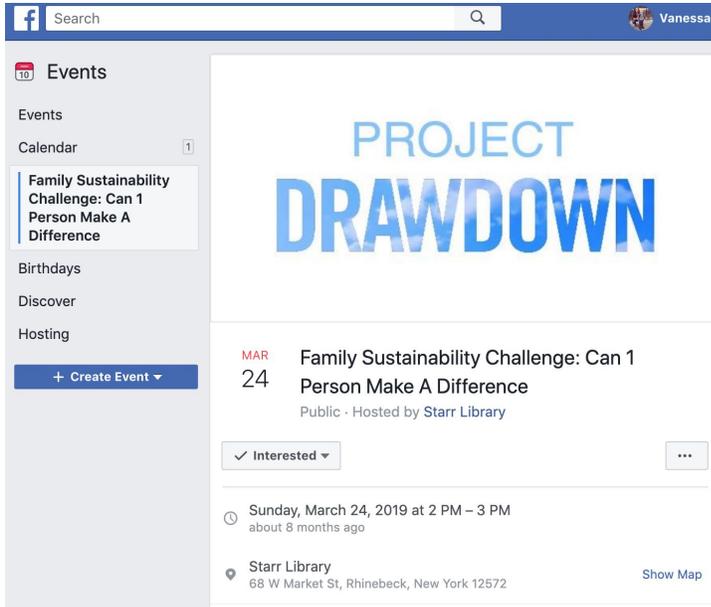
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcHMP9dIQ7U>



Drawdown Eco-Challenge

In April 2019 the Rhinebeck Village participated in the Drawdown Eco-Challenge, coming in second place globally. The Challenge was sponsored by the Rhinebeck Central School District Environmental Clubs and involved 389 members who took action on climate solutions and saved up to 7,000 pounds of carbon emissions, planted 117 trees, spent 13,000 minutes learning, contacted 71 public officials, did not travel 1473 miles by car and many more! (see the team's dashboard here:

<https://drawdown2019.ecochallenge.org/teams/ecochallenge-rhinebeck>)



Members of the village government, including Mayor Bassett, were active participants. (See Gary's dashboard: <https://drawdown2019.ecochallenge.org/participants/bassett-gary>) Members of the Climate Smart Community Task Force also organized public education events at Starr Library with the CSC Task Force's partner, Nan Jackson, Program Director at Starr. (Starr events complete list here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lifs0FIOzUrHZhEHbqn-lwtq44INtRAh/view>) One of the events was organized by CSC Task Force member Scout Pronto and featured a talk about local avian biodiversity in the era of climate change and a live wildlife demonstration (pictured below).





Vision: To have RCSD staff, students, their families and friends identify, communicate, and practice concrete actions that reverse climate change.

A set of online resources (found here <https://sites.google.com/rhinebeckcsd.org/rhinebeck-ecochallenge2/home>) was organized for the community in advance of the challenge and will be included on the CSC website, along with additional resources shared throughout the duration of the challenge. Many businesses within the village supported the Eco-Challenge by participating as team members and by publicizing it in their establishments.



The April 30th Bike to School Day was started to support reducing our carbon footprint. Village resident, Liz Mazarella, organized and members of the community came out to help direct traffic. Local garden shop, The Phantom Gardener, gave away seed packets to all participants and a No Waste breakfast was provided.



Drawdown Learn



Members of the Climate Smart Community Task Force attended the Drawdown Learn event 18-20 October, 2019, along with other members of the Rhinebeck community and students and teachers from the school district.



Isabel Pronto Breslin

Isabel "Scout" Pronto Breslin, a high school student in Rhinebeck NY, co-created Hudson Valley Wild, a youth organization focused on promoting biodiversity, conservation, and nature-based solutions for the climate crisis. Under this, she is developing biodiversity tracks for several regional climate summits and was selected by the United Nations to attend the recent UN Youth Climate Summit as a youth delegate.

Breslin is the vice president of her school's environmental club, co-organized its climate strike, and was an active participant in the Rhinebeck Drawdown Eco-Challenge team, which took second place nationally. She is a founding member of the newly launched Student Climate Coalition for NY state and her town's Climate Smart Community Task Force. She is also a 2019 global Coalition Wild Ambassador.

Rhinebeck Village and CSC Task Force members also organized and participated in sessions. Scout Pronto and Chantal Collins were on the panel about the Drawdown Eco-Challenge. Scout also represented and spoke about youth leadership and civic action (see Scout's bio above, as a presenter on the Omega website), biodiversity and nature based solutions for climate.





In addition to Scout and Chantal, CSC Task Force members Mayor Gary Bassett, Matt Stinchcomb, Jennifer Breslin and Nan Jackson attended. Learnings are feeding into CSC Task Force's strategies and future actions.

<https://www.eomega.org/online-workshops/2019-drawdown-learn-conference-on-demand>

