

PURSUING SUSTAINABILITY



When looking at the environment, there are two main and distinctly different issues: pollution and climate change. We look at them both here, examining their overlaps, complexities and room for citizen involvement. Climate change is an issue where the responsibility for solutions lies mainly on the government, as expressed in our staff editorial, while pollution is an issue that all citizens can have a hand in alleviating. We shine a spotlight on businesses and groups in the QC working to fight pollution, along with some of the issues facing that fight. We hope that you'll join us in *pursuing sustainability!*

WHERE DOES THE BLAME LIE?

THE NEED FOR FEDERAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A Staff Editorial By Jayne Abraham

As it has become increasingly apparent that climate change is an urgent and pressing issue, a majority of Americans believe that the government must do more to combat climate change. However, the responsibility of stopping climate change continues to be projected onto individual Americans, rather than where it should truly lie: on the government.

While there is still a fair share of climate change deniers, a vast majority of Americans have supported specific climate change policies. As of last June, the Pew Research Center determined that 90% of US adults supported planting about a trillion trees around the world to absorb carbon emissions, 71% supported tougher fuel-efficiency standards for vehicles and 73% supported taxing corporations based on the amount of carbon emissions they produced. All of these policies have bipartisan support.

It is likely that since June, support for these policies has only increased, especially after Texas' weather crisis in February of this year demonstrated the damaging effects of climate change. Little action has been taken by the federal government on climate change in ways that are satisfactory to the American people. Few of the aforementioned policies have been implemented in meaningful ways. This lack of

action on the federal level leaves Americans to bear the weight of climate change themselves, and this has detrimental effects.

On the individual level, it is often difficult and expensive to pursue climate change "solutions." One way Americans have attempted to be more sustainable is through their diets. Researchers at the University of Oxford found that cutting meat and dairy products can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by 73%, but vegan and vegetarian alternatives are often expensive, and many communities do not have access to such luxuries at local grocery stores.

Consumers also feel pressure to be environmentally responsible shoppers. Producing clothing in a sustainable way, for example, is good for the environment, but more expensive for companies. Sustainable clothing companies often have high prices, making them inaccessible to people of lower socioeconomic statuses. Reformation, for example, sells jeans for prices ranging between \$100-\$200. Paying this much for a pair of jeans is unrealistic for most Americans, so they often go for the cheaper, less sustainable options available to them.

The false narrative of climate change being the responsibility of the individual is not a new concept. Elliott Hyman of the Harvard Political Review elaborated on this idea in an article by saying, "...only 100 investor and state-owned fossil fuel companies are responsible for around 70% of the world's historical GHG emissions. This contradicts the narrative pushed by fossil fuel interests that individuals' actions alone can combat climate change, as individual actions have minute effects relative to these emissions..." Essentially, as citizens bear the weight of climate change, such fossil fuel companies are allowed to continue to make significant contributions to environmental issues. On social media, it appears to be a trend to emphasize "doing your part." Through

posts on several social media platforms, individuals are overwhelmed with the all-consuming burden of climate change. One organization known as the Climate Clock displayed a clock in Times Square that counts down the time left until the effects of climate change are irreversible. A photo of this clock went viral on Instagram months ago, with many users reposting the image onto their Instagram stories. While using such methods to gather public concern for environmental issues is important, there is only so much that can be done on the individual level. Such posts can have harmful effects, as they can lead to discouragement and hopelessness among individuals. People may begin to feel guilty for not doing everything in their power to stop climate change, but how can one truly do their part if those in positions of power do not?

The reality is that in many facets of life, individuals are contributing to climate change—and there is little they can do to stop it. Living environmentally-friendly is often inaccessible and that is why government action is so important. (Many are re-routing their efforts towards fighting pollution, an issue where humans can have a large impact). Citizens have expressed support for legislation working to fight climate change, but instead, the burden has been deflected onto them.

As individuals—as Americans—it must be a priority to stop the devastating effects of climate change for generations to come. This requires embracing collective action and demanding more from the government. If environmentally friendly options are available, by all means take advantage of them.

But it is a privilege to be able to live that way.

Instead of placing the blame on others for not engaging in a certain lifestyle, the blame must be placed on the government—the true perpetrator.



PITCHING THE POLLUTANTS

QC BUSINESSES IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES



By Allisa Pandit

As the issue of pollution within our country grows, many QC businesses are implementing sustainability practices to minimize their waste.

Senior Ella Litchfield is a barista at Dunn Brothers Coffee. Litchfield highlighted one of Dunn Brothers' key steps in becoming more environmentally friendly: sip lids. Shaped like a sippy cup lid, these new lids ditch plastic straws in order to reduce plastic waste. "I'm really glad that Dunn Broth-

ers has followed the trend of sip lids since it has become popular," said Litchfield.

Sip lids have become a mainstream trend in the past few years. In 2018, environmentalists began a movement: Save the Turtles. The campaign was successful in bringing attention to the billions of plastic straws that pollute the oceans every year. Big corporations such as Starbucks, Disney and Royal Caribbean announced their steps towards avoiding plastic straws, reported finance news company Money. Litchfield commented, "It's great that businesses have adopted trends like these to normalize environmentally friendly practices."

Manager of Peachwave Frozen Yogurt Kathy Necker stressed that enforcing minor rules can help achieve a sense of environmental awareness: "Here at Peachwave we recycle our cardboard, milk bottles, and other materials on a regular basis. Along with that, I have become very strict on the importance of water conservation. I constantly remind my employees to shut off the water in order to avoid waste and keep the temperature moderate in the store," she said.

Similarly, Your Pie has changed various operations in order to be more sustainable. Assistant Manager Tiana Logan shared major changes at the popular pizza place: "The most important step in keeping a business sustainable is recycling. At Your Pie, we regularly recycle all of our cardboard boxes and paper products. We also require our employees to use metal cups when they work in order to reduce dispos-

able cup waste," she shared. "Along with metal cups for the employees, we serve our food on metal plates for our customers."

Logan added, "We have found that these practices significantly reduce our waste." Small measures and changes in everyday activities can significantly reduce waste and overall pollution in the world. Not only have local QC businesses taken measures towards sustainability, but big corporations have also made strides to being more environmentally friendly.

Amazon, the leading company with the largest selection on Earth, has pledged to be green: "The new shipping option is part of Amazon's Shipment Zero initiative. This program is pledging to reach 80% renewable energy by 2024 and 100% renewable energy by 2030, on its path to net zero carbon by 2040," shared Forbes business magazine. As businesses continue to change their products and procedures to help the environment, individuals at home can also help the cause. Junior Tanisha Nanisetty shared her favorite sustainability tips: "I realized that there were many minor changes I could make in life in order to be more environmentally friendly," she included. "For example, I invested in reusable straws, a bamboo toothbrush, and try to minimize the amount of plastic bags I use at the grocery store."

Nanisetty, along with many others around the world, are working towards a cleaner earth. Similarly, businesses are working to better the environment by adding sustainable products, reducing plastic waste and improving daily tasks.

(MANY) STRINGS ATTACHED

THE IMPACT OF DISCARDED MASKS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

By Raksha Kumar

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all life on Earth in many detrimental ways. In response to this pandemic, citizens have been wearing masks, but few know the harm masks have caused the environment.

Wearing a mask is a necessity to protect oneself and others, but leaving them on the ground carelessly has cost many animals' lives. One of the main species affected is birds; the string that goes behind the ears have been getting caught in birds' legs. The News-Journal stated, "PPE can be mistaken as food by birds, fish, marine mammals and other animals. The gloves, masks and sanitizing wipes break down into microplastics that attract pesticides and other harmful chemicals. When the wildlife eats the litter, they don't just get the plastic, they get the chemicals as well." Wearing surgical masks is necessary, but many believe they need to be disposed of in a more responsible manner.

The environment has already been suffering greatly due to several factors, like pollution and the use of plastic. Since the pandemic requires masks for protection, it has been making environmental problems even worse. According to PETA, "Already, mask litter has polluted parks, sidewalks, and our city streets. Reports have been shared of wildlife tangled in the elastic straps common to most plastic, disposable masks. Dolphins, turtles and other marine animals can easily choke or suffer from fatal bowel

obstructions when they mistake personal protective equipment for food." It is important for citizens to try to do the best they can to decrease the impact they have on the environment. Environmental problems have worsened due to the usage of masks. According to United Nation News, 75% of used masks will end up in landfills or seas. One of the long term effects from this outburst of masks in the ocean will be an increase in pollution.

Junior Kavya Kalathur said, "I understand that masks are required, and it is stressful enough to have to wear them everywhere. However, because of human carelessness, our environment is suffering. I think it is very sad, and more people need to be edu-

cated on this issue for a change to happen." There are many safe alternative solutions that people can use to help solve this problem. Reusable cloth masks have been said to be the safer option and better for the environment. This way, people will not dispose of these masks improperly and can wash and reuse them. Another solution is to cut the ear straps after using a surgical mask, so that animals do not get tangled up in them.

The environment has been suffering enough due to plastic pollution. This change in environmental problems will cause severe damage to global issues in the future; however, if citizens start to change their ways of recycling, the issue may be able to settle down.



ENVIRONMENTALLY EDUCATED

PV CLUB TACKLES ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

By Aayusha Adhikari

Pleasant Valley's environmental club is a place designed for students to educate and initiate projects about issues surrounding the environment.

During these unprecedented times, co-presidents Allison Suen and Thomas Solomon

have made it their top priority to keep everyone informed. At meetings, the students discuss current events involving the environment, such as the climate crises around the US and the environmental policies of the Biden administration. The students understand the importance of reducing the

carbon footprint as a society, and they honor people such as Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors, who has incentivized carbon emission reduction.

In past years, they have held fundraisers where they have sold t-shirts and water bottles to raise money for families in Haiti. Water filters were to be bought and installed in homes with the money raised, but this year has given them less flexibility to plan successful fundraisers. Instead, they have continued volunteering at the QC Botanical Center where they hang up Christmas lights and clean up.

Nonetheless, even sitting down together and dis-

cussing current issues has been impactful. The discussion of current events has caused a wider range of students to attend, who bring in different perspectives and want to learn what they can contribute to the solution.

Suen said that the focus this year has been on working around the members' schedules while having occasional, engaging meetings. Suen stated, "Since students have only been attending the meetings if they have time, it allows for more voices to be heard and more lively conversations." Senior Quique Riojas Berazaluze shared his thoughts about the club, and he added a few ideas he thought the future leaders of the club could take on: "We all know that the Environmental Club is extremely important because it is now or never that we take action to aid our planet that continues deteriorating. The club is already thriving, but it would be interesting to see the students try to take another route by reading books because we sometimes underestimate the power of the knowledge books provide." One example is the novel "No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference" by Greta Thunberg, which is a collection of all of her speeches commenting on global warming and the climate crisis.

Looking at the next year, Lynne Lundberg, the club's advisor, hopes to find new leaders who are aware of the difficulties of being an environmentalist and want to find new solutions that the students can adapt to.

Lundberg commented, "Overall, this club focuses on student empowerment. The projects they take on and the issues they discuss revolve around student interest, and it is always exciting to see students engaged in finding solutions and educating themselves on crucial issues."



PRETTY, POLLUTED

SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

By Addi Steele

In the fashion world of 2021, different trends have taken hold – some respecting the environment and others harming it. With the increase in popularity of fast fashion, the effects the fashion industry has had on the environment have been largely negative.

Through fast fashion sites like SHEIN, ROMWE, Zara and Fashion Nova, many fashion lovers purchase cheap, yet fashionable clothing. Though the cost may be low for consumers, it is not for the environment.

The reason this genre of fashion is described as “fast” is because of the process it goes through. Earth.org, a non-profit and non-partisan organization dedicated to averting the global issue of climate change, described it as a “streamlined system involving rapid design, production, distribution and marketing.” Because of the system fast fashion accessories go through, these companies must cut corners to make this whole process possible in a timely manner.

Since fast fashion’s main goal is to produce and distribute their accessories fast and at a low price, they often use inexpensive, synthetic fabrics like polyester, acrylic and nylon – all of which are hardly biodegradable and take hundreds of years to decompose. The synthetic fibers these companies use also have microplastics within them that come out into the water during the laundering process. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, 35% of microplastics in the ocean come from the laundering of synthetic textiles. Having more and more fast fashion products means laundering these products and contributing to the increasing pollution of the ocean.

According to “The True Cost,” a film directed by Andrew Morgan, dedicated to exposing the truths behind the fashion industry, the clothes society wears and the places they come from, “The average American

now generates 82 pounds of textile waste each year.” This generates another problem dealing with pollution. With fast fashion products being cheaply made, they are not made to last which causes many to eventually throw them away. Therefore, not only are these products polluting the ocean, but they are also filling landfills everywhere.

Many believe, however, that the price of sustainably produced clothing is unaffordable compared to the low prices of fast fashion. But there is a rising sustainable solution that could help fill this gap: thrifting.

Fast fashion is not the only fashion trend in 2021. With older fashion trends from past decades making comebacks, thrifting has gained popularity as a way to purchase these desired items. Today thrifting accounts have taken Instagram by storm, selling their thrifts for personal profit. Different from fast fashion, this trend is very healthy for the environment.

Locally, many PV students have their own thrifting accounts on Instagram, one of them being @gangzcloset with 771 followers, run by seniors Reagan Stein and Azzy Brown. Stein is a believer in the benefits of thrifting on the environment and individually. “I think thrifting is a great hobby that ultimately helps the environment,” she said. “I think people should get into thrifting more, but people should also stop shopping online at fast fashion places like the popular store, SHEIN.”

“If people don’t want to go out of their way to thrift, these days, there are multiple apps you can download to get things second hand thrifted from sellers,” Stein continued. “By using these newer apps, you

help the seller by supporting them and you reduce the overall waste from fast fashion.”

The more thrifting society partakes in, the less demand there will be for clothing from fast fashion companies. Reducing the popularity of fast fashion sites will benefit the environment by decreasing the amount of clothes produced. This will use less amounts of water and energy in the production process. Buying second hand clothing is also a great way to keep those clothes out of landfills.

Not only great for the environment, thrifting is also perfect for originality because it is a way to obtain items that may not be widely available anymore but can still fit any individual style. Senior Courtney Mohr enjoys thrifting and appreciates the way it helps the environment. “I like to thrift clothes to find unique pieces of clothing, and it is something fun to go do and see what you can find at a low cost,” she explained. “It is also a good way to be stylish on a budget and can shrink your [carbon] footprint a little bit.”

In 2021 and beyond, the fate of the environment is in society’s hands. Society creates the demand for what can be beneficial or harmful to the environment, whether that is thrifting or fast fashion. Only time will tell if society’s decisions for the fashion industry were enough.



THE NEXT STEPS

LOOKING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Alyce Brown

Although the nation and world are facing many environmental issues, new innovations and legislation are creating what many believe is a promising path forwards.

One step on that path is cities' sustainability initiatives. Cities across the country have begun rolling out plans to develop more sustainable living for their inhabitants through climate and energy based steps.

Just a couple hours from the Quad Cities, Chicago is one such city. They implemented the Chicago Climate Action Plan, a plan that aims to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions by 80% of its 1990 levels by 2050. This plan is being implemented through an update of the city's energy code, a promotion of renewable power, an improvement of public transportation and a reduction of industrial pollutants, among many other steps.

"The Chicago Climate Action Plan is a comprehensive sustainability plan that can

inspire public participation, allow city departments to see how their existing 'green' activities fit into a broader agenda, and provide a road map for what businesses and individuals can do," said Julia Parzen, a former environmental advisor to the City of Chicago, in her report on the Climate Action Plan.

Aside from individual cities, many governors have joined forces to continue the fight for sustainability. The U.S. Climate Alliance is a bipartisan alliance of 25 governors that was created after former President Trump withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement (which has since been rejoined).

Each of the 25 member states has pledged to, according to their website, "reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025," "track and report progress to the global community," and "accelerate new and existing policies to reduce carbon pollution and promote clean energy deployment at the state and federal level."

Many scientists and innovators have also begun working on smaller-scale initiatives to help make their own dent in the nation's sustainability issues. One such invention is the Loop, an invention launched in 2019 by the recycling company TerraCycle. Loop partners with name brands such as Clorox, Pantene, Dove and Febreze, among others, to offer their products in eco-friendly and reusable containers. When consumers are finished with their product, they send the reusable container back to Loop, who cleans and refills it to start the cycle again. The company has expanded to include many brands and to be sold in Walgreens and Krogers across the country, an achievement that shows Americans are dedicated to helping lead sustainable lives.

Despite the difficulty that society has previously shown in finding ways to operate sustainably, scientists and leaders are forging what many believe will be a very successful path for the future.



CURBING WASTE PRODUCTION AND LIVING SUSTAINABLY

THE AVERAGE PERSON PRODUCES ABOUT 5.91 POUNDS OF WASTE IN A DAY, 41.37 POUNDS IN A WEEK, AND 2157.15 POUNDS IN A YEAR

THE BREAKDOWN

- 1 ATOMIC CUP
- 1 PLASTIC BOTTLE OF WATER
- 8 OTHER VARIATIONS OF WRAPPERS
- 4 PIECES OF PAPER
- 2 GUM WRAPPERS
- 1 TRIP TO AND FROM SCHOOL
- 1 DISPOSABLE MASK

OF THE AVERAGE
PV STUDENT



WASTE REALITY

1500 PLASTIC BOTTLES/CUPS END UP IN LANDFILLS OR THE OCEAN EVERY SECOND

EACH YEAR, SCHOOLS THROW AWAY ABOUT 530,000 TONS OF FOOD. FOR WASTE COMPANIES, THIS COSTS ALMOST \$9.7 MILLION A DAY TO MANAGE.

THE EFFECT ON NATURE

A LARGE AMOUNT OF HUMAN ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE IN SCHOOLS, AND A LARGE AMOUNT OF WHAT IS PRODUCED IN SCHOOLS IS PUSHED BACK INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.



SO, HOW DO WE HELP?

REUSABLE CUPS
REUSABLE MASKS
THRIFTING
COMPOSTING FOOD

INFORMATION SOURCE

World Wildlife Fund
www.theworldcounts.org



WHAT IS COMPOSTING?

AN AEROBIC (NEEDING AIR) WAY OF DECOMPOSING/BREAKING DOWN ORGANIC SOLID WASTES AND OTHER BIODEGRADABLE MATERIALS INTO A SUBSTANCE THAT CAN BE USED AS FERTILIZER