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In the wake of drastic climate change bringing fires to our doorsteps, floods and hurricanes to the East Coast, and pollution and waste becoming more and more unavoidable globally, environmentalism has grown from a mere afterthought to one of the most critical challenges the world faces. As a result, many groups have sprung up, promoting local action and community solutions. Among these is Oaks Christian School's Environmental Club, ran by President Fiona Wagner.

Wagner had her first major awakening in environmental justice when sailing. One day, her sailing practice was cancelled due to runoff city pollution draining into the ocean after rainfall. "Coach cancelled practice because if we were to fall in the oil laced water, there would be concerns for our health... I thought that if we were not allowed to go into the ocean, what was this doing to our marine life?"

Founded last year, Oaks's Environmental Club became a wild success on campus, demonstrating the passion and interest several students have in standing against environmental degradation. This year, the club under Wagner's leadership takes an even more prominent role in the school even with the campus's closure, beginning already with four major ongoing projects.

First, the club has partnered with Oak Park's Environmental Club in an effort for students to raise money by recycling--bottles, cans, etc.--and donating the proceeds to CA fire departments. Wagner explains that this "helps the fires and firefighters, and also students and families to show how much waste they use... and how bad it is for the environment." In all, the program is a win-win, helping the firefighters that protect us from the recent outburst of fires and helping the community visualize their waste so they can reduce it.

Second, the Environmental Club has partnered with Oaks student Eden Tan's non-profit organization Ash to Eden and Oaks teacher Mr. Trimble to kickstart the Clay for Life Project, where students can create clay pots for plants, with proceeds going to charitable efforts. Wagner says the project "helps students foster a love for the natural world while also helping out a cause."

Third, the club provides students opportunities such as beach cleanups.

Last, the organization is looking into a plan to create a garden on campus to increase green appreciation in the whole student body because of the distressing environment the garden can promote.

As apparent through its ongoing efforts, the club engages students by not only raising awareness of environmental issues, but also fostering the community's love and appreciation for nature. This second method provides the groundwork for more students to care and be involved more deeply in serving the environment. Club leadership also

sees the value of local and community-based action. Wagner argues that when local projects manifest in their local communities, "students can actually see tangible and vigorous change," so they find greater value and encouragement in their efforts.

This leads us to wonder what we can individually do to foster change and create a positive environmental impact. Wagner has lots of advice regarding this. There's plenty of choices we have to become better allies of nature. We can educate ourselves with books, articles, and documentaries relating to climate justice and talk about these issues with others. We can reduce, reuse, and recycle: we can cut down on our plastic and non-biodegradable consumption; buy second-hand books, clothing, and other goods; and donate usable goods instead of throwing them out. We can cut down on water, lights, and energy usage in our households. And the list goes on.

As Wagner best sums up, "we need to act now to save the future of our planet." In our communities and as individuals we have the power to make change and help Mother Nature; let's roll up our sleeves and do it."