

Dear PGC Leaders,

Words cannot describe how grateful I am for the inspiration and the educational opportunities this challenge has generously given me over the last 30 days. Each day, I was learning something new about climate change, the world, and even myself.

While I enjoyed doing all the challenges, there were five submissions that reflected my PGC experience the most. On Day 3, participants were asked to carry a trash bag around the school proudly. I was hesitant, thinking about how embarrassing I would look. That moment, however, was also when I reflected back at why I began this challenge in the first place: to do something I care about. It meant a lot to me when I challenged myself to try something new and to also hear my friends comment about the SWAG trash bag. The Zero Waste Greener Challenge was definitely a representation of how I have been able to go beyond the limits I had set for myself.

Day 6 was when I learned to look beyond a product's brand label. Before, I never paid attention to the ingredients in personal care products, but the challenge taught me to find harmful chemicals can be everywhere around us. In the Climate Justice challenge, I saw my fear of holding a sign on my street as an opportunity to become stronger and be proud of a cause I believe in. I wanted the people around me to know that climate change is a serious issue and that it affects people all around the world. Day 19 was when I noticed how important one's body and soul is. I often forget to slow down and take care of myself, and mindful eating truly gave me time to heal from the fast pace of life.

The last challenge I felt the most proud of was the Climate Action Project. Being able to make tangible changes is something I have always been passionate about and to see myself take action to make an idea a reality means a lot to me. The Climate Action Project marks the beginning of a new, exciting journey for me.

These challenges have demonstrated the growth I have experienced in the last month. PGC, a truly powerful experience, has opened up opportunities for me to overcome my reluctance to step out of the comfort zone, to speak up about issues I care about, and to be more grateful for what I have.

Sincerely,
Ashley Liu



PGC DAY 19 WELLNESS

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MINDFUL EATING

BEFORE

Mindful eating has always been an important aspect of my life. I usually try to practice mindful eating every morning when I eat breakfast by removing any electronic distractions and simply focusing on the act of eating, but I sometimes end up looking at my phone or eating quickly. I was excited to try eating an apple mindfully because I wanted to test myself whether something as simple as an apple can change my eating experience.



MINDFUL EATING

AFTER

An apple which usually takes me 1 minute to finish ended up taking me 5 minutes to eat.

Nonetheless, those 5 minutes were undoubtedly valuable. During the 5 minutes, I thought about how the apple was once in a farmer's hand and is now in my hands. The slow eating made me more appreciative of the flavor, texture, and fragrance of apple. I also felt more rejuvenated and nourished knowing that I was sensing each bite with awareness and appreciation.

MINDFUL EATING

what an apple taught me

gratitude

Savoring each bite made me reflect on the hard work each farmer puts into growing this delicious food for people like me to enjoy.

nature

I became aware of how something that Mother Nature has created is providing me with the nourishment and energy I need.



experience

Eating slowly made me more present in the moment. No Internet. No phones. Just the apple and me :)

senses

I could feel the crunchy texture, taste the sweet and complex flavors, and smell the natural fragrance of the apple.

MINDFUL BREATHING

BEFORE



In real honesty, at first I felt reluctant to try mindful breathing because I imagined the 5 minutes of silence to be boring and irritating. I had the notion that doing nothing but breathing for 5 minutes would be unproductive.

MINDFUL BREATHING

AFTER

Wow! The 5 minutes felt different from what I expected! After sitting down and breathing for 5 minutes in my bedroom with my lights and phone notifications turned off, I felt a renewed sense of peace and energy. The act of being conscious of my own rhythmic breathing was very therapeutic. During the 5 minutes, there were a couple times when my mind wandered off, but I was able to pull myself back into focus. The best part of this mindful practice was being able to let go of any anxieties or stress I had.



MINDFUL BREATHING

what 5 minutes of calm taught me



patience

Staying calm for 5 minutes seemed boring at first, but afterwards, it made me feel refreshed.

self

I paid more attention to the rhythm of my breathing and the movements of my body.

awareness

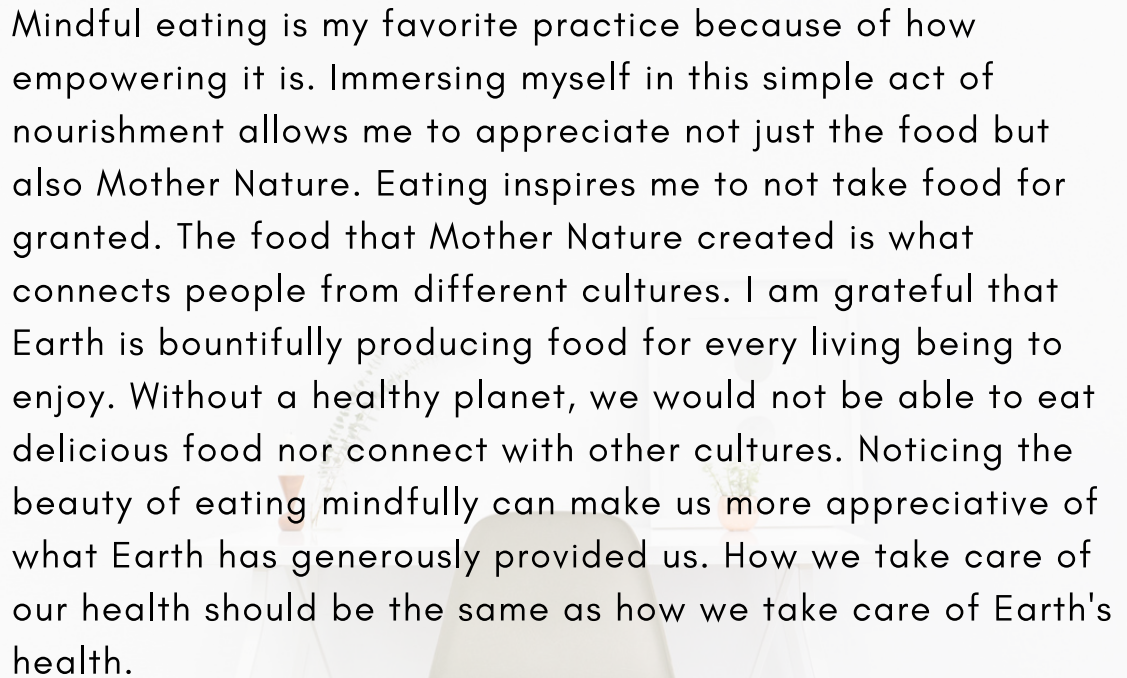
I learned to let go of the worries, thoughts, and stress I had during those 5 minutes of silence.

peace

With the fast pace of life, it is easy to forget the value in slowing down and taking a moment to acknowledge your existence and your soul.

The internal barrier I initially had was the reluctance to try mindful breathing. In my mind, I thought the 5 minutes would merely be a waste of time. One way I eliminated this barrier was learning to learn. After reading the articles and watching the TED Talk that PGC recommended, I wanted to try and see if this simple act really has the benefits those resources are claiming. Instead of making assumptions about something without even trying it, take action and don't be afraid of trying something new.

An external barrier was the amount of noise in my surroundings. Since my house is located near the highway, I could hear cars passing by loudly. I initially assumed that a mindful breathing session needs to be utterly quiet, but after closing the windows and turning off the lights, I realized that I really didn't need a room with utter quietness. I followed the advice in the Pinterest chart "How Mindfulness Can Change Your Life" by focusing solely on my breathing.



Mindful eating is my favorite practice because of how empowering it is. Immersing myself in this simple act of nourishment allows me to appreciate not just the food but also Mother Nature. Eating inspires me to not take food for granted. The food that Mother Nature created is what connects people from different cultures. I am grateful that Earth is bountifully producing food for every living being to enjoy. Without a healthy planet, we would not be able to eat delicious food nor connect with other cultures. Noticing the beauty of eating mindfully can make us more appreciative of what Earth has generously provided us. How we take care of our health should be the same as how we take care of Earth's health.

MINDFUL BREATHING

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With the fast pace of life, it is easy to forget the value in slowing down and taking a moment to acknowledge your existence and your soul.



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When life gets busy, it's easy to forget the beauty of slowing down and appreciating the moment. Practicing mindfulness, the art of living in the present, is a great way to take a step back and take care of your body, your health, and your soul.

[@turninggreenorg](#) [@natracare](#)
[#pgc2019](#)

1h



1 like

1 HOUR AGO

Add a comment...

Post



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Climate change is more than an environmental issue. Climate change impacts several aspects, including human health, agriculture and food security, water supply, energy, ecosystems, and others. After reading a Green America article on climate justice, I learned that native communities are often targeted by companies with climate-changing infrastructure. People living near coal power plants are dying from respiratory illnesses due to the chemical-polluting industries. We all live on this one planet called Earth where there should be climate justice for all.

@turninggreenorg #pgc2019

7m



1 like

7 MINUTES AGO

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Climate change is an issue I am passionate about. To see that Earth is progressively worsening in so many ways is doing injustice to Earth, the one and only planet that provided humanity with all the resources we need to prosper. The sign I drew was meant to say “There is only one planet.” I wanted to capture the idea that Earth is really a place where humans should not be exploiting. Instead, Earth should be treated with care. Humans should give back to this place which has given us so much. When I held this on the street of my neighborhood, the passing cars did not really stop to inquire me about the sign. Since this is my first time ever holding something up in public, the experience initially felt nerve-wrecking because there was no one but me in the middle of a street holding up something. Even then, the fact that I had even pushed myself to step out of the comfort zone for just a bit made me feel more inspired to not be afraid of taking actions.

Dr. Bronner's Lotion

Bath & Body Works Bath & Body Lotion

Cleanest Alternative

Dirtiest Ingredients



- Fair Trade ingredients
- Organic coconut oil sourced from Sri Lanka
- All ingredients are clean and safe
- Vegan
- Certified Organic
- Nourishes and Hydrates
- 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Bottle

Fragrance (Parfum)

BHT

- possible carcinogen

Diazolidinyl Urea

- a preservative that can increase risk for dermatitis
- possible carcinogen
- toxic

Methylparaben

- hormone disruptor



rating: 0

rating: 8

Today's Goal

Bring my own lunch to school!

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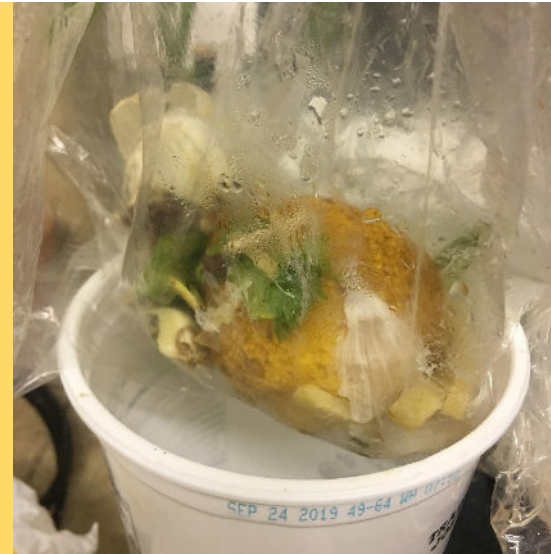
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Plastic

If I had not collected my waste today, I would not have realized the amount of plastic I have consumed in just one day! Today's challenge has challenged me to rethink about reusable alternatives I will use in the future.



Food Waste / Compost

Paper to be Recycled



Pizza Box!

At my high school's cafeteria, individual slices of pizza are each wrapped in their own boxes! Instead of buying school's lunch, I will bring my own lunch to school.



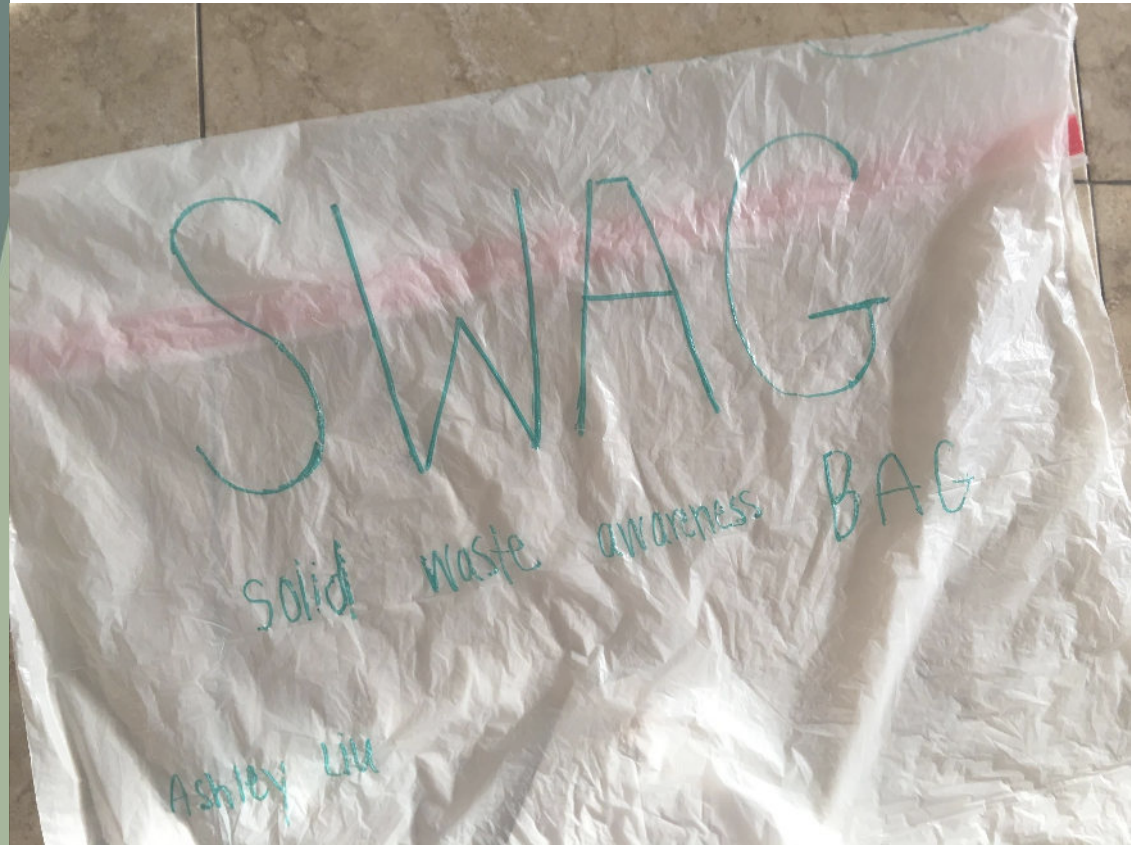
SWAG

I showed my friends my SWAG bag and although they presented me with a disgusted look at first, after I told them about why I'm doing this, they thought the bag was a unique idea.

“EWWW”

AWAG

I shared my thoughts on bringing my own lunch to school today with my mom and she was very supportive about it! I also told her about my SWAG Bag and she thought that it was a great idea to increase awareness! All went well :)



Sources

[Opinion | Fixing Livestock Emissions Metrics](#) - FoodTank

[Your Questions About Food and Climate Change, Answered](#) - NY Times

[6 Pressing Questions About Beef and Climate Change, Answered](#) - World Resource Institute

[Meatless Monday for K-12 Schools - Meatless Monday](#) - Meatless Monday

[New York City Public Schools to Join 'Meatless Mondays' Movement](#) - Eco Watch

[Scaling Up Healthy, Climate-Friendly School Food • Friends of the Earth](#) - Friends of the Earth

[Avoiding meat and dairy is 'single biggest way' to reduce your impact on Earth](#) - The Guardian

[6 Million California Students Will Soon Have Vegan Lunch Options](#) - LiveKindly

[THE PLATE METHOD: a nutritionally balanced meal for vegans](#) - Pick Up Limes

Dr. Bronner's Lotion – \$9.99

Product page for Dr. Bronner's Lavender Coconut Lotion. The page shows a product image, name, and price of \$9.99. It includes engagement metrics (1.5K likes, 2.7K views, 4 comments) and a 3.8 star rating with 75% of users liking it. The ingredients list is categorized by skin type: DIRTY (red), HALF N' HALF (yellow), and CLEAN (green). The ingredients are: ORGANIC CANNABIS SATIVA (HEMP) SEED OIL (1), AQUA (0), ORGANIC COCOS NUCIFERA (0), COCONUT OIL (0), ORGANIC SIMMONDSIA CHINENSIS (JOJOBA) SEED OIL (0), ORGANIC PERSEA GRATISSIMA (AVOCADO) OIL (0), XANTHAN GUM (0), TOCOPHEROL (0), and LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA (LAVENDER) OIL (0). A disclaimer is visible at the bottom.

Ingredient	Count
ORGANIC CANNABIS SATIVA (HEMP) SEED OIL	1
AQUA	0
ORGANIC COCOS NUCIFERA	0
COCONUT OIL	0
ORGANIC SIMMONDSIA CHINENSIS (JOJOBA) SEED OIL	0
ORGANIC PERSEA GRATISSIMA (AVOCADO) OIL	0
XANTHAN GUM	0
TOCOPHEROL	0
LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA (LAVENDER) OIL	0

Bath & Body Lotion – \$12.50

Product page for Bath & Body Works Japanese Cherry Blossom Body Lotion. The page shows a product image, name, and price of \$12.50. It includes engagement metrics (10 likes, 111 views, 0 comments) and no reviews. The ingredients list is categorized by skin type: DIRTY (red), HALF N' HALF (yellow), and CLEAN (green). The ingredients are: FRAGRANCE (PARFUM) (8), BHT (8), DIAZOLIDINYL UREA (8), METHYLPARABEN (7), PROPYLPARABEN (7), PETROLATUM (5), CETEARETH-20 (4), TETRASODIUM EDTA (3), DISODIUM EDTA (3), and METHYL IONONE (3). A disclaimer is visible at the bottom.

Ingredient	Count
FRAGRANCE (PARFUM)	8
BHT	8
DIAZOLIDINYL UREA	8
METHYLPARABEN	7
PROPYLPARABEN	7
PETROLATUM	5
CETEARETH-20	4
TETRASODIUM EDTA	3
DISODIUM EDTA	3
METHYL IONONE	3



Posts

Dr. Bronner's Lotion	Bath & Body Lotion
Cleanest Alternative	Dirtiest Ingredients
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Trade ingredients • Organic coconut oil sourced from Sri Lanka • All ingredients are clean and safe • Vegan • Certified Organic • Nourishes and Hydrates • 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Bottle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragrance (Parfum) BHT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible carcinogen Diazolidinyl Urea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a preservative that can increase risk for dermatitis • possible carcinogen • toxic Methylparaben <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hormone disruptor
rating: 0	rating: 8



ashley.pgc2019 PGC Day 6 Greener || According to the Story of Cosmetics, the average woman in U.S. uses 12 personal care products daily. Less than 20% of all chemicals in cosmetics have been assessed for safety. "Anybody can put anything in a bottle and call it natural." It is time to be more aware of what we're putting on our skin. Thank you [@turninggreenorg](#) for making me realize how much dirty ingredients there are in conventional care products. Thanks to this challenge, I am able to learn about Dr. Bronner's and more through the Think Dirty App. After doing research, I found that Dr. Bronner's is such an amazing company, doing good both socially and environmentally. <https://www.drbronner.com/about/> The next time I'm shopping for personal care, I'll definitely grab Dr. Bronner's!

#pgc2019 #environment #personalcareproducts #organicskincare

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Will I make the switch?

Absolutely! After doing the research, I am impressed by how amazing Dr. Bronner's lotions (and other products) are! They have a rating of 0 compared to Bath & Body's rating of 8! There are only 9 ingredients in Dr. Bronner's lotions compared to 38 ingredients present in Bath & Body lotion. Among the 38 ingredients are substances with carcinogenic potential, which is really harmful to bodies. What's even better is that Dr. Bronner's is cheaper than Bath & Body. That was mind blowing! So it is time to say goodbye to Bath & Body!

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Project Green Challenge Climate Action Project

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Project Summary

Food, health, and climate change are, in many ways, interconnected. Eating food is an act of nourishment that supplies our bodies with healthy nutrients, vitamins, and minerals necessary for our everyday functions and healthy bodies. Food, however, also comes with great environmental costs. The byproduct of all the processing, packaging, shipping, and other processes involved in the production of food is greenhouse gas emissions, which contributes to the exacerbation of climate change.

My deep passion in this Climate Action Plan stems from my interest in sustainability and food. After learning about the negative impacts of the animal industry and conventional agriculture in Project Green Challenge, I feel inspired to transition to a more sustainable eating lifestyle. At my school, an everyday problem my peers and I face is the lack of vegetarian, vegan, and nutritious meals at my school's cafeteria. I began envisioning how a schoolwide shift from mostly meat-based meals to plant-based meals would help combat a serious global issue I am hugely concerned about: climate change.

In this Climate Action Plan, I will describe the project I plan on executing on University High School (UHS) campus to fundamentally tackle both climate change and student health.

Problem

One of the issues with the current UHS cafeteria is the lack of nutritious food. In accordance with the regulations set by the USDA's MyPlate, K-12 school lunches are required to include certain portions of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy. While our school's meals are based on the USDA's MyPlate, the cafeteria still offers unhealthy options such as Papa John's Pizzas, Popcorn Chicken, and Cheeseburger Sliders, many of which are high in unhealthy calories, saturated fats, and refined carbohydrates. Despite their lack of nutritional quality, pizzas and cheeseburgers are still the most popular items among the UHS students.

Another prevailing issue at the UHS cafeteria is the neglect some students have towards fruits and vegetables. Although students are required to take a ½ cup fruit or vegetable, most students throw them away. Packaged baby carrots, celery sticks, and raisins are some of the common fruits and vegetables seen in the "unwanted foods" basket. Not only do these uneaten foods contribute to enormous food waste, they also indicate that students are not consuming a proper, nutritious meal.

Along with health problems, environmental issues also need to be considered. Based on what I learned in PGC Day 2: Footprint and from the Footprint Calculator, a person's ecological footprint significantly increases if he or she consumes meat. In a 2018 study in the journal *Science* assessing the environmental impacts of livestock farming, meat and dairy provide just 18% of calories and 37% of protein. Yet, livestock farming accounts for 83% of all farmland use and produces 60% of agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. To put the facts in a broader context, according to Food and Agriculture Organization, livestock is responsible for around 14.5% of the world's greenhouse gases annually.

Solution

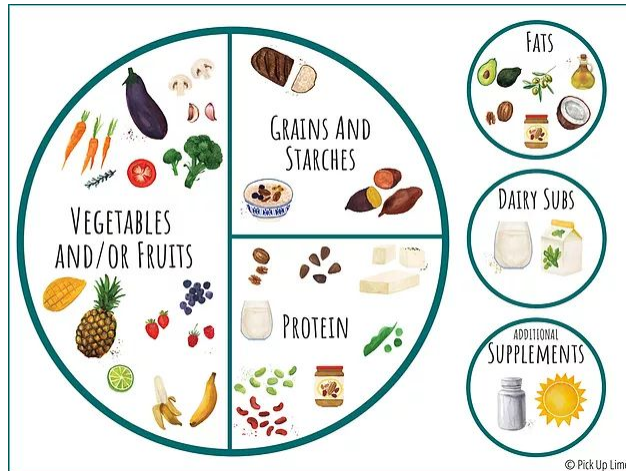
The Meatless Monday Project is aimed at providing affordable vegetarian and vegan meals to UHS students by implementing Meatless Mondays at the UHS cafeteria. The plan will address the Project Green Challenge themes Food and Organic. In the PGC theme Food, I was introduced to the concept of FLOSN (Fresh, Local, Organic, Seasonal, and Non-GMO). The variety of benefits from choosing FLOSN ingredients is the reason why I would like to incorporate not only meatless meals but also organic and seasonal foods into the cafeteria.

Every Monday, students will have plant-based options. Below are some healthy vegan snack and lunch ideas:

- Navitas Energy Bites
- Meatless bolognese with spaghetti
- Veggie burger
- Vegan wraps
- Vegan mac & cheese
- Grilled cheese with whole grain sandwiches

Project Goals

In the short term, I hope the UHS cafeteria can offer healthy and affordable vegetarian and vegan snacks and lunches every Monday for the entire school year. I would like the UHS cafeteria to follow a more comprehensive nutrition guideline curated for vegans and vegetarians:



In the future, in addition to meatless meals, I will advocate for 100% organic foods. If the UHS Meatless Monday is successful, I would like to promote the same campaign at other local high school schools and, eventually, middle and elementary schools.

My ultimate mission is to inspire local schools to adopt Organic Meatless Mondays where the snacks and lunches are vegetarian, vegan, and made with FLOSN ingredients.

Project Benefits

Making healthy and sustainable choices are important to not only students' health but also the environment and animal welfare. Implementing Meatless Mondays would be a great way for the school to approach both the issue of climate change and health while helping students across the board change their eating habits and lifestyles to become more sustainable.

Health Impact

Offering vegan and vegetarian options would increase the intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, thereby enhancing the nutritional quality of school lunches. Plant-based meals are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants and can reduce an individual's risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems.

One of the common misconceptions surrounding veganism is calcium deficiency. Many plant-based foods such as fortified plant milk and yogurt, tofu, beans, sweet potato, and others actually contain decent doses of calcium. A varied and nutritionally balanced plant-based meal that includes vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, fats, and a few supplements can ensure that students are meeting the daily levels of protein, fat, and carbohydrates.

Environmental Impact

The Meatless Monday will combat climate change on a schoolwide level. Replacing meat-based lunches with sustainable vegan or vegetarian options even just one day a week can result in a significant reduction in a person's carbon footprint. Shifting away from meat-heavy foods can also promote animal welfare since it diverts the agricultural economy away from conventional animal industry and CAFOs.

Financial Impact

Several reports have found that meat reduction can save institutional food service money. In a case study executed in Oakland Unified School District, \$42,000 was saved by reducing

meat in school lunches. In 2012, when the Los Angeles Unified School District adopted its Meatless Mondays policy in 2012, the district has recorded a “32% decrease in meat spending.”

FLOSIN Impact

In addition to offering meatless meals, the project will seek to provide FLOSIN (Fresh, Local, Organic, Seasonal, Non-GMO) foods. Organic foods are free of synthetic pesticides and chemicals, which reduces an individual's exposure to harmful substances. Fresh and local produce supports local farmers and reduces the length of an energy-intensive transportation.

Feasibility

In February 2019, a new bill incentivizing California public K-12 schools AB-B1 was introduced. Under AB-479, the Healthy Climate-Friendly School Lunch Act, schools would receive state funding for serving vegan school lunch and provide financial and technical support to encourage schools to offer plant-based meals. In fact, four school districts across California have adopted clean and climate-friendly menu. More than 6 million California students were able to choose black bean burgers, bean and cheese nachos, and other delicious healthy alternatives.

In March 2019, all public schools in New York joined the Meatless Monday campaign. This citywide effort serves as an excellent model for other schools to follow suit. The wide availability of these and other resources are testaments to the fact that implementing the Meatless Monday Project at UHS would be feasible.

Team

In order to successfully execute the project, I would need the help and support from people with diverse background knowledge, expertise, and skills. Some people I will be reaching out to for advice and support are my AP Environmental Science teacher Ms. Bartlau and the Irvine Unified School District's Nutrition Service Manager. I will also contact the adults who are in charge of the UHS cafeteria. Last but not least, I will be seeking approval from the school principal or assistant principal.

To bring this project to fruition, I need a team whose members share the same vision as I do. I am looking for people with leadership experience and teamwork qualities. Finding peers, classmates, or staff members who have educated perspectives or opinions on vegetarian and vegan foods will also be an important component of my project

Conclusion

The above Climate Action Plan includes detailed answers to the following questions. However, I decided to provide short answers for readers who would like to have a quick glimpse into the project.

- What climate related issue/s do you want to focus on?
 - Greenhouse gas emissions
 - Land deforestation
- Why has this particular project resonated with you?
 - I am passionate about food and sustainability since food is an essential part of my life but so is climate change.
 - I am interested in helping people move towards more sustainable living lifestyles.
- How will you synthesize and apply the knowledge you have accumulated during PGC?
 - Footprint Calculator
 - FLOSN Food Benefits
 - Meat produces tons of GHG
- What are your short and long term goals for the project? Consider if these goals are attainable on your campus.
 - Short-Term - Implement Meatless Mondays at UHS cafeteria
 - Long-Term - Transition to 100% FLOSN meals
 - Long-Term - Inspire other schools to follow suit
- Why do you think this project is needed on your campus?
 - Only one or two vegetarian meals are offered in our cafeteria
 - Zero vegan lunches or snacks
 - Unhealthy foods like pizzas and cheeseburgers are the most popular foods among the students
 - Students throw away fruits and vegetables
- Who and what does your project benefit?
 - Students Health

- School (financial)
 - Environment (less greenhouse emissions)
 - Animals welfare
- Who will you need to be involved in the early stages of your project to support you on campus?
 - Nutrition Service manager
 - School principal
 - Teacher advisor
 - Peers and friends for support
- What skills or expertise would be an advantage to bring this project to fruition?
 - Leadership experience
 - Teamwork
 - Ready to take on challenges and bold actions
 - Knowledge about vegetarian and vegan foods
- What are the desired outcomes? What does success look like?
 - UHS successfully implements 100% FLOSN Meatless Mondays
 - Other schools in the district follow suit