

Climate Action Project Executive Summary: Seeds of Hope

Project Overview:

Across the nation, native plants are disappearing, causing unforeseen environmental degradation and accelerating climate change. We must work to reinstate these essential plants. In order to do this, my solution, Seeds of Hope, fosters individual environmental activism by placing seeds in the hands of students and other community members. Seeds of Hope works to establish seed libraries where people can take seeds for free to plant. What makes Seeds of Hope so unique is that my seed libraries are located in high school libraries as well as public libraries and provide native plant seeds for free to the public. My goal is to inspire others to help improve the environment and educate them on how to do so. Instead of a one-time project like many cleanup and planting events, my organization plants the "Seeds" of environmental activism in youth, allowing them to continue their own environmental activism and exponentially increasing my impact.

Reflection and Key Learnings:

Before the Project Green Challenge and my CAP project, I felt as though my actions could not make a difference in the fight for our environment. I believed that because I was only one person out of billions, my voice and my actions did not matter. However, as I advanced throughout my CAP I realized that I am not alone in my anxiety and feelings of helplessness in the face of climate change and, through empowering others to act with me, I can make a real difference for our planet. Our Generation Z is having its future stolen: Rising sea levels, natural disasters, ocean acidification, forest fires, extinction, all from climate change - a catch-all environmental villain we feel helpless to stop. All of this fear over the future of our planet, over OUR future, leads to widespread climate anxiety. According to nature.com, a study of thousands of youth worldwide found that 65% are extremely worried about climate change. When describing how they feel about climate change, they used the words "angry," "powerless," "anxious," "afraid," and "sad." In addition, 45% of youth stated their fears surrounding climate change negatively impacted their daily lives and functioning. Through completing my CAP, I learned that we must empower our youth by showing them that they can make a difference in the fight against climate change and encourage them to use environmental activism as an outlet for their growing climate anxiety. By showing students that their voice matters and that they can make a real difference in the fight against climate change, we can activate the next generation to be environmental changemakers, relieving climate anxiety and changing the future of our planet for the better.

Goals:

As my project evolved into its current form many of my goals shifted. However, my driving motivation remained the same: to place the power to make environmental change in the hands of youth, encouraging them to practice lifelong environmental activism and expanding my impact far beyond that of one person. My measurable goals were as follows:

1. Engage over 40 students with the implementation of seed libraries
2. Implement 4 seed libraries in high schools and public libraries
3. Give over 5,000 seeds for planting to students and community members
4. Hold at least 1 educational event and spread informational materials including posters and books about environmental activism, climate change, and the importance of pollinators and native plants.
5. Create a student board for Seeds of Hope with at least 5 members to meet weekly to oversee project development and organize events

Challenges:

My greatest challenge was that my original project concept, working with students to create vertical gardens for schools, was not permitted by my school administration nor the administration of other local high schools. I had raised teacher support for the project and was working on receiving permission from my school administration throughout my CAP, however they eventually explained how the placement of water in the vertical garden and having plants that needed to be cared for year-round was not practical for our school. Therefore, I shifted my project's focus. Instead of holding one-time environmental events, what if I could inspire long term change by allowing students to engage in environmental action on their own time. My Climate Action Project's Focus is to inspire others to help improve the

environment and educate them on how to do so. With Seeds of Hope, people take the seeds, tell their friends and families, and our impact spreads exponentially. More and more people want to get seeds and spread seed libraries. More and more people want to get involved with environmental action. I found a true power of change in just one little packet of seeds. Through Seeds of Hope, we can take back our planet one seed at a time and plant a seed of hope for our Generation Z!

Timeline and Process:

- December 1st to January 29th:
 - Ordering and receiving many native plant varieties, seed library units, and packets to label and sort the seeds into.
 - Planning the bee home educational event and gathering necessary materials.
 - Gathering an executive board and working with them to sort seeds for our initial seed libraries
 - Creating an educational poster over the importance of native plants to display with the first seed library
 - Setting up community garden for planting in April (unfortunately the snow finally melted a couple of days ago and we have not been able to plant yet)
- January 30th: Native solitary bee home educational creation event
- January 31st: Seeds of Hope becomes a national art honor society service project. Many students help paint beautiful native plants on the seed libraries and create amazing wooden signs.
- February 9th: First seed library is implemented in my high school. Received environmental book donations and donated my books from the Project Green Challenge, after reading them, to create a climate section in the school library. Heavily promoted the seed library through posters and announcements.
- March 10th: Second seed library is implemented in another local high school.
- April 6th: Third seed library implemented in Montgomery public library who is also creating a climate section in their library to accompany the seed library.
- April 10th: Fourth seed library implemented in Oswego public library.

Impact:

- **27** students attended my native bee home creation and educational event.
- I have worked with **53** students to implement my first **4** seed libraries
- I have given **7,270** native seeds for planting to students and community members
- After hearing about my project, **3** more public libraries and **4** more high schools have reached out to me requesting assistance in implementing their own seed libraries.
- It has been so exciting to see students and teachers alike eagerly share photos of them planting their native plants with me. By the end of the month I am excited to see many new native gardens sprouting throughout my community!

Potential for Ongoing Impact:

Seeing the joy of students, teachers, and librarians alike upon the unveiling of each seed library inspires me to continue spreading Seeds of Hope for years to come. The greatest benefit to my project is the community support I have received. So many people have volunteered their time to create the inaugural seed libraries, and more and more students are taking native seeds to plant. As people hear about Seeds of Hope, high schools and public libraries are contacting me asking how they can receive a Seed Library. As of now, I am leading a group of students in my local community in sorting seeds to restock and create new seed libraries every weekend. However, to continue to expand beyond my local community, I am working to form a network of different groups to distribute seed libraries to their areas. I will support these groups by sending them instructions and resources, such as the native plant seeds and containers needed to create additional seed libraries. Through this network, groups can use a localized approach to further spread seed libraries and foster youth activism within their communities. My project will continue empowering other students through engaging them with environmental activism for years to come causing nationwide environmental change.

What I am Most Proud of:

I am most proud of how I evolved throughout my project. I thought I could not make a real difference, but now I realize that I can. Teaching others that they also can make a difference has become my passion project. Project Green empowered me and now I work to empower others.