

# Youth-led campaign asks Kingston residents to Join the Journey

By Kristen Coughlar

EMC lifestyle - If you see a young person walking up your driveway with a blue baseball cap and a cream-coloured shirt decorated with footprints ignore the urge to close the curtains, lock the door and pretend you aren't home.

This young lady or gentleman isn't looking to sell you anything. They're hoping you will Join the Journey towards creating a more sustainable community.

Join the Journey, a youth-led campaign oriented at inspiring area residents to reduce their greenhouse emissions, began a six-week door-to-door campaign in the city last week.

The Join the Journey team is a spin-off of the Reduce the Juice Foundation, which facilitates the creation of youth-led campaigns targeted at reducing a community's greenhouse gas emissions. The campaign came to Kingston last year and served as the inspiration for Join the Journey.

"This year Randy Cuff, who is the project manager of the centre (the Kingston Sustainability Centre) decided that he wanted to create something really similar but not exactly the same. So, Join the Journey is really based on the same type foundation as Reduce the Juice, but it's kind of adapted and really personalized for Kingston," said sustainability team leader Debbie Bennett.

For the next six weeks a team of eight high school students, led by three post-secondary team leaders, will conduct a door-to-door campaign and appear at six community events with the goal of educating area residents about waste reduction,

water and energy conservation and steps that they can take to reduce their carbon footprint and city of Kingston's overall greenhouse gas emissions.

"The whole premise is to help Kingstonians in a really one-to-one manner to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because a lot of people they understand the importance of it but the concept of, "Oh my goodness, how do I that" is so overwhelming. It's very hard to understand that something that you do as an individual will actually make a broader impact," said sustainability team leader Melanie Fortune.

To reduce that feeling of being overwhelmed, Fortune said the Join the Journey campaign will see youth engage with residents one-on-one, educating them on environmental conservation and providing them with the tools they need to take part in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

The students will also be armed with a pledge form where residents can check off steps they are already taking to reduce their waste, water and power consumption and items they would like to pledge to do in order to further their contribution.

"When we do come to your doorstep we're not there to tell you what to do or throw a whole bunch of information at you. We there to offer options, offer you tools, offer you things that can make things easier for you and just chat about what you're doing so far and what you'd like to continue doing.

We have a lot of different ways that everybody can contribute and we can also make calculations to let them know the greenhouse gas emissions they'd be saving

by each of those actions as well," Fortune said.

Bennett agreed, noting that the pledge form allows residents to choose commitments that suit their individual lifestyles.

"Some people are ready to make bigger steps than other people, so one of the things could be as simple as we have stickers that saying, "I Join the Journey. No Flyer Mail." So it could be as simple as sticking it on your mailbox and that's one second, it's done, you never have to do it again. Or, it could be something like making sure that you're turning off the power bar every time you are not using the appliance, so that's a habit. Or some things do involve a little bit of money if people are willing or want to purchase something like an Energy Star appliance, like a fridge. So there are different levels of commitment for people so it kind of helps make it more personalized and less overwhelming," Bennett said.

By the end of the six-week campaign, Bennett and Fortune noted that the Join the Journey team hopes to have engaged in 8,500 conversations and have 2,000 pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Join the Journey campaign will continue throughout the fall and into the winter with a pledge station and information at the Kingston Sustainability Centre. By the end of December the group hopes to see its numbers rise to 16,500 conversations and 5,000 pledges.

"Overall we're hoping that each person will pledge to reduce their emissions by five per cent," Bennett said.

Just two days into the door-to-door campaign, the group was off to a good start, collecting a total of 46

pledges.

"We're being received really well," Bennett said. "I think it's really inspiring to have a high school student with a passion on your doorstep and they're not trying to sell you something, they want to just talk to you."

Following the campaign, Bennett and Fortune noted that a research study would be conducted in conjunction with St. Lawrence College to determine the effectiveness of this type of youth led community-based social marketing campaign.

For more information about Join the Journey visit, [kingstonsustainabilitycentre.com](http://kingstonsustainabilitycentre.com).