

ENVIRONMENT



Youth for a Greener Future

Meet the East Bay's next wave of eco warriors.

BY HANNAH CRADDICK

Student participants at the Livermore Youth Climate Summit.

COURTESY OF THE TRI-VALLEY YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION PROJECT

Something green is brewing in the Tri-Valley, and Shrish Premkrishna and Thaarak Sriram are two of a group of teens leading the charge. Their efforts began last summer when over 30 kids, mainly from Livermore, Granada, and Amador high schools, organized Livermore's first Youth Climate Summit (with guidance from Quest Science Center board directors Richard Stulen and Vaughn Draggoo). A huge success with 200 attendees and more than 20 organizations, the event galvanized the teens to do more.

"It completely surpassed our expectations," says Sriram, a junior at Livermore High School. "It was such a huge success, we thought, *Why stop now?*"

The group named themselves Tri-Valley Youth Climate Action Project (TVYCAP) and began doing light-efficiency surveys and

heat mapping in Livermore. Mentored by Tri-Valley Air Quality Climate Alliance outreach director Ann Brown and Jim Callahan, a director at Mobile Climate Science Labs who led a similar project in Washington, D.C., the teens used infrared cameras to survey three buildings, finding an energy-deficient window in the public library. "A broken window had been replaced with one that didn't block out extra sunlight," says Sriram. "We sent the data to the library, and they worked on getting that window changed."

There are even plans to take the energy audits to the skies. "We will be using drones, and we're also in contact with NASA to get access to data from a specific satellite that uses infrared lighting," says Premkrishna, a junior at Livermore High. "We're hoping to use that data for a city-wide survey and [to] affect city planning."

Other projects in TVYCAP's pipeline include audits of school food waste, a meatless Monday campaign at Tri-Valley schools, a climate literacy resolution for the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, and a carbon garden (using plants that extract more carbon from the atmosphere).

Their environmental work is getting noticed. Last November, TVYCAP was honored with one of Innovation Tri-Valley's Dreammakers and Risktakers awards, and in December the group presented its projects at the American Geophysical Union's annual AGU23 in San Francisco—the largest climate and space science conference in the world.

"We're doing this because it's making a change, it's what we need to do," says Premkrishna. "But it's always really nice when we realize that people are listening and recognizing us for what we're doing."