First Here, Then Everywhere

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Current Initiative [Posted August 16, 2013]

Green Kids Now

My name is Pavan Raj Gowda. I am a current eighth-grader, and I founded "Green Kids Now," a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness about environmental issues. We also reach out to kids all around the world in this cause to share ideas and experiences.

My activities can be categorized as follows:

- Raising Awareness about environmental issues

The purpose & goal: to reach as many people as possible with the awareness messages.
Results: by utilizing various media and form factors, my messages have reached thousands of kids around the world.

- Science and Innovation initiatives:

The purpose & goal: to help kids take the path of innovation by utilizing STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) areas while being responsible and caring towards our planet.
Results: Science and innovation is the core in my guidance for green star school program. Since its release in 09/2012, the program is already being downloaded by schools in Sri Lanka and California. Many environmental educators have shown interest in the program and we expect to see more adoption over the years to come. The partnership with Lawrence Berkeley Lab and Stanford Linear Accelerator Center has also lead to the inclusion of the "Jr. Scientists and Innovators" section in my Green Kids Conference.

- Green Kids Conference

Purpose & goal: to educate kids and their families on environmental issues, make them aware of available resources and opportunities, and promote, encourage, and reward new innovative ideas.
Results: Had three successful past conferences with over 800 people in attendance every year. We are excited to obtain Microsoft's sponsorship again for next year, and our next 4th annual, Green Kids Conference will be held on 05/31/2014. Click here for a video of the conference.

I have also published two children storybooks--"Two Tales from a Kid" and "Geckoboy-The Battle of Fracking"-- that raise awareness about the value of community involvement in environmental issues and the side effects of hydraulic fracturing. I also serve as an international reporter for the Primary Perspective children's radio program in Australia.

My new project is implementing "Plastic Caps Recycling Project" that would go Fremont city-wide starting September 2013. Fremont city has a population of 214,000. This is a huge initiative to stop plastic caps pollution, as these small caps have become a huge environmental hazard.
Project Goal: To recycle all the valuable Polypropylene and Polyethylene bottle caps and prevent them from ending up in our landfills and Oceans.
Project Mission: To raise awareness among all the Fremont residents about the environmental hazards caused by plastic caps, and encourage citizens to voluntarily take action by participating in this plastic caps recycling program.
Results will be measured by measuring the weight of the caps collected, and we can easily show how much we have actually recycled.

For more details on this project, please check out: http://greenkidsnow.org/PlasticCaps.html

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<u>First Here, Then Everywhere</u> showcases interviews with featured initiatives. These interviews are designed to delve into unique aspects of a venture so that readers can truly learn from the experiences of others and hopefully apply the lessons to their own activism.

Interview With

Pavan Raj Gowda of Green Kids Now

1) How do you begin the process for planning a conference?

At first, envisioning the need for a conference for kids and getting a sponsor to help make this vision a reality was the most difficult task. I had to work really hard in the beginning to convince people and organizations to believe in my vision and come forward to participate. There were several rejections and few supporters, and I had no budget. When I got Microsoft's support to host my first conference in their conference center and Microsoft also provided me with some of their staff, it helped tremendously to reach the community, and few more supporters came forward. I did most of the outreach by email, as literally I had no money to print flyers. Slowly the word spread, and public support increased. Over 800 people came to the conference!

The overwhelming support from the community helped me to now obtain more sponsors and volunteers, and we successfully were able to organize our 3rd annual Green Kids Conference on 06/01/2013.

The planning and organizing of the conference is a yearlong process. I work along with our volunteers and partners throughout the year to organize this conference. My main task in organizing involves getting contacts wherever I go and then reaching out to them for partnership and participation.

2) How do you involve new people in the environmental movement?

The first step in involving people to take action is to first raise their awareness on the environmental issues we are facing today. People have to come forward by themselves to take action. Only then it would be more effective. For that, providing all the data and sharing of information is very important.

I serve as the Principal Lead in my organization and work along with others and lead by example for other kids.

I soon realized that not all people respond in the same way, and one approach to raise awareness is not sufficient. So, I adopted several methods and form factors to raise awareness:
· Blogs
· Radio Interviews
· Children stories
· Art
· Public speeches
· Participating and exhibiting in various events
· Etc.

3) What have you found to be the most effective ways to communicate with youth?

From my experience, the most effective way is speaking at schools and public gatherings. I am able to reach more kids at one time, and also in those settings kids and adults are prepared to listen. I can also see peoples reaction immediately and get feedback immediately too.

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