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Become a Green Kid

Posted by [Vidya Pradhan](#) on Sunday, February 14, 2010, 15:20

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At 4, little Pavan Raj Gowda was already disturbed by litter. Says mom Shanti, "He would get so upset that we would walk around cleaning it up."

At 10, that young neatnik is a confirmed greennik. The founder of greenkidsnow.org, this precocious environmentalist has taken the message of reduce, reuse, recycle to heart. Started by Pavan a couple of years ago with help from Shanti, the website is an attempt to connect with other green kids and start a movement of sorts. "I'd like kids to pledge to care for the environment," says Pavan.

Pavan began his efforts to spread the message of caring for the environment in his classroom at Glenmoor Elementary school in Fremont.

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Says teacher Johnna Laird, "Pavan's passion for the planet strikes a chord in the hearts of children and adults."

When Pavan informed his class about his website, more than 20 students raised their hands, saying they want to join him in finding ways to make the planet healthier.

One student, Natalie, decided to enlist her Girl Scout troop in energy conservation projects.

Another student, Matthew, took Pavan's Green Kids business card, attached his pencil as a stick and marched around with his mini-placard at recess advertising Green Kids, just as he had seen adults campaign for an important issue.

Anna used a spelling and preposition homework assignment to write about her concerns after Pavan spoke to the class: "As for people who don't litter, they should wear a badge on their shirts. If we all manage to keep the earth clean, we can change the world. Whenever you see trash on the ground, pick it up and throw it away."

Adds Laird, "Pavan is a catalyst for children. He has figured a way to transform his feelings into action, into a practice to make a difference. Other children want to be part of this process. They care. They know that Earth is their home and want to keep it healthy for years to come." The school has already replaced its light bulbs with longer-lasting fluorescent ones as a first step in conservation. In the classroom, care is taken to use both sides of copying paper before it is recycled. Even the recycle bin was added at Pavan's urging. At school birthday parties, biodegradable plates and spoons are used.

These are small steps, but imagine every classroom in Glenmoor, every school in Fremont, California, the United States, taking up these simple changes.

Pavan hopes the website will make his message a movement. Kids who are interested can sign up and create local teams. One child takes a leadership role and represents the kids in their efforts to make their own environment a little better. The kids work out cost-benefit analyses and write proposals to effect change in the schools and neighborhoods. They learn teamwork and leadership skills.

Already 97 kids have signed up. Chapters are being formed in Ohio, Indiana, and Washington state. Apart from the Fremont chapter, the Bay Area has another in San Ramon.

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Pavan oversees these activities. Each regional team is helped by an adult, but in general the activities are led and managed by kids. Mom Shanti is working towards non-profit status for Green Kids Now. "Once we received the appropriate status, hours spent with Green Kids will count towards community service credits," says Shanti. She hopes to get it by May 2010.

Still, being a 10-year-old with a passion for the environment when your friends are into Harry Potter and Super Mario can be frustrating at times. "People don't take me seriously because I'm just a kid," complains Pavan. "They ignore me." Many of the kids at school couldn't be bothered either. "I tell him not to give up," says Shanti. "That kind of reluctance from the community is natural."

Says Laird, "when I think of Pavan and his classmates, I think of the words to a Whitney Houston song:

*I believe the children are our future
Teach them well and let them lead the way."*

It's not easy being green, as Kermit the frog realized, but Pavan hopes his efforts will help bring about those small changes that can hardwire environmental awareness into the consciousness of the next generation. If your kid wants to sign up, becoming a green kid is just a click away.

Here is a partial list of classroom tips from the [website](#):

Use both sides of the paper

- Only buy recycled paper
- Have a recycle bin in the classroom, and mark it clearly with the recycle symbol
- Create a student job as a "Recycling Monitor". This person would be in charge of making sure that people are recycling instead of throwing into trash bin
- Use reusable water bottles, rather than throw away plastic bottles
- Use biodegradable plates, cups, and spoons for class parties
- Do projects using recycled materials
- Do art projects from things that we throw away
- On a nice sunny day, let the sun light come inside and turn off the lights
- On a hot day, open the windows for fresh air, instead of using the air conditioner