

Student climate strike in Bethlehem (and around the world)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council, Serious Issues September 21, 2019

Festival UnBound

Ten days of original theatre, dance, music, art and conversation designed to celebrate and imagine our future together!

October 4-13

(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)

Gadfly couldn't attend. Comments invited from those who did. Did followers have any kids or grandkids who were there?

Sarah M. Wojcik and Kayla Dwyer, "Global Climate Strike inspires Lehigh Valley residents, students to rally against inaction on climate change." Morning Call, september 20, 2019.

Madison Bold doesn't see how her attendance score in high school is going to matter if a threat as massive as climate change is left unchecked. Bold, 16, a sophomore at the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, was among about 20 students who left class Friday to join protesters of all ages in Bethlehem's Payrow Plaza as part of the global climate strike, inspired by a Swedish girl the same age as Bold. Millions attended the event around the world, including a handful of locations around the Lehigh Valley.

At Lehigh University's front lawn in Bethlehem's South Side, students used a bullhorn to persuade peers to join them in their march to City Hall. There, Lehigh students joined more than 150 others gathering to show support for action on climate change. "Skip your classes! Save the planet! Join millions!" organizer Connor Burbridge shouted to students shuffling past. A few stopped to watch before moving along, but more and more found their way into the growing cluster of students.

Even so, the turnout – roughly 100 by 1:30 p.m. when the group marched across the Fahy Bridge to Payrow Plaza – thrilled organizers. Oliwia Krupinska, a Lehigh senior studying astrophysics, had no sense of the response at the university. The event was organized by various groups in an intentionally decentralized fashion, but that made it hard to understand the reach.

Students called on each other to make small, personal changes to effect change: Drive less, cut down on meat consumption, start composting. Students were encouraged to refrain from viewing the issue from a partisan lens and take ownership in whatever parts of campus or community they are – be it in their communication classes or mechanical engineering courses.

Student leaders also called on Lehigh University to enact policies and practices, such as banning single-use plastic on campus and divesting university finances from the fossil fuel industry, to combat climate change.

"It's our job to hold our own school responsible," Krupinska told the students gathered.

A group of environmental policy graduate students said they had no classes during the planned march. But given their course of study, suspected they'd get in more trouble if they didn't join the mobilization.

“This is also about showing solidarity with youth around the world,” Clopton said. “I think it’s important that Lehigh and little cities like Bethlehem join this conversation. It’s just as important for places this size to stand up and fight back.”

“This gets people together to network and start conversations,” he said. “And for young people, getting them this experience is important. Chanting can be contagious. Once you do it, people want to come back to it. We all have it in ourselves to be leaders.

It’s Saturday, September 21, do you know where your local Climate Action Plan is?

Festival UnBound