

Knock, knock: Students to campaign for change

ENVIRONMENT: Program pushes conservation

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The students spearheading an environmental conservation program, Reduce the Juice, divide the general population into three categories.

First, there are the true environmentalist, those who work hard to reduce their carbon footprint each and every day.

Next, there are the uninterested -- those who will never adopt green habits.

Then, there is their target group. "People who need a push," said Sarah Fetterly. "And we're going to give them a push."

Fetterly, along with Brooke Giles and Katie Matthews, are the three university students spearheading the Reduce the Juice initiative in Kingston this summer.

Along with four soon-to-be-hired high school students, they will go door-to-door engaging Kingstonians in "1,200 conversations" and getting pledges from at least 500 people to make environmentally friendly changes in their lives.

"The people choose the actions they feel they can commit to personally," said Giles. "They could be small like replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents or large like replacing old appliances with Energy Star appliances."

Giles is the energy conservation expert on the team.

"Do you know what phantom load is?" she asks. "That's when your appliances are plugged in even though you're not using them and they're still using power. You should unplug them or get a power bar. Then you just switch it on, switch it off."

Meantime, Matthews will focus on water conservation and Fetterly on waste and recycling.

"One of the messages is read the city recycling guide," said Fetterly. "My goal is to educate people to reduce the amount of stuff that goes to landfills."

Reduce the Juice is a non-profit foundation that hires students to speak mainly to older generations about their environmentally unfriendly ways. It has run programs in four different Ontario communities over the past several years. Each one is tailored to the needs and wants of the individual city or region.

"It's about youth and youth leadership," said co-ordinator Randy Cluff, who has been in Kingston for four months setting up the program.

"We're different in that we get people to take action -- take the pledge. The response has been fabulous. Most everybody sees what a unique approach it is. They see that it's youth that will be the core of the movement."

Reduce the Juice has set up office space in the new community Sustainability Centre at the intersection of Princess and Montreal streets.

But most of the hard work will take place on city door steps, the students appearing at homes from 1 to 9 p. m. each day, as well as at various summer events around town.

Today, they'll have a booth set up at the high school e-waste challenge taking place at the Invista Centre on Gardiners Road from 9 a. m. to 2:30 p. m. They'll have their trademark sno-cone machine with them, powered by a portable solar panel.

Giles said they've been doing some market research this week, talking to Kingstonians on the street about environmental issues and concerns.

"They seemed very open to our initiative," she said.

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