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Education can empower society. Developing youth into active citizens begins with education on global issues and engagement in their communities. As someone who participates in and leads youth environmental involvement, I have witnessed the change adolescents experience when exposed to ways they can make a difference. Dedicating myself to environmental advocacy has revolutionized my perspectives, inspiring me to personally aid others my age in undergoing similar transformations, especially in appreciating the inherent beauty of the American River Canyons.

Promoting awareness through education is instrumental in fostering environmental advocacy and reducing the impact of climate change. My personal connection to the American River and the looming threats to its longevity were recognized in the classroom. My passion for the environment was inspired by my curiosity fostered in numerous science courses, which delved into the human impacts on the environment. These classes challenged my concern and desire to become an advocate against climate change.

In addition to education through academics, my interest was piqued through my community's promotion of environmental awareness. I served as a steward for preservation as a four-year participant in Auburn's Wild and Scenic Film Festival, where youth were empowered to select films and collaborate with Michael Anderson of PARC and Haute Trash to draw awareness to the wasteful consumerism of society and to demonstrate that consumer waste reduction and recycling can reduce carbon footprints and global warming.

My community further educated youth through the opportunity to participate in Auburn's *Think Globally, Act Locally: The State of the Climate* event, featuring climate

scientist Dana Nuccitelli. Being a part of this powerful discussion empowered and rejuvenated my drive to educate and enact change on both local and global scales. Dedicating myself to social improvements, which benefit the environment, gives me a sense of empowerment and reinforces my passion to help our world, starting with our small corner of Auburn.

New generations must be taught and exposed to the values that have made our country prosperous in the past, as well as learning from mistakes others have made and adapting to a changing world. Youth bears the weight our nation places upon them. Environmental chaos, intensified by a pollution-damaged atmosphere and political reluctance regarding climate change, can be defeating, but can also motivate today's youth, who will soon carry the weight of their community, nation, and globe on their shoulders.

Youth engagement is crucial to maintain and preserve the American River Canyons that distinguish our local communities. Fortunately, today's youth possess an astute awareness and passion for issues that characterize them as the promising leaders of tomorrow. Inspirational youth activists, such as Greta Thunberg, who has revolutionized environmental activism for all ages, and Mari Copeny, a.k.a. Little Miss Flint, who advocated for environmental justice during Flint, Michigan's ongoing water crisis, are examples of how young citizens inspire one another and drive change at many levels. Recognizing their powerful actions inspires me to want to become a young voice that can be heard energizing America's youth.