



# New Haven/León Sister City Project

*Summer 2017 Newsletter*

## Clean Energy Summer

*by Jen Levine*

Coming into my first morning at the New Haven/Leon Sister City Project I knew that my work would have something to do with climate change, but I wasn't quite sure what that would entail nor what skills I would need. During our first meeting, I was assigned the Clean Energy Summer Campaign. The goal of the campaign would be to get as many people to switch to renewable energy as possible, but it was up to Luiza Livingston, a coworker, and I to come up with the rest. Our first step was creating a website with a straightforward description of how to make the switch. Neither of us had done so before, and there was certainly an adjustment period to using new software. However, cleanenergynhv.org was up and running within a week. Luiza and I then created a Facebook page to attract our first set of viewers to the website, and we were able to share it on the New Haven Climate Movement's (NHCM) page and improve our reach in the community.

We soon began several projects to garner more interest before our launch with Mayor Toni Harp on July 5th. Luiza and Jamie Friedman, another co-worker, began painting two thirty-foot banners to hang above busy areas in New Haven. A video was created by Jennifer Stock and Jeremy Schulick,

along with several Yale students, to be presented at Friday Flicks through the Parks Department. Jumana Aryan, another coworker, and I were able to reach out to the Yale community through a contact at the Yale School of Public Health. Dr. Robert Dubrow helped us spread the word through mass emails and newsletters and connected us to other schools such as the Yale School of Medicine (YSM) and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (FES). We were especially successful through another friend of NHCM, Gabrielle Stack, who was able to reach out to her friends in the postdoctoral community at YSM and switched several to renewable

energy. Our success within Yale's community will continue as a student at FES will be creating a sub-campaign on campus this fall with the goal of converting at least 20 units to renewable energy.

My favorite part of the campaign was working in ten of the City Camps run by the New Haven Parks

Department. Through our visits, Luiza and I learned how little climate change education there is in the Greater New Haven school systems. When asked to give a quick definition of climate change, many campers

### In this Issue:

- Clean Energy Summer p.1
- Becoming an Energy Expert p.2
- Live! Car Free! p. 3
- Climate Emergency p. 4.
- Christmas Everywhere p. 5

*Mural above by International PEACE Projects in Granada, Nicaragua.*



Summer campers working on Clean Energy Summer posters.

came up with "a change in the weather." While this is accurate, we broke the definition of climate change down into two parts: good climate change: the natural progression of the four seasons and the small variations in day-to-day weather, and the climate change we were discussing: global warming, destruction of habitats and ecosystems, ocean acidification, and other issues. To get the campers to further understand what this all meant, we asked them to tell us their favorite animals and then explained how those animals were affected by climate change. We went on to ask

## Becoming an Energy Expert *by Hailey Noble*

This summer I had the pleasure of working with NHLSCP in New Haven. My experience with NHLSCP was extremely educational, specifically the project that focused on energy efficiency in residential rental properties. Being energy efficient helps reduce our carbon emissions and, in turn, reduce the effects of global warming. It is vital that we start taking steps to combat climate change and the harmful effects it has on our planet.

Throughout the summer my co-worker, Jen Levine, and I did significant research for a better understanding of energy efficiency, its benefits, and the easiest and most effective ways to save energy in your home. One key challenge we discovered is that landlords and tenants are not able to agree, believing that one or the other is paying to make the switch but won't receive any of its benefits. For example, if the tenants pay directly for utilities, they have an incentive to

make improvements but don't own the building and may not be around to see the

savings they invested in. The owners have the opposite problem; their investment will increase property value but they won't see the savings pay back.

Eager to learn how to solve this problem for landlords and tenants and increase energy efficiency in general, Jen and I set up a meeting with Maritza Estremera and Sheri Borrelli at United Illuminating Company to learn more about their work with energy efficiency in New Haven. UI runs the Home Energy Solutions and other programs to cut energy use. These programs are mandated by the

state and funded through rate payer fees.

Besides reviewing available energy programs, Sheri introduced us to HOW Green Is New Haven, an energy assessment program for Houses of Worship. We were able to set up an energy assessment through UI for the First Unitarian Universalist Society of New Haven, which is where our NHLSCP offices are located. The initial free energy assessment, opened my eyes to the major inefficiencies in the building. We hope to continue with the HOW Green Is New Haven program in the coming months to make improvements to the building that will pay for themselves through savings..

Additionally Jen and I worked closely with Maritza throughout the summer to help with their Youth Conservation Corps canvassing. We attended training sessions, and did some follow-up canvassing in New Haven to educate people about the UI Home Energy Solutions-Income Eligible program, and encourage them to sign up for an energy assessment of their

living space. I thoroughly enjoyed canvassing the Dwight neighborhood because making

connections with people and having a face-to-face conversations about energy efficiency felt very effective. Additionally, we were able to get some sign-ups for the HES-IS program.

After researching energy efficiency in rental properties, we decided to create [elmenenergyproject.org](http://elmenenergyproject.org), a website that offers resources for both landlords and tenants to make their living spaces and rental properties more energy efficient. There isn't anything like it for New Haven, and it will be helpful to have apartment sustainability resources all in one place. The website is part of the Elm

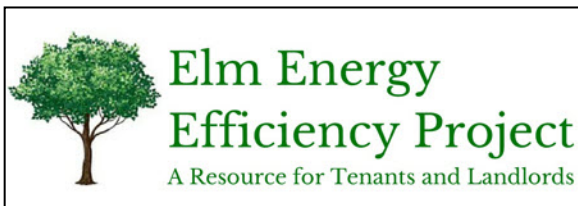


Intern Hailey Noble doing energy efficiency outreach in Dwight neighborhood.

Energy Efficiency Project which will also involve outreach to let people know about the site. The site includes a page for tenants which provides information on ways to make one's living space more energy efficient, options for an energy assessment, and more. The site also includes a page for landlords with resources about the benefits of energy efficiency and weatherization in rental properties, an explanation of the Energy Star rating system, DIY changes, and more. Finally the website includes a page with additional resources for ways people can be more sustainable in their daily lives and includes sections on transportation, recycling, and landscaping.

I hope it will help make homes and rental properties in New Haven more energy efficient and help make the world a greener place. Hopefully we'll all take this information and get to work reducing energy waste and carbon emissions and increasing savings!

*Hailey Noble is from Woodstock, Vermont and is a rising senior at Hobart and William Smith Colleges majoring in International Relations and minoring in Spanish and Latin American Studies.*



# Live! Car Free

By Jamie Friedman

Leading up to my 16th birthday, I looked forward to the freedom that came with being able to drive a car, a national symbol of independence that few would voluntarily give up. I knew that driving couldn't be good for the environment, but I saw that more as a problem of the past, back when cars emitted dark gray smoke that left a visible fog over almost every city, back when you could see the pollution. My naïve faith in the car companies and our government's environmental regulations led me to believe that driving a car couldn't be that bad for the planet. So when I learned my contribution to our summer of fighting climate change would be discouraging car use, I was a little skeptical at first.

But this summer, as I began delving further and further into my research, I was rudely awakened to the reality of car use. How could one gallon of gas, something we spend only around \$2 on, be responsible for the emission of 20 pounds of CO2 into our air? If those numbers seem disproportional to you as a gallon of gas is only 6.3 pounds, it is because the burning of gasoline reacts with the oxygen in our air, resulting in the added weight. In fact, just by owning a car, we inherit a huge carbon footprint from the CO2

emitted during the car's manufacturing. There is no way around it- car use is heating our planet, and the results of this warming are extreme. So extreme, it's hard to wrap your head around it.

I soon realized that this disbelief was at the root of the problem. So many of us are resistant to accepting both the causes of climate change and the magnitude of its effects. Cars are such a valued and accepted part of our society, that we don't want to question their true impact or assume that environmental responsibility. And even when we do accept the effects, the whole situation feels out of our hands. When the U.S. pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement, nearly 70%

of Americans were upset. Most of those Americans have since moved on, assuming that our government and oil companies are the only ones who can really make a change. For me, this summer was about realizing that change can and needs to start happening from the bottom up. The challenge is to let people know that it's possible.

I started by examining my own circumstances. Being from Weston Connecticut, a small town with no public transportation, my options were limited. I live a one hour walk to the closest bus stop, and a two hour walk to the train station. Our lack of resources makes the car-free

commitment nearly impossible. However, in a week I will return to my college in Grinnell, Iowa where I will be living car-free. And when I think about moving somewhere else in the future, I will take the ability to live car-free into consideration. A city like New Haven, that has buses, shuttles, trains,



and many more resources, would be an ideal place for this lifestyle.

This summer, we created the new campaign Live! Car-Free! to let New Haven residents know that they have that option. Live! is a page on the website of goNewHavenGo (an alternative transportation program) that outlines the reasons a car-free life is important, and provides resources that make it possible within the region. We hope that it will target people's disbelief that cars are making such a negative impact- while also making the ability to change realistic for every New Haven resident. And for people who need more convincing than the environmental benefits alone, the page outlines health, safety, and financial benefits that come with a car-free life.

With this new campaign we have set a foundation so that the car-free movement can grow faster in New Haven. I look forward to hearing about how this movement continues to work towards supporting more car-free residents and I am grateful for the skills and lessons I will take with me going forward. Hopefully, just as the invention of the car changed the world, a new car-free age will have a big impact in healing the planet and building a greener future.

*Jamie Friedman (below) is an undergraduate at Grinnell College and is from Weston, Connecticut.*



### Alternative Transportation Works in New Haven!

- I like **WALKING** for exercise.
- I save time and money by **telecommuting** two days a week!
- I rent a **Zipcar** when I'm going somewhere far.
- Biking** is efficient and fun!
- There are always **BUSES** available for me to catch!
- Taking the **TRAIN** to work is easy!
- When I go on a big run to the grocery store, I know **Uber, Taxi, or Lyft** will be there for me

**Clean Energy Summer** continued....

them what they thought humans were doing to cause such destruction. Here the students excelled no matter the age. They all understood that throwing trash in the ocean, cutting down trees, driving cars, and other actions are harmful to the environment. It gave me hope that they were able to recognize some of the problems, and might come away from our activity trying to change their ways.

We could not simply leave them with all of the harmful things they were doing, so we brainstormed a list of actions they could take to help the environment. The ideas conjured up at the various camps ranged from turning off lights when you leave a room and recycling to getting solar panels and riding your bike instead of driving a car. Luiza and I also gave students another simple way to support the campaign: coloring in posters and bringing home flyers to inform their families about how to make the switch to renewable energy. The students were eager to help and enjoyed having their pictures taken with their posters. The pictures were then posted on our Facebook page and drew a lot of interest to the project.

Overall, my experience working with the campers as well as creating the campaign was rewarding and educational. I will certainly take all of the skills I gained into my future positions, and I look forward to seeing the continued success of my projects as well as what NHLSCP creates in the future.

*Jen Levine is a rising sophomore at Davidson College and is from Easton, Connecticut.*



*Painting one of two Clean Energy Summer street banners on the New Haven Green. Jen is third from left.*

**Climate Emergency/Mobilization** resources prepared this summer by Jamie Wetmore and Jumana Aryan. To learn more go to New Haven Climate Movement website. Below are slides from one online presentation.

**THERE IS NO DEBATE.**

**98% of scientists are in agreement that climate change is real, poses a significant threat, & is caused by humans.**

- Additionally, scientific predictions have underestimated the effects of climate change, meaning the future could be even worse off than expected.
- Nearly every country has recognized that climate change is a serious issue, and signed onto the Paris Agreements in order to combat climate change. However, the real response will not keep us under the 1.5° C goal, which threatens the livelihoods of millions of people and of the Earth itself.
- Governments and representatives have taken a gradualist approach towards the issue, an improper response to an emergency situation.

**"NO CHALLENGE POSES A GREATER THREAT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS THAN CLIMATE CHANGE." - BARACK OBAMA**

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**Things You've Probably Heard About Climate Change:**

- 2014, 2015, 2016 were the warmest years on record.
- Ice sheets are melting faster than ever before.
- Thousands of coral reefs are dying.
- The first heatwave in the US occurred in the month of January.

**WHAT IS THE SOLUTION? MOBILIZATION!**

Mobilization is a rapid, large-scale organization and effort taken by a government to respond to an emergency.

A well-known, successful example of mobilization was during World War II when the U.S. shifted the economy towards the war effort. Everyone in the country contributed to this cause.

It is important to realize how much of an impact federal and state action can have towards a crisis.

**Hard Working Interns** take a break to hike East Rock.

From left Luiza Livingston, Jumana Aryan, Hailey Noble, Jen Levine, Jamie Wetmore, Jamie Friedman.... The group was a great font of energy, generosity and creativity!!



# Finding Christmas Anywhere

By Abigail Cipparone

A few months ago, I learned that the New Haven León Sister City Project (NHLSCP) sought summer interns for its school reinforcement program. The opportunity seemed perfect -- I'd get to work at a school, live with a family in León, Nicaragua, and practice my Spanish. So I shot an email to Chris Schweitzer, the Director of NHLSCP, and about 20 minutes later we were chatting at the local Starbucks. When Chris heard that I sing with the Yale Glee Club, he exclaimed "Oh, could you please run a choral program for our school?". Caught unawares, I agreed. In the coming weeks, my doubts about my decision grew. How could a 20 year old, 2nd year Yale student lead a choral program in Nicaragua? It sounded unrealistic at best, foolish at worst.

When I get nervous, I over prepare. I touched down in Managua, Nicaragua with a backpack full of early childhood choral curriculum, a medley of song selections, and an empty notebook primed and ready for lesson plans.

The first choir of Goyena was a small and scrappy collection of 8-11 year-olds. None of my singers had sung in a choir before, and only a handful had any previous vocal experience. In my first lesson, I tried to lead them in singing Nicaragua Mía, but gave up as I realized that they didn't know how to match pitch. I started over with ear development exercises and slowly but surely, as the hours and days passed, more and more students began to sing in tune. A melody emerged from within the muddled tones.

In the 4-room Goyena school building, my choir didn't have any of the resources usually needed for a choral program. The school house rooms were made of concrete, and there was no electricity. I couldn't rehearse inside for fear that the children would overheat in the 90-

degree-plus weather, so I found an outdoor classroom which consisted of a concrete platform with a metal roof. It sat between a dirt soccer field and a stand of corn. This learning space worked well unless it rained; and it poured almost weekly. Drainage was a pipe dream in Goyena, so parents would keep their children from going to school on rainy days. Even with clear skies, choir attendance was mixed. The majority of parents worked so they depended on their children for help on heavy work days.

Nonprofits like NHLSCP work to give Nicaragua a much-needed leg up. They find what Paul Farmer calls in *Mountains beyond Mountains* "areas of moral clarity" --situations where what ought to be done is perfectly clear. They bring educational programming, women's health programs, kitchen stoves and a cleaner water supply to Goyena. NHLSCP is fully Nicaraguan-run, and almost completely run by the community of Goyena itself. It leads women support groups and provides reproductive health resources. It supports Goyena public education.

The barriers I faced starting the Goyena school choir were uncomfortable, but unsurprising. This was the reality of creating a choral program in the second poorest country in the western hemisphere. Poverty keeps children from attending the best schools, which are in the city.

My family has a story we tell every Christmas called Christmas Anywhere. A train breaks down on Christmas Eve in the midst of a snowstorm. The passengers come together, each sharing what they packed for the holiday with the other strangers on the train. Much like those travelers on Christmas Eve, the first choir of Goyena refused to let circumstances keep them from what they set out to do. 16 boys and girls learned songs from Mexico, Nicaragua, the United States and South Africa. Every day, as I stepped down from NHLSCP's truck in Goyena, a gaggle of children would



shout "Abigail!" and push and pull me to our classroom. The choristers dutifully marched around the room to practice the rhythm of *De Colores*, and relented to my constant pushing to "Canten juntos!" and to "Pongan sus manos a sus lados!". As I left the school yard after choir, I'd hear snippets of the song *Siya Hamba* coming from math class.

A few days ago, we celebrated with an end of the year concert. The singers dressed up in their school uniforms, the closest thing they had to concert black. A few Goyenan women made tortillas and beans and the school teachers decorated a makeshift "stage" and "auditorium" with colored paper and balloons. The concert was a hit. We began with *De Colores*, then sang *If I Had a Hammer*. The crowd ate up *Siya Hamba*, and when we sang *Nicaragua Mía*, a good dozen community members joined their voices with ours. Singing our last downbeat, we held hands and bowed. As I looked out at the audience, I was overwhelmed with gratitude. I was so grateful for the singers, the staff at NHLSCP, and the parents and community members who contributed their creativity to help to make this choir.

The Goyena school choir created a new version of Christmas Anywhere. With resourcefulness, we took what little we had, and gave the gift of music to Goyena. With resourcefulness, Nicaragua can pick itself up. And with persistence, NHLSCP will continue to make a difference.

*Abigail Cipparone is a rising junior at Yale and is from Old Lyme, Connecticut.*

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*NH/LSCP supports education  
and sustainable development in  
Nicaragua and New Haven.*

Paper: Environment PC 100.  
Post consumer 100%

**Thank You for your ongoing support!**

## **Make a Plan to Amplify Your Impact**

If you would like to extend your support of New Haven Leon Sister City Project to make a lasting impact, there are several gift arrangements to choose from. Making a meaningful gift is easier than you think. A gift in your will or trust, for example, is accomplished by adding simple bequest language to your will - and you'll join others already part of *New Haven Leon: Presente!*

Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or benefit us after your lifetime, you can find a charitable plan that lets you provide for your family and support NHLSCP.

More information at [newhavenleon.org](http://newhavenleon.org) on the Give page.

