



On Becoming a Global Sustainability Youth Leader

It was an honor to be selected as the Castle High School youth delegate to the 11th Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. The Summit helped to show me more about sustainability and myself.

Going into this Summit I had no idea what to expect. The idea of gaining a “can do attitude” drew me toward this journey. Before the Summit I helped prepare a presentation on sustainability projects in the Windward community. I began to understand that sustainability is not just about the environment but also includes social, economic, and so much more. At the Summit I became inspired seeing the ambitions of all the youth delegates. We had the finest guest speakers who taught us to embrace who we are and go after our dreams. Nancy Slonim Aronic is an author and NPR commentator, a hilarious and vibrant writer and teacher. She spoke of how to let everything inside of you out and onto the paper. Nancy was so inspirational as she lived her life the way she wanted. She was the kindest, sweetest person and helped us see ourselves in a brighter light. Viviana Guzman is a Grammy nominated brilliant flutist who has performed in 123 countries. She spoke of her health challenges as a child and how she overcame them. Viviana showed us that even though life may be hard, do not give up! Find a way to make your current predicament into a positive one and make your future brighter even on the darkest days. With all of these inspirational guest speakers I was inspired to make my future just as bright as theirs. Wednesday was our "The Sustainability Day." The Hawaii delegates shared the fantastic sustainable activities happening in Hawaii. We also got to learn about the amazing sustainability actions happening on Hawaii Island and on Martha's Vineyard.

Dr. Sarah Oktay shared about the Nantucket Field Station, a sister island to Martha's Vineyard. She helped us to see how science helps to find ways to sustain our world and the environmental problems happening in Nantucket and what they do to preserve their island. At the Summit we made 5-year action plans that helped us map out how we would attain our future goals for our lives. At first the 5-year plan was scary because I had never thought of anything outside of high school. The Emerging Leaders (college alumni from Hawaii and Martha's Vineyard) helped support us in a good direction and got us to really think about our future. I was very moved by everyone's goals and life stories. I wanted to help others become just as enriched as I was becoming! We learned so much and we got to meet and become friends with all the youth delegates. They were all so wonderful and welcoming with their Aloha spirit. I hope to meet all of them once again, hopefully in Hawaii, and show them the same amount of kindness they shared with us. Overall the Summit was eye opening and wonderful. I got to meet the coolest adults and become inspired to help our environment by becoming more sustainable. I became friends with so many fantastic human beings. I will definitely bring all that I have learned that week to Castle High School. I am looking forward to being a SHYLI Fellow and through my Sustainability-In-Action Project I hope to show others how easy and important it is to be sustainable. Thank you to everyone for this amazing experience, I will treasure it forever.

Jacqueline Noborikawa
Senior, Castle High School
Windward, Oahu, Hawaii



**11th Youth Leadership Summit
for Sustainable Development
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Greeted by excited, joy-filled voices and bubbly laughter I was immediately welcomed in and offered a spot in the organized chaos of that morning's activities. I had arrived three days late to the Summit (from Washington DC trip). I had been worried everyone would have already bonded. I was worried I would spend the next few days standing on the edge of the crowd too afraid to contribute. I had nothing to fear. I was approached by complete strangers and treated as an old friend, instantly filled in on the inside jokes with friendly teasing being thrown about. I sat, sandwiched between two people I passed daily in the school halls without ever learning their names, and listened to the emerging leaders, only a few years older than I, share their amazing journeys and accomplishments. Then, later, I was in a workgroup with Bella, an emerging leader who, like me, aspires to international studies. She coached us on college, networking, and internships, and about doing what we love in a way that gives back to the community or benefits the environment. The Summit was such an enlightening, heartening experience. Never in one place have I seen such a large gathering of teenagers so dedicated to making a difference in the world. And never before have I been so inspired to push myself for the good of other and for the good of the environment. And never before have I been so determined to succeed. From the familiar faces I passed daily in the high school halls, to the new faces of the Hawaii youth I was surrounded by intelligent, curious minds who had come together to share our dreams for our islands, and who had left with new ideas on how to accomplish those dreams and with new friends for life.

Willa Vigneault
Junior, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School



During my first Youth Leadership Summit I met new people, learned about writing, speaking, but most importantly, I learned about myself. During the Summit we were organized in work groups with college youth with a similar career path. For me this was one of the most important parts of the Summit. Everyone contributed to the smaller more generalized discussion of our lives. We were able to not only learn about other people, but about ourselves. We discussed where we wanted to be in our lives and what we would have to do to get there. It made me really think about my future goals and what I would have to do to get there. We explored things affecting our lives: choices we make and the will to make things happen. At first we thought it wasn't so important to consider what kind of house we wanted to live in or how much money we needed to realize our goals. We soon realized that these seemingly small factors were important. Each day built on the next – until we created our personalized five-year plan. Focused year by year, we added our goals to each year to help us relate – what would I want to be doing when I was 22? This exercise was my favorite part of the work group because it allowed me to visualize my life in the future. I hadn't ever thought about a five-year plan and by verbalizing and expressing my thoughts in writing, I was able to physically see my vision for my life evolve in just one week! At the Summit Graduation each workgroup presented their 5-year plans to everyone. It helped me learn more about other people and the kinds of lives they wanted to live.

Chris Aring
Senior, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School