

One day in ninth grade, I was sitting in a classroom after school when the facilities staff came to empty the trash and recycling bins. I did not think much of it until I saw him combine both into one big bag. He must have seen the confused expression on my face, for he sighed and said, “The recycling bins are just for show.” There I stood, a youth council member of Project Green Schools’ (PGS) since the fifth grade, stunned and embarrassed that my own school did not recycle.

Project Green Schools has always been intertwined in my life. Having Robin Organ as a neighbor meant that I had many opportunities to get involved, whether it be local like selling glow sticks at the Mansfield father-daughter dances, or national like speaking at an event affiliated with the United Nations in New York City. I knew that my years of work with PGS had prepared me to make my own school live up to its school colors: green. After numerous meetings with our administration and facilities staff, we came to an agreement; they said that the school would invest in a recycling dumpster if the facilities staff did not have the job of emptying the bins. I agreed because I felt confident that I could rally my peers to this common cause, as I had been thinking about starting a green club on campus for some time. I understood that major problems like these cannot be solved by one person. In our first year, my club managed to implement a very successful recycling program that significantly reduced waste. I quickly realized that students did not know what could and could not be recycled. To make further improvements, we hosted a school wide competition, where we proactively monitored the students’ recycling habits. In a short period of time, Green Club grew to over a hundred students in a school with just four hundred total. Our next big project that we took on was creating a garden on campus. We were blessed to have Robin come in and advise us on how to go about this project. In my sophomore year, we fundraised money through bake sales and a “Sponsor a

Plant” program in order to create a green pollinator space for meditation. This space was immediately incorporated into students’ lives; numerous classes shifted in order to take place in our garden in the Springtime. The biggest takeaway I have gained from this journey is that nothing will get done if we are only thinking for ourselves and our own personal gain. However, when we take a step back and think for the common good, we realize that it takes a village to make a significant change. PGS has given me the confidence and foundation needed to advocate for this given change.

Although it takes a village to make a monumental change in society, a piece of advice I would offer the next generation would be to never underestimate the power of your own individual efforts. Watching the end results of what Green Club at Ursuline has accomplished is a testament to the importance of following your passion to drive change.

This coming fall, I will be attending Northeastern University (NEU) in Boston, MA for a double major in bioengineering and biochemistry. One of the biggest factors that made NEU so appealing was their emphasis on sustainability education. Their sustainability mission aligns extremely well with PGS’ mission, for both are committed to teaching and molding the next generation of environmental leaders. I plan to take advantage of NEU’s offerings of nearly 200 courses that integrate sustainability. Although NEU is one of the greenest universities, I believe that more can be done, not only on campus, but also in the city of Boston itself. With the numerous emerging challenges, my ability to identify a problem, rally my peers, and create a solution will allow me to positively impact Northeastern’s student body. I am excited about the new scale that Northeastern could bring to the causes I am passionate about. If I can inspire a quarter of my school to believe and work towards a common goal, I can only imagine the Green Difference that can be made in Boston and beyond.