

Responsible Earth Stewardship

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With a plethora of prevalent global issues, we are surrounded with opportunities to make a difference in a variety of ways. So where do we begin? Protecting the environment is a noble quest, but what even is the environment and what can one person do? Albert Einstein once said, "The environment is everything that isn't me." This is an interesting thought that provokes the idea that we have the obligation to safeguard all our surroundings, not just follow the general slogan, "reduce, reuse, recycle." What we perceive as the environment can maybe help us understand and as a result become better stewards of it. The environment is the whole earth, everything around us. It is our duty to not only preserve, but protect it. It is our duty to become a steward of the Earth.

As long as I can remember, being outside has been my favorite thing to do. Growing up, going to the lake, raising animals, irrigating our family's land and even just playing in the yard; my brothers and I were taught that as citizens of the earth, we are charged with the responsibility of taking care of the gifts God has given us. These gifts are all around us in this world, but are most clearly evident in the breathtaking beauty of nature and the wonder of the environment. How humbling it is, that many of the resources we use every day are not renewable, even with today's technology. We have a limited amount and therefore must act wisely in our usage of them and preserve them, as is our duty by being citizens here.

Living in the Southwest, Eastern New Mexico in particular, water is definitely a precious resource and the supply is continually decreasing. The current drought started when I was 6 years old and the effects on the lives of those around me, the land around me, and our lifestyle were shocking. People lost their source of income and dust blew

constantly as the fields surrounding my house dried up. In a couple of years the lake water level dropped too low to continue irrigation and as a result the prices of hay and feed rose too high for us to continue raising horses or cattle. Witnessing firsthand the impact that a drought can have on a community there is only one word I have for it: devastating.

There is not much to do about droughts, besides being water usage conscious, but we did all we could. Our irrigation runoff collected into a small pond that was stocked with fish, our appliances were replaced with high efficiency ones, and installed drip lines in an effort to reduce the amount of water wasted. However, there are more opportunities to protect the environment, that is, to protect everything around us. From picking up trash, to Earth Day activities, I have participated in many events around my community in order to make myself a better Earth steward. Also, not only protecting and preserving, but also redistributing other kinds of resources to those in need, is important to me. Earth's resources are not just those that are natural, but can be also material goods, or yet again, "anything that isn't me."

At Tucumcari High School I am the President of our National Honor Society (NHS) Chapter, and this position has given me a unique chance to lead a group of outstanding students towards making a difference. This year, I led a drive to collect jeans locally and donate them to a program that in turn distributes them nationally to less fortunate teens. The drive was extremely successful and helped raise awareness for the less fortunate in our own community, and also for the previously established program at our school that collects clothes for local children, in which I am also actively involved.

Leaving high school, and my NHS Chapter, I hope to find a university that holds high the values that I do and will provide me a setting in which to augment my contribution in the various areas that make up Earth stewardship. I plan to associate with organizations, once in college that will make responsibility to the environment, and its resources, part of the educational experience and will provide opportunities for students. For me, learning does not simply come from books and classrooms, but from involvement and experiences gained from going out and doing great things. Raising awareness, rallying the participation of others and speaking up for the good of our planet will be an integral part of what I hope to achieve in life. Protecting the earth, that has nurtured me, will always play a key role in my life and will follow me, no matter what career I choose or where I go.