

Pro athletes express climate change concerns to students

By Stephen Ward

RENO – Carbon emissions and global warming are not concepts easily conveyed to teenagers. Telling them what it might mean to their ability to ski in Tahoe in the future made it real.

“It wasn’t a boring way of learning,” student Tyler Groves said.



Alliance for
Climate
Education
takes it show
to Reno and
Truckee.
Photo/Provided

The nonprofit Alliance for Climate Education is on a road trip in the Reno and Truckee area; bringing extreme athletes to high schools to give testimonials blended with fast-paced cartoons to get the message out.

That’s what ACE’s presentation consisted of Tuesday morning at North Valley High School in Reno. The group recruited acclaimed snowboarders Iris Lazzareschi and Moss Halladay to speak with students about the ways climate change has affected their sport.

"It's something we got to take care of," Halladay said to the crowd of about 400 fervent students.

Lazzareschi was quick to add her voice, explaining how she and Halladay had to cancel a trip to Alaska this year because of a lack of snowfall.

"We can't shoot when there's no snow," Lazzareschi said of needing to interrupt the film schedule.

ACE spokeswoman Rebecca Anderson did most of the talking; telling students they need to reduce their carbon footprint and staying informed about the environment.

Anderson's roughly 30-minute presentation ran consecutively with a fast-paced animation meant to illustrate all her main points. Trees reducing greenhouse gases were shown eating away at the gases as if they were malnourished animals.

The video also offered an array of statistics like the average young person needs 21 football fields worth of waste to accommodate for their consumption of energy.

"You don't have to live large to live well," Anderson said.

A cartoon depicting a teenager running quickly across an endless stretch of connected football fields brought the students into an uproar.

"That's tight!" a student in the front of the auditorium shouted.

Shortly before ending the presentation, the discussion's mood became somber. Halladay, who is from Tahoe City, explained how many of his friends cannot find work in the Tahoe area because of low snowfall, which ultimately creates a vicious cycle of unemployment and turmoil for the region.

"It doesn't care, like, what you think about it," Halladay said. "It affects you."

When shown an idyllic video where world carbon emissions are restrained and clean energy is the standard, students broke into commotion and raised their hands in unison when asked whether they would like to make that vision a reality.

“I think (the talk) was informative,” senior Jaffar Richardson said.

As the event came to a close, many students rushed the stage to snag autographs before heading back to class.

In the end, Anderson said her motive is more than just scaring kids about the future environmental outlook.

“As the next generation, they have the opportunity to change (the situation),” Anderson said. “It’s not going to be easy, but it needs to happen. After all, they’re going to be the ones most affected by it.”

More information is on the ACE website.

Other dates:

- March 24 9:30am: Nine-time Big Mountain Snowboarder of the Year and POW Founder Jeremy Jones visits his hometown of Truckee at Truckee High School
- March 24 10am: Pro snowboarder Ralph Backstrom at McQueen High School in Reno
- March 24 11am: Pro snowboarder Nick Visconti at Truckee High School
- March 28 12:05pm: Visconti at Damonte Ranch High School in Reno.