

CHANGE MAKERS

Meet the Royal Banner's 2023 People of The Year: three juniors making big waves in the national climate justice movement.

story by **siena scornavacco & julia perian**

Last spring, Emma Weber (11) asked her sister Molly Weber (11) and her friend Rylan Neumann (11) to join her at a national training in Philadelphia, for an organization called the Sunrise Movement.

Sunrise is a movement centered around climate change activists. Led by young people, Sunrise aims to stand up to legislation and create change within communities all across the country.

Fairview's Net-Zero club is led by these three activists, as well as other student leaders that are a part of the leadership team. The club consistently has 50 or more people attend every week. Due to the hard work, dedication, and passion of this Fairview club, BVSD was part of a revolutionary step in the fight against climate change. In November of 2023, the first Green New Deal for Schools resolution was passed, making BVSD the first district in the country to commit to these demands.

ROOTS OF AN ACTIVIST

M: I started organizing in 8th grade with Fridays for Future, and Colorado 350 climate strikes, but it wasn't until I heard about the Green New Deal For Schools at the end of my sophomore year that I got really involved, and that was my first experience with Sunrise, which really made me way more engaged and excited about activism.

E: It wasn't until sophomore year when I went to my first training with the Sunrise Movement that I really had the opportunity to organize the way that I wanted to, and having the experience in Philadelphia where I was in a room full of high schoolers from across the country that cared about the same things I did, that was very transformational for me.

DE-ISOLATING THE ISSUE

E: I think that climate change a lot of the time, feels like a really isolating issue, and it's very common, especially for young people, to experience this feeling of being alone and powerless. Then, there's this really large juxtaposition when you join Sunrise Movement, or a movement like that, where as opposed to you being in your room, alone, super anxious about climate change, suddenly you're part of a national movement, where you're getting to connect with young people from across the country, and watching their successes.

A MOVEMENT'S MOTIVATION

R: What inspires me is seeing all the successes, and the other things that students and young people are doing to fight climate change, it gives me a lot of hope that we can at least prevent the worst of climate change...I'm also inspired by the tragedies that climate change poses to our local communities and communities across the world, and how it's totally ruining peoples lives.

M: I'm also really inspired by how I feel working with other young people, surrounded by young activists from across the country, or even in my own highschool. I feel so connected and united and powerful working together, and that really inspires me and makes me confident in our ability to win real change, like we've seen this past fall.

THE PROCESS OF A PROTEST

E: We were consistently going to school board meetings, giving public comments, and then we started meeting with school board members, and talking through the details of what a resolution would look like... Then, we finally reached an agreement that students and all of the board members could feel good about, and we worked with their attorney to actually write the resolution and edit it. They voted on it, and now it's passed.

As far as the significance, this means the district is committing to a bunch of things, like **climate curriculum, climate disaster plans, pathways to green jobs, trying to keep free RTD bus passes, as well as furthering their commitments to net zero energy by 2050. In broader terms, they are also calling on the state and the federal government to pass Green New Deal For Schools legislation.**

M: **Our resolution is important because we need a climate curriculum. We need to be taught the truth of the climate crisis, so that we are prepared to face it and combat it now and after high school. We need to have climate disaster plans that we are aware of, so that we...feel prepared for climate disasters, and how to recover afterward. Schools and public buildings account for a big portion of emissions and by making our energy come from renewable sources, we can cut down on that. Our last demand, pathways to green jobs, is also very essential because in order to have a sustainable economy, all of our jobs need to be green, and students need to know about those, so we know what our future looks like, and how we can contribute to the world we are creating with the vision of the green new deal.**



Net Zero leaders pictured left to right: Emma Weber (11), Rylan Neuman (11), Molly Weber (11). photo by farah ahmadova.