



We Are The Leaders Of Today

Kevin J. Patel, One Up Action
California

☀ Call to Action

Make yourself heard about climate initiatives in your hometown. Join the discussion about what is being done on the issues that directly affect you. Get the support you need from One Up Action: oneupaction.org.

☀ Values

- Pioneer
- Committed
- Citizen Leader
- Environmentalist
- Solidarity

☀ Lessons Learned

Health issues and climate issues are intertwined.

Many affluent communities are not as affected by the climate crisis as marginalized communities are.

In the face of adversity, people need to step up.

When Kevin was in sixth grade, suddenly his heart started acting crazy.

He was rushed to the hospital, where he learned that he had heart palpitations caused by smog and air pollution. His health crisis inspired him to become an environmental activist. First, he started an environmental club in his school. Later he started One Up Action, an organization that supports young climate activists from marginalized communities.

“I wanted to create an organization that can give funds to young changemakers and help them by providing them with connections and opportunities,” he says. He also created a Youth Climate Commission that is advising the Los Angeles County administration on climate initiatives. “Young people are very, very smart,” Kevin says. “We are not only the leaders of tomorrow. We are the leaders of today.”

☀ Language Arts

Drawing on Kevin’s experience, research how pollution (air, water, or soil) can affect young people. Then, with the information you have found, create a series of posters to use in an information campaign. In a separate essay, explain why you chose the images and words you chose, and which type of social media you would use for your information campaign.

Create a series of 4-6 TikTok videos that explains the concept of environmental justice through the use of concrete examples.

Write a speech aimed at local political leaders in which you explain and make the case for supporting the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Write a Facebook post inviting people to actively partici-

pate in Kevin’s organization, One Up Action. Explain not only what the group does, but why it is important, and how it can benefit society as a whole.

STEM Activities

Like most highly motivated students, Kevin’s ability to organize and unite people began when he organized the environmental club at his school. Find out what clubs are offered at your school. Then design the structure for a club that addresses a sustainable issue that is not being currently addressed by the clubs at your school. Select a teacher or member of your community to be the advisor for your club.

Kevin often refers to marginalized communities and issues that he and others face living in Los Angeles. Compare the carbon footprint of LA to that of the town that you live in, and two other major cities. Display this data on a graph and explain how it is related to climate change.

Write a note, or create a presentation to send to the 25 members of the Youth Climate Commission in LA about an issue that you would like to assist in solving.

Monitor the air quality in your community, and identify some of the factors that may be contributing to the deterioration of air quality.

Sustainability Innovations

Kevin’s organization, [One Up Action](#)¹, enables anyone to start their own youth climate commission by completing the forms available on their website. Kevin belongs to the only West Coast-based Youth Climate Commission Chapter in the United States. What is holding you back from joining him in this cause?

There are many organizations striving to create a more sustainable future for the people of Los Angeles. California [Green Works](#)² and [Communities for a Better Environment](#)³ are two leaders in aiding communities of color and improving the sustainable footprint of Urban LA Communities.

In addition to progressive efforts like One Up Action, organizations like [Tree People](#)⁴ have been working on making Los Angeles greener for 45 years. Tree People strives to educate people about the importance of trees, and how they affect greenhouse gas, water management, and making the city’s air more breathable.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Climate Activist. When asked what role young people should play in solving the climate crisis, Kevin responded, “We should all be activists.” Climate activism is a career path listed time and again in these lesson plans; that’s because without climate activism we cannot stop the climate crisis. Interested in becoming a climate activist? You can get active locally right now. Join your school environmental group, or a nearby chapter of Fridays for the Future, Extinction Rebellion, the Sunrise Movement, or Kevin’s group, One Up Action. If there are no chapters in your community, you can start your own. As you develop your activist skills, many full-time activism opportunities will open to you.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). National and state governments play an essential role in regulating and enforcing environmentally sustainable behavior. Working for the EPA or for your local environmental department can be a rewarding and useful ca-

reer path. The EPA employs 15,000 people around the United States, and needs people with a variety of skills, from communications to computer programming. Want to learn more? [Visit here](#)⁵. Other agencies, from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy to the Bureau of Land Management also offer many opportunities to help protect the environment and make a difference in your community.

Environmental and Public Health Advocate or Practitioner. The quality of the environment has a direct effect on human health--from air and water quality and exposure to toxins to the amount of green space present in communities. You could become an advocate for [environmental health](#)⁶ or public health; or, by becoming a doctor, nurse, or medical professional, you can draw attention to the links between environmental and human well- being. Here is an introduction to the field of [environmental health](#)⁷.

Greengrocer. Like Kevin, about [23 million Americans](#)⁸ live in “food deserts,” neighborhoods that have little or no access to fresh food and produce. But there are ongoing efforts to build grocery stores, natural food stores, and farmers markets in inner cities, helping to remedy the poor health and nutrition suffered by residents of these communities. Are you interested in starting a farmers market, or becoming a manager of a sustainable grocery store? This is a career that can really help your community. Here’s a nice overview of what it’s like to [manage a grocery store](#)⁹. Want to start a farmers market? Here’s a [great introduction from the USDA](#)¹⁰, and a longer guide from the [Texas Department of Agriculture](#)¹¹.

1 <https://onecupaction.org/ycc-final/>

2 <https://californiagreenworks.org/>

3 <http://www.cbecal.org/>

4 <https://www.treepeople.org/about/what-we-do>

5 <https://www.epa.gov/careers/why-work-epa>

6 <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/environmental-health>

7 <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environmental-health>

8 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7299236/>

9 <https://thegrocerystoreguy.com/what-does-a-grocery-store-manager-do/>

10 <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/starting-a-farmers-market/>

11 https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FarmersMarketGuide-online_version_lo-res.pdf

