

Our Enemy: Climate Disruption

Daily News-Record (Harrisonburg, VA) - August 29, 2013

- Author/Byline: Cathy Strickler
- Section: Opinion (Open Forum)
- Readability: 6-7 grade level (Lexile: 980)

A month ago, the "Walk for Our Grandchildren" was completed, a walk to highlight that our grandchildren need a climate that is stable and healthy. I walked 60 miles from Harpers Ferry to Washington, D.C., as a statement of how important I think this issue is. It wasn't as bad as I thought it might be and I only ended up with bruised toenails. I gained much more than I sacrificed.

I learned that I was tougher than I thought I was. Still, it was hot and arduous, taking a toll on my aging body that doesn't spring back like it used to.

I came away with an attitude that I didn't want to have walked for nothing. It has made me want to be more emphatic with my words and actions. H.G.

Wells said "History is a race between education and catastrophe," and that is certainly true for climate change.

I feel like the determination I learned on the walk continues full force with the resolve to help people understand and spread the word themselves about what we're up against.

To me, it's like an enemy is over the horizon and needs to be stopped because it keeps getting more powerful as it approaches.

Even though it seems far away and easy to ignore, now is the time to prevent harm in the future. Our enemy is climate disruption.

Actually, it's not only in the future; the harm, the very personal risk, is happening now.

Most of us are aware of the raging fire threatening Yosemite National Park in California.

It seems distant, but our firefighters, Shenandoah National Park employees, have been sent to fight that fire.

Among them is the son-in-law of friends and the father of their seven-year-old granddaughter, Sophie.

As the climate is increasingly disrupted with more droughts and fires, how many more husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers will be put in harm's way?

It is hard to admit that we need to change the way we do things but it is easier to make those changes now than waiting until later.

We take our medicine now, before we get any sicker.

We start to look at our decisions through a new lens; one that looks at how our decisions affect climate disruption.

I know my friends' granddaughter and I can see her sweet face and gentle manner. I see her grandparents teach and guide her. I've seen her write 'I love the earth'.

When I think of these things and how it's all connected - our use of fossil fuels, the high levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, the gases causing the heat to stay trapped in, our world getting hotter with more extreme weather, more people dying from fires, floods, and hurricanes, or dying just trying to help - I feel sad, but I don't feel helpless.

Thinking about Sophie is sobering.

Protecting the innocent from suffering is a herculean task.

Fiscal responsibility, not only human suffering, is also at stake here.

Insurance experts say that for every dollar we spend now to slow climate change, \$3.65 is saved in disaster costs.

When higher insurance claims are paid out, all of our rates go up. We will have a riskier world to insure and we pay a higher price. Attend to it now; be smart and efficient.

All this means I need to change my ways. During the walk I found a strength I didn't know I had. There was a lot of fantastic support with meals prepared and tents transported, but I had to keep walking, nobody else could do that for me.

And nobody else can change my ways except me. That means, to me, anyway, that I push harder for society wide changes that will improve our situation the quickest. How many fires does Sophie's father need to go fight?

Climate disruption has many faces. I can only think of Sophie's.

Cathy Strickler lives in Harrisonburg.

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