

EVENT RAISES MONEY FOR CLIMATE WALK

Posted: January 27, 2014

By JONATHON SHACAT



HARRISONBURG — Peter Jackson prefers to say “climate change” rather than “global warming.”

In some sense, they mean essentially the same thing, he says. But the term “global warming” can be easily misunderstood.

“People see cold temperatures and they think there is no such thing as global warming,” he said. “When people talk about global warming, if you get caught up in the idea of it being warmer, then you are not on the right track.”

“What’s happening is a disruption in climate patterns,” he explained. “As a result, you are having extreme colds, extreme heats and droughts, periods of little rain followed by periods of intense rain.”

Jackson, 24, who graduated from Spotswood High School in 2008 and James Madison University in 2012, works as a freelance videographer and filmmaker.

He made a film called “Sea of Change” last summer for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network that outlines the sea level rise affecting the Hampton Roads region.

His film was shown Sunday evening at Court Square Theater at a fundraiser to benefit Jerry Stewart, of Loudoun County, who plans to walk across the country later this year to raise awareness of what activists call a climate crisis.

Stewart, who graduated from Kenyon College in Ohio in 2009 with a bachelor’s in religious studies, will leave Los Angeles on March 1 with other participants in what’s being dubbed the “Great March for Climate Action.” Those on the “march” plan to walk roughly 3,000 miles before arriving in Washington, D.C., around Nov. 1.

Each participant in the Great March for Climate



Jerry Stewart (right) talks with Ryan Lester, a James Madison University senior and member of the Earth Club, Sunday during a reception before the showing of “Sea of Change” at Court Square Theater. Stewart and others plan to walk from Los Angeles to Washington D.C., in the Great March for Climate Action between March 1 and Nov. 1. (Photos by Michael Reilly / DN-R)



A scene of a flooded car in the film “Sea of Change” is projected on the screen Sunday at the Court Square Theater.

Action must raise \$5,000, or \$20 per day, to cover the costs of food and logistical support for the 245-day trip.

As of Sunday afternoon, Stewart had raised 40 percent of his goal, or about \$2,000. But, Sunday evening's fundraiser brought in \$2,340.

A poster promoting his upcoming adventure says: "Is he crazy? Why on Earth is Jerry walking across the U.S.?"

On Sunday, when asked if he is indeed "crazy," Stewart chuckled for a moment, and acknowledged he is a little bit crazy some of the time.

"I think the crazy people are those fossil fuel industries who are destroying the climate. I mean, that's really the radical people. They are laying waste to a planet for their short-term business model," he added.

Many of those in the fossil fuel and other energy-related industries would disagree, of course. While the vast majority of scientists have concluded that climate change is indeed caused, at least in part, by human activity, some climate scientists aren't so sure. They say climate change is a natural, cyclical process that has occurred thousands of times in the Earth's history. That position has gained traction in recent years due in part to the so-called "Climate-gate" scandals, where the veracity of research by climate scientists was called into question. But climate change activists say much of that research has been verified, adding that many of the claims made by skeptics is false or misinterpreted.

Sunday's event was sponsored by Climate Action Alliance of the Valley, the Shenandoah chapter of the Sierra Club, JMU's Gandhi Center, and iMatter Youth.

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James Madison University graduate Peter Jackson introduces the film "Sea of Change" Sunday at the Court Square Theater for the Climate Action Alliance of the Valley hosting of a Chesapeake Climate Action Network film.



Emily Heffling, Virginia campus organizer for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, (right) helps Heather Lantz of Harrisonburg with informational brochures Sunday at Climate Action Alliance of the Valley hosting a Chesapeake Climate Action Network film.