

Small Steps

Change is something I really struggle with. I don't like it and honestly it's really daunting to me. I've never been able to really accept change as a good thing but rather something I've had to do. What I have come to realize is that it is something we have to do or nothing *will* change. Change is really challenging but it's a process that will hopefully lead to something better.

I've grown up walking my dog through an alley near my house that is littered with trash and a factory nearby that generates loads of smoke that gets sent into the atmosphere. This was normal, this is normal, but does it have to be? I used to think about taking a day to pick up the trash spread throughout my walking route or confronting the factory owners and asking them if they knew how many toxins and chemicals they were putting into the air I breathe. But I realized, how can I stop someone from littering? Someone might accidentally let a candy wrapper fall out of their hands and even if they did see it would they pick it up? I also had to consider there were many other alleyways, roads, parks, and parking lots filled with plastic bags and old eating utensils and what not. How could I stop people littering by myself? How would I confront a factory owner? How would I even find them? How do I even know they would listen to some 13 year old kid? The hows were endless.

Everything takes time but there's no harm in taking small steps. Small steps are what lead to making big differences. In my family we have worked on reducing our power usage. We usually keep the lights off to let natural light fill our house. We watch how much water we use and make sure doors are shut when we are heating and cooling the house. For the first two weeks of school we rode our bikes to school every morning. I felt like we were making a difference but over time obstacles arose. Bikes broke, doors were left open and lights weren't always turned off. The pattern had broken but why? Our lives were busy. School, work, and extra curricular activities drew us away from those daily practices. I think this has happened to many of us and I know working back up to a routine and even building a new one is hard. It takes time and effort but it doesn't take a lot of people to make a change, so what can we do as a community to help keep our lovely city and earth healthy?

I had the opportunity to go on retreat to Camp Friedenswald with my church for a weekend and talk about ways to reduce our energy consumption. We each got a journal and one of the pages consisted of a list of ways to address climate change so I thought I would share the ones that caught my eye. Reducing food waste, eating more plant based foods, installing LED lights and planting trees on degraded land are things we can easily do to start taking those small steps.

Just think about all the things you love to do, whether it's walking around Fiddler's Pond or biking on the Millrace. Think about how powerful it is when you can do those things in fresh air with no trash on the ground or in the water. It will take time but I believe that if Goshen, as a community, starts taking these small steps we can really change for the better.