

Spring/Summer 2020

GOOD NEIGHBOR[®]

welcome



**CHANGE-MAKERS
HELPING
COMMUNITIES
DO GOOD**

**MAKING WAVES:
GEN Z
TAKES ON
OCEAN TRASH**

**GIVE YOUR
HOME A
(SAFETY)
BOOST**

SPECIAL SECTION ▶

27 LIFE HACKS

FOR HOME,

MONEY & AUTO



QUICK & EASY HOME UPDATES TO MAKE YOUR LIFE BETTER



**READY
TO
EXPLORE?**

Check out statefarm.com/customer-care/welcome to get started.



The Ripple Effect

A band of committed Florida teenagers helps clean up their community's beaches—and gains more than they give.

WRITTEN BY **ANN HINGA KLEIN** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KATHRYN GAMBLE**



Above: Jemma and Emily. **Right:** One week of straws collected on the beach. **Previous page:** Marina, Jemma and Emily scan the beach.



IT STARTED WITH SOMETHING SMALL—IN THIS CASE, BITS OF TRASH AND PLASTIC EVERYWHERE ON THE SAND IN WEST PALM BEACH.

Florida beach kids grow up swimming in the ocean and scooping up shells. But as coral lost its color, the health department closed beaches and aquatic life was affected by bacteria, the community’s young people, including Emily Briceno, Jemma Currie and Marina Barto, couldn’t help but notice. “It felt like people were hurting someone I knew well,” Marina says.

Translating feelings into action to help a wider community is a different story. The story of Surface 71, started by students in a school class, offers one example of how small things can beget big results to help change neighborhoods for the better.



Left: Diane Buhler leads efforts during the cleanup. **Above:** Some of the trash collected in one morning. **Below:** Surface 71 artwork is used during community outreach.

CURIOS SCHOOLWORK, CURIOUS STUDENTS

In their middle school, students like Emily and Jemma can earn high school credit in a class called Experimental Design. Its goal is to examine current issues and formulate possible solutions. The big-picture lesson, says former teacher Stephanie Killingsworth, is that “science is curiosity about your world.”

When Emily was in seventh grade, her class raised money for freshwater wells in India and traveled there to observe the project’s impact. “I loved seeing how our work was helping people,” Emily recalls. On the plane ride home, she started thinking about the trash in her ocean backyard. “I wasn’t seeing it getting any better,” she says.

As the Experimental Design class brainstormed its next project, enthusiasm about marine health soon surfaced. “I instantly loved the idea,” Emily says. “I wanted to jump on it.”

Jemma did, too. “I grew up surfing, snorkeling and boating in the ocean,” she says.

As the class project came together, she and Emily became its de facto leaders. They named their group Surface 71, referring to the percentage of the planet covered by water.

AN OCEAN OF PROBLEMS

Marine life is in a losing battle with plastic. Researchers from the Smithsonian to the National Wildlife Federation estimate that from 8 to 12 million metric tons of plastic enter the world’s oceans annually, killing a million sea birds and countless whales, dolphins, manatees, seals, sea lions, shellfish and sea turtles that consume or become entangled in it.

Left adrift, that debris breaks down into tiny, toxic pieces to create what scientists describe as a “plastic soup.” Enormous vortexes of it now rotate in five major ocean currents worldwide. The plastic sinks

to the ocean’s deepest trenches, travels on currents to the world’s most isolated islands and pervades marine life. Globally, plastic has been found in 100 percent of sea turtle species and 50 percent of all marine mammals.¹

Local advocates have focused on the impact on beaches. Since 2013, Friends of Palm Beach, founded by Diane Buhler, has removed more than 64 tons of trash from the shoreline. The group has picked up medical waste with labels from Haiti and Cuba and octopus fishing pots from Senegal.

CLASSWORK + FIELDWORK

Once the students organized Surface 71, they focused on three ways to improve their community: beach cleanups, artwork to help convey messaging and raising money to expand the positive effect they could make on the community.

They recruited hundreds of students to help support Friends of Palm Beach cleanups. Surface 71 also collaborated with artists, teachers and a nonprofit to transform trash collected at the beach into works of art. Esmeralda the Eel, Harry the Hammerhead and Deep Water Danny help build awareness at Surface 71 presentations to school and community groups.

Early on, Surface 71 students sold T-shirts and reusable water bottles to raise money. Then, Stephanie received a letter about Philanthropy Tank, a local organization that supports young people in social service, activism and entrepreneurship. Applicants have to pitch their ideas before a panel of investors and an audience of 500.

“There’s no reason someone in this room should not apply,” Stephanie told her class. “I’m not going to be in charge, but I’ll absolutely back you up with everything you need.”

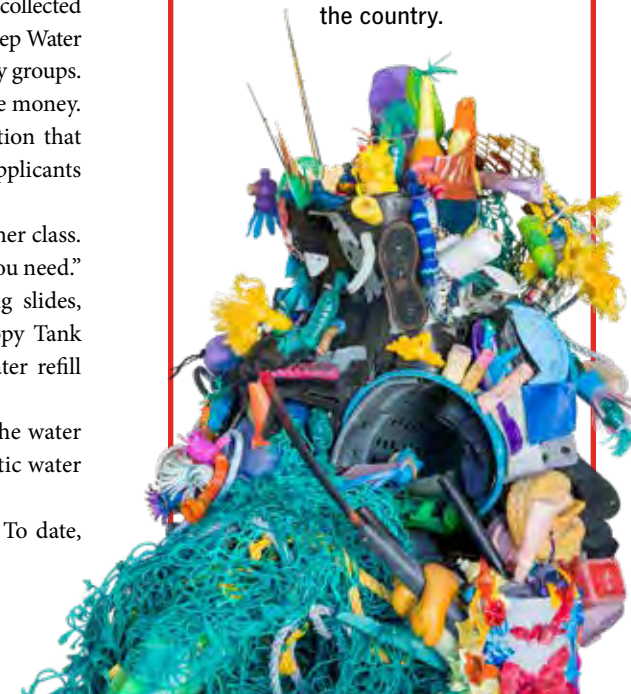
Emily and Jemma assembled the materials for the application, including slides, a video and an in-person presentation. The work paid off when Philanthropy Tank awarded Surface 71 a \$12,000 grant. The group put it toward installing water refill stations at Palm Beach County public schools.

“No one drinks from the water fountains in our schools,” Jemma says. “The water comes out warm and has a weird aftertaste, so everyone was purchasing plastic water bottles through the schools.”

Now, seven refill stations provide chilled, filtered water at four buildings. To date,

A Greener Community

State Farm® has made a commitment to a more eco-friendly future with diverse partnerships and initiatives. State Farm continues to work with experts and researchers to survey hurricane damage and determine whether fortified homes withstand storms better. A partnership with The Local Initiatives Support Corporation helps community-based development organizations transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy ones. And with customers and in its own facilities, State Farm has committed to efforts such as paperless billing and eco-friendly roofing technology. In fact, major State Farm facilities have an Energy Star score of 84, meaning our buildings are more energy efficient than 84 percent of comparable buildings in the U.S. It’s all part of our efforts to help communities across the country.



the group estimates it has kept more than 50,000 plastic bottles out of the environment, and the group is installing four new water stations at schools in 2020.

THE NEXT GEN

For Emily and Jemma, the class that launched Surface 71 ended years ago. They're now in high school—and they're still leading Surface 71, writing legislators, speaking to local groups and picking up trash with Friends of Palm Beach. They've also recruited the next generation: Marina, a middle schooler, joined the two in 2018.

The group has bigger goals, too, and would like to do even more outreach, including creating an online store devoted to replacing single-use products with reusable and earth-friendly options, and expanding the group to additional schools. "It's the ripple effect," Marina says. In the same way a single plastic bottle can kill one sea animal, an effort to reduce plastic waste can protect the environment and inspire others.

The ripple effect guides the students when the problem feels too big to take on. Like so many in their generation, Marina, Emily and Jemma have focused on that principle to take on a problem that can often feel too big to change.

"I think that a lot of kids are worried about the future of our Earth, but nobody feels like they can do anything about it," Emily says. "They think, 'Oh, it's just me. I'm only one person.' But if 100 people are working on it, that's 100 people who want change. If I show that I care, more people will say, 'Hey, it's not just me out here. I'm able to work on what I think is important as well.' "



Stephanie, Jemma, Marina and other student volunteers sort through trash (above, right, below). Biodegradable cards help scientists track debris paths (far right).



Are you looking for your perfect match or want to find more volunteers for your group? Several websites, including PointsofLight.org and VolunteerMatch.org, highlight opportunities by both interest (for example, "pets") and ZIP code.



GET INVOLVED in your community with more volunteer ideas: statefarm.com/simple-insights/family