

PLANET AID POST

For the Environment, For People



Vol. 3 No. 1



Supporting Charitable Work Beyond Our Borders

Volunteer cooks in Mozambique prepare lunch for school children as part of the Food for Knowledge program implemented by Planet Aid and ADPP Mozambique and paid for by USDA.

Americans have a strong sense of compassion toward the less fortunate. From volunteering to donating money, we lead the world in helping good causes. The UK-based Charities Aid Foundation ranks the U.S. as “the most generous country on Earth.” In 2013, Americans gave over \$335 billion to charitable organizations, up by 4% from the previous year according to the Giving USA Foundation.

The Origin of “Charity”

The American character is one that assists those in need. However, the question of whom to help or where can be vexing. Sometimes the need to simplify choices leads to confusion and misguided reasoning. For example, consider the idiom “charity begins at home.” This saying has served as a simplifying mantra for those arguing against providing aid to people beyond our borders. Let’s examine it more closely.

To begin, it is important to know that the very meaning of the word “charity” has changed. Since Roman times “charity” had meant a certain type of attitude, one that embraces kindness and benevolence. The word itself derives from the Greek word *agape*, which also means love.

Today, “charity” has changed in meaning from that of a generous attitude to that of simply donating money or goods to help people who are poor. Likewise, the phrase “charity begins at home” has also changed in meaning. Originally, it meant that kindness and love taught in the home will grow and spread, making the world a better place. Today, this phrase has been flipped around, and, as stated earlier, is used as an admonition against international giving. It is often repeated by critics of foreign aid who believe the U.S. should focus more inwardly.

What critics of international aid fail to understand is that in the poorest parts of the world, people suffer from very different problems. A child may die of malaria for lack of a \$10 bed net, or from diarrhea for lack of a five-cent packet of nutrients. Dollar for dollar, foreign aid has a much larger impact in saving lives and helping the poor.

People are also often under the false impression that vast sums of money are being spent on foreign aid. Americans consistently estimate that around 25% of the Federal budget is spent on aid, and they say that the figure should be around 10%. In fact, less than 1% of the Federal budget is spent on foreign aid. (In comparison, the Iraq War of 2003 cost more than the amount given in foreign aid over the past 50 years.)

Empowering the Poorest of the Poor

At Planet Aid we believe that charity, like love, begins at home. We also embrace the words of seventeenth century author Thomas Fuller, who wrote, “Charity begins at home, but should not end there.” We know from our experience just how much can be done for people in the developing world who are struggling to survive, and who need a hand up to escape tragedy for themselves and their families. It is Planet Aid’s mission to provide the means by which the poorest of the poor can improve the condition of their lives.

We celebrate the larger meaning of “charity” in this issue of the *Planet Aid Post*. We also offer snapshots of how we put charity into action. For example, learn how our support of programs such as the Step-up Centers in India are making a difference in the lives of children, or how kids in Mozambique are being helped from a new school lunch program. You can also read about the work we have been doing at home on the News page.

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Why We Care About Almirante's Lunch

This is from the case stories that appear at Planetaid.org. It was first published in August 2014.

Almirante never ate lunch during the school day. The small and shy first-grader spent long hours in the classroom with an empty stomach. It is no wonder that all of the curly letters and meandering numbers on the blackboard seemed somewhat bewildering to him.

Like most children in rural Mozambique, Almirante comes from a poor family. They could hardly afford more than one dish of *xima*, a traditional maize flour porridge, per day. Only on special occasions would the *xima* be served with a cassava leaf or cabbage stew.

Life became even more difficult when Almirante's father passed away and left his mother alone to raise two young boys. Almirante's older brother dropped out of school, and his mother asked another family to care for him.

When the Planet Aid Food for Knowledge school feeding project came to Almirante's school, the circumstances began to change. Thanks to the daily meal served there, Almirante was able to stay with his mother and continue his education, now without an empty stomach.

A year after the school lunch program began, Almirante's outlook had changed. He now greets strangers with a generous smile and has a special shine in his eyes when talking about school.

Almirante, now a second grader, can write his name and knows the alphabet forward and backward. He has also grown faster than in previous years, catching up to many of his schoolmates in height.

Almirante used to be so tiny and quiet and spent most of his time alone. Now that he has been eating meals at school, he has grown to be a big boy – a beautiful boy! —Almirante's mother

"I'm very proud of my son," says Almirante's mother. "He goes to school with a lot of energy and plays with his friends. I think he is happier than ever before."

As if to prove this, Almirante playfully grabs a basket his father made to carry his schoolbooks, and runs off barefoot with a laugh that fills the whole neighborhood.

Fifty-four percent of Mozambicans today still live below the poverty line. This poverty manifests itself as hunger, malnutrition and low levels of schooling. It is estimated that up to 43% of Mozambican children suffer from chronic malnutrition, and only 49% of school-aged children complete the 7 years of primary school.

Malnutrition compromises the development of children and affects their immune systems, leading to greater susceptibility to infectious diseases such as pneumonia, malaria, and HIV. Delays in growth and in motor and cognitive development may also occur and can become irreversible. The effects include memory and attention deficiency, learning disabilities, and reduced language development and problem-solving skills, contributing thus to high dropout rates, low school attendance, and poor academic performance.

Planet Aid and USDA Making a Difference in Mozambique

The Planet Aid Food for Knowledge project in Mozambique is a comprehensive school feeding, nutrition, and education initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

This project has been making a huge difference in the lives of children and improving their chances for a healthy future. It has been addressing the problem of undernutrition and poor school performance with a multifaceted and holistic strategy that is feeding children; training teachers; spreading literacy; establishing school gardens; strengthening nutrition knowledge; and improving school facilities such as kitchens, clean water facilities, and storerooms.

The project has now reached the halfway point of its 3.5-year run. Approximately 56,000 children have been benefitting from a daily lunch, with nearly 1 million total meals served. The project has also graduated approximately 1,050 new skilled teachers, with another 1,831 future teachers currently in training. The project has built or rehabilitated the kitchens and storerooms of 175 schools.

The Food for Knowledge project is part of the National School Feeding Program of Mozambique and is implemented in the province of Maputo by Planet Aid, Inc., ADPP Mozambique, and the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), together with the Mozambique Ministry of Education.





Pathways Out of Poverty

Step-up Centers and Academies for Working Children in India

On India's streets young children pull garbage carts, serve food from a street wagon, or haul rubble from construction sites. Some you never even see as they are locked away in sweatshops, working under brutal conditions. Nearly 1.5 million children in India between the ages of 6 and 11 do not attend school. These destitute youngsters are barely surviving and are without hope for a future.

Many of these children cannot enroll in a mainstream school because they have no address. They arrive in India's urban slums from outlying areas with their families, who are lured by the promise of opportunity. However, the migrants have no official residence in the city, often living in little more than a makeshift tent or box.

To help these disadvantaged children, Planet Aid supports a network of 17 schools in four states in India. These specialized schools acculturate children from the harsh street environment and offer them hope and a chance at a better future.

Called Step-Up Centers or Academies for Working Children (AWC), the schools are generally located near a slum in an urban area where there are migrants. They reach out to children between 6 and 14 years old and engage with parents and the community. The program provides disadvantaged children with the opportunity to attend school in spite of the obstacles they face.

The 2-3 year program enables youth to complete their elementary school education up to grade 8, either through classes offered at the schools or by re-entering the mainstream school system. The staff work to make the program a success for children by not only offering quality lessons on a flexible schedule, but by also raising awareness and mobilizing parents, local school teachers, and educational authorities to work together for the sake of the children. In addition, they organize events in the children's communities, and ensure that every child receives the individual support they need.

The [slums] are teeming with vigour, industry, energy—with people trying to improve their lives, trying to break that vicious cycle of poverty.

— Vikas Swarup, author of the novel *Q&A*, which became the basis for the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*

An example of the success the schools have been able to achieve is the Academy for Working Children in Gurgaon. This school was opened in March 2009 in partnership with Dell Giving. There is one main school for grades 4 through 7, and there are three satellite centers for grades 1 through 3. The school has a student population of approximately 400 children, and nearly 500 children have moved on from the Academy and are continuing their education in a mainstream school.



Education and Outreach Help to Annul Child Marriage

A recent UNICEF report found that about 14 million girls under the age of 18 are married off each year worldwide. This story was written by Kareena, a young girl in India who avoided such a fate as a result of the Planet Aid supported Academy for Working Children in Gurgaon.

My name is Kareena. My native place is Rewari village in Haryana, and presently I am living in Basai, Gurgaon. We came here looking for a better life. There are seven in my family, including my parents. My family is very poor, and it is difficult to get even two meals a day.

I was nine years old when my father got me married, but I stayed in my home and did not go to my husband's house.

Time passed and one day two teachers from the Academy for Working Children came to my home and spoke with my parents about my education. Later, my father enrolled me and my younger sister in the Academy. This was the first time I got an opportunity to study.

Things started changing when my parents attended the monthly parent-teacher meeting. During the meeting, the teachers showed my parents a documentary film on child marriage. My parents learned that child marriage is illegal and is not good for a child's future. Eventually, my father realized his mistake and had my marriage undone. I am now studying in grade 7 and would like to thank the teachers and the Academy for helping me. I am happy to now make plans for my future.

Planet Aid News

What's Happening in the Planet Aid Service Areas

Planet Aid aims to improve the lives of those less fortunate in the developing world, but we also take care of our local communities in the United States. Here's a glimpse of recent domestic Planet Aid events. For more about what's happening locally, visit "Your Local Planet Aid" at Planetaid.org.



Rochester, New York. Planet Aid collected nearly 300 pounds of used clothing during a benefit at a Lulu Lemon yoga studio.

Gastonia, North Carolina. Planet Aid donated new, comfortable clothes for Rape Crisis Care Packages, which are given to sexual assault victims at the hospital.

Franklin, Massachusetts. PlanetAid donated 92 pairs of prescription eyeglasses to the local Lions Club, which cleans, repairs, and redistributes eyeglasses to those in need.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Planet Aid distributed warm clothing, blankets, and sleeping bags to the homeless during the cold winter months.

Nashua, New Hampshire. Planet Aid helped collect dresses and accessories for the "Gowns for Girls" event, giving girls who may not be able to afford prom wear to obtain dresses at no cost.

Cleveland, Ohio. Planet Aid donated hundreds of school supplies for a local "Stuff the Bus" campaign, including boxes of crayons, reams of notebook paper, folders, boxes of tissue, packages of construction paper, and packs of pencils.

Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Planet Aid donated toys, baby strollers, high chairs, playpens, and baby swings to a residential program for women battling addiction.



Elkridge, Maryland. Planet Aid staff cleaned up their office park in celebration of Earth Day, collecting a total of 42 bags worth of trash, around 300 pounds!

Fort Scott, Kansas. Planet Aid donated to The Beacon, a local nonprofit that helps provide food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities during times of need or emergency.



Myths and Misconceptions About Used Clothing

For 17 years Planet Aid has been encouraging Americans to recycle unwanted clothing. We have made considerable progress, but there is more work to be done. As part of our continuing efforts, we want to clear up a few common myths and misconceptions about used clothing.

#1. Americans recycle most of their used clothing

Actually, Americans throw out approximately 70 pounds of clothing per person per year on average according to the U.S. EPA. That adds up to 14 million tons of clothing annually, a veritable mountain of textiles that could bury a small city. Of that amount, only 15% (or 2.25 million tons) gets recycled or reused. The disposal of all this textile waste increases local disposal costs and tax burdens. We need to all work together to divert more of this perfectly good clothing from municipal waste streams.

#2. People in the U.S. have a great need for used clothing

Yes, there are individuals in the U.S. who need used clothing. But the larger truth is that the vast bulk of donated clothing in the United States is simply not needed or wanted here. Remember, Americans produce 14 million tons of unwanted clothing every year. That is a huge quantity! Much of this clothing is dumped needlessly in U.S. landfills because no one really wants it. The truth is there are people who want these items; they just happen to live outside our borders.

That said, Planet Aid still donates clothes to those in need in the United States. For example, we gave away winter coats to the homeless during the Polar Vortex last winter. We also work with the L.A. Fire Department to supply clothing to victims of fire, and elsewhere we donated clothing for victims of rape to wear after hospital visits. The list goes on.

#3. Charities give away all the used clothing they receive

It is surprising how this myth persists. The truth is that charities that collect used clothing on a regular basis sell that clothing. The question to ask yourself is where do you think the proceeds from your used clothes should go? We sell most of what we collect for pennies on the pound on the global market. For example, a pair of jeans can sell for 50 cents. If you choose us, everything you drop in our bin gets used or recycled, no matter the condition.

We donate all of the net proceeds from the sale of the clothing we collect to support projects overseas, like the Academy for Working Children described on the opposite page. We are a recognized national nonprofit in good standing, and are registered with the U.S. Agency for International Development as a private voluntary organization.

#4. People in the developing world want used clothing handouts

This flow of used clothing supports many millions of jobs and keeps the cost of clothing reasonable and fair for consumers. There are many small businesses in many different countries that participate in this trade. You can find street markets all over the world displaying American castoffs. Used clothing is so deeply woven into the fabric of some cultures (no pun intended) that they even have their own special word for it. For example, in Haiti used clothing is called *pepe*, in Tanzania it is *mitumba*, in Zambia it is *salaula*, and in Central America it is *ropa americana*.

Most developing countries will not accept used clothing for free and have rules against this practice, which some consider to be "dumping." Instead, the worldwide distribution of used clothing is bought and sold according to the rules of free market supply and demand. This is the only way that it can work effectively on a large scale.

#5. Used clothes are possessed by the devil

This is not a myth per se, but it has appeared in the media in the past year.

Televangelist Pat Robertson stated on his program the *700 Club* that used clothing could be possessed. "Not every sweater at Goodwill is possessed by demons, but it's a good idea to pray over secondhand clothes just in case," said Mr. Robertson. He elaborated by saying that clothing could be possessed just like any other inanimate object.

We can't speak to these spiritual aspects, but we do know that used clothing that gets thrown away rather than recycled contributes to another kind of evil: greenhouse gases. Clothes decompose in landfills and release methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases. The two million tons of textile waste Americans recycle annually helps reduce such gases in the same capacity as taking 1.2 million cars off the road! Join us and be a part of the global solution for good.

To find the location of a nearby bin or for other inquiries contact your local Planet Aid office at Planetaid.org.

Experts agree that the science supporting climate change is overwhelming. Yet there is a significant disconnect between this empirical reality and lay perception. According to a 2013 poll by the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, the percentage of Americans who believe that the Earth is getting warmer has remained stable at 63%. However, compared to the previous year, more formerly undecided people now believe that the Earth is *not* getting warmer (up by 7 points to 23%). There has been a corresponding drop (7 points) in those who believe that climate change is being caused by human activity.

Why are we growing more skeptical of climate change? Political leaders and others point to a coordinated misinformation campaign to discredit the scientifically supported reality of our changing climate.

“There isn’t just lying going on about climate change, there’s a whole carefully built apparatus of lies,” reported Senator Sheldon Whitehouse on the Senate floor. “This apparatus is big, and artfully constructed: phony-baloney organizations designed to look and sound like they’re real; a deliberate and organized effort to misdirect the public discussion and distort the public’s understanding of climate.”

Photo courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech

In contrast, people in Canada, Europe, and other areas recognize climate change as a major problem. Across Latin America, Africa, and Asian-Pacific regions, global warming is considered the most serious threat communities face, according to Pew Research Center surveys.

Around the globe, communities are threatened by severe droughts, altered growing seasons, and ravaging storms that destroy their homes and livelihoods. They have observed changes to the land, vegetation, and animal life that are both strange and frightening. The U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the current situation will become more “severe, pervasive, and irreversible.”

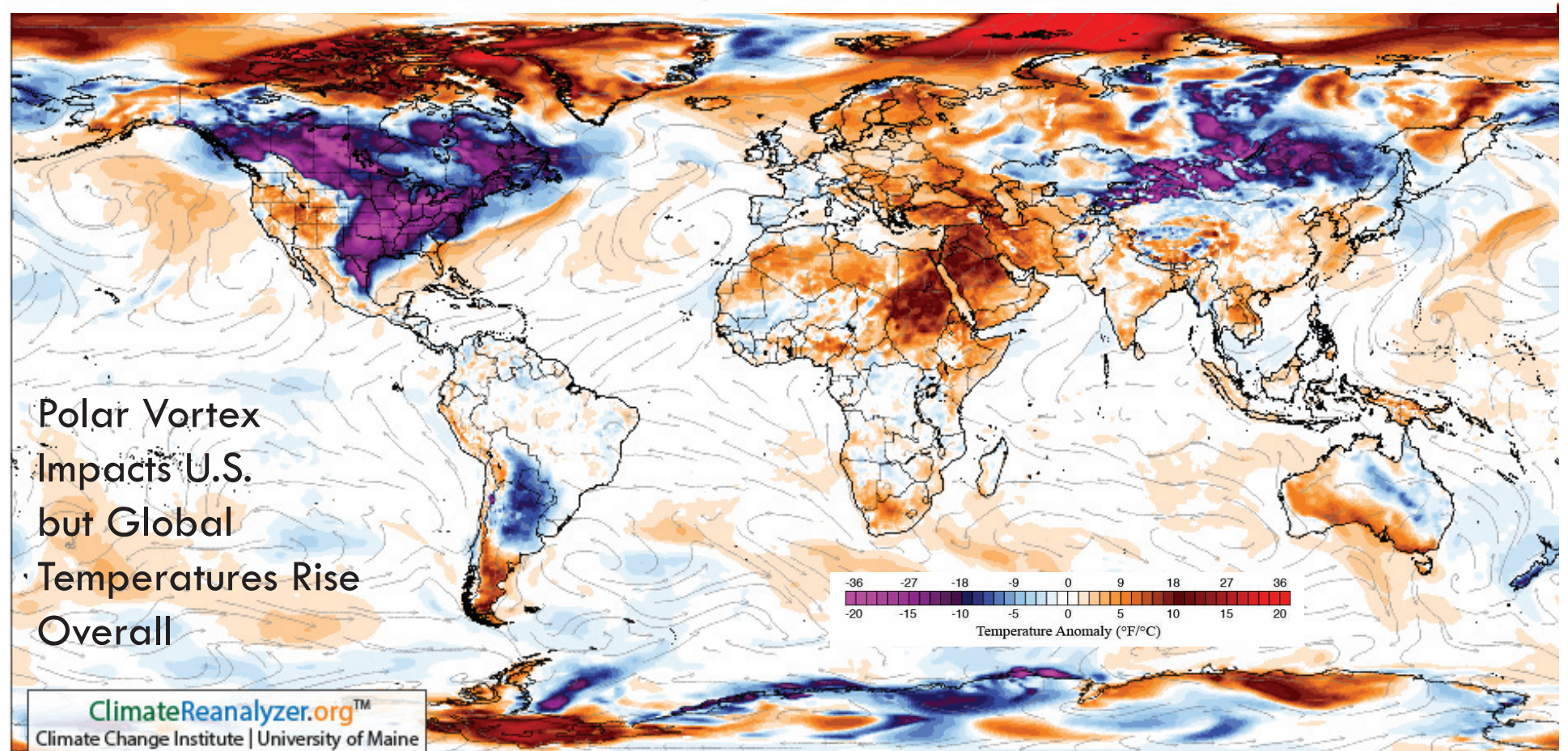
Science and Public Opinion Being Driven Apart on Climate Change

Recycling Textiles Reduces Greenhouse Gases

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency indicates that the 2.25 million tons of textiles recycled in 2012 reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 5.7 million metric tons, or about the same as taking 1.2 million cars off the road!

The impacts will become increasingly serious, with widespread hunger and malnutrition from precipitous drops in crop yield and withering of agricultural land, combined with periodic severe flooding and extreme weather.

Climate change is a global phenomena, and thus by definition it is “everybody’s problem.” However, the United States emits nearly 20 percent of global CO₂, but only makes up 4% of the global population. We have benefited immensely from our fossil fuel-driven economy. It is only fair that we come to terms with the climate reality, stop the damage being done, and provide material support to those who are suffering climate change’s devastating impacts.



The now infamous Polar Vortex brought record cold temperatures to many parts of the United States in 2014. Some pundits have tried to persuade the public that the frigid air was proof that climate change was a hoax. Yet the truth is that for the planet as a whole temperatures continued to rise. Record breaking heat spread across Australia and in Alaska, and parts of the Arctic experienced as much as a 40 degree spike in temperature. The upshot: trying to assess the Earth’s temperature based on your local weather simply doesn’t work.



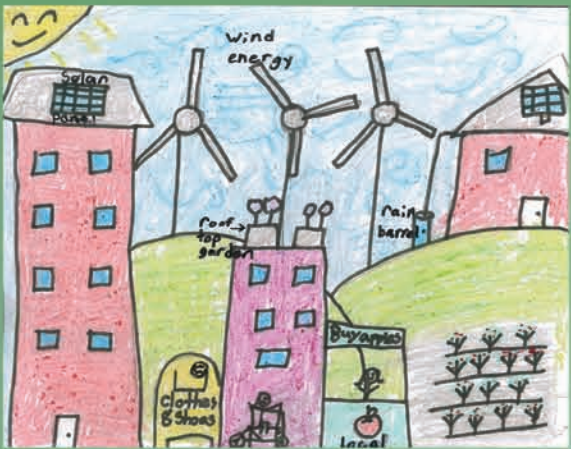
Lucas, kindergarten, MD



Jaiden, 2nd grade, MD



Yolanda, 3rd grade, MD



Anna, 3rd grade, NC



Lily, 4th grade, NC

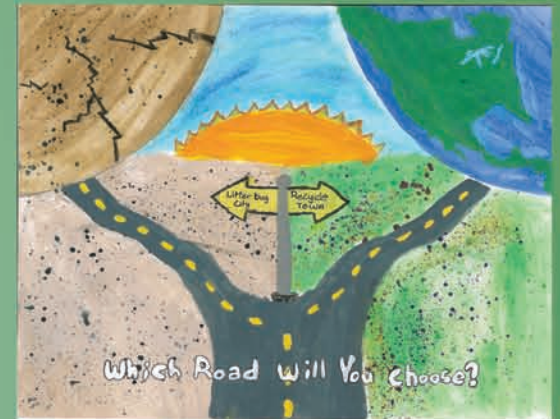


Izzie, 4th grade, MD



Earth Day Art Contest WINNERS

Planet Aid asked elementary school students to create a picture related to Earth Day 2014's theme, *Green Cities*. Here are the 10 winners out of all the fantastic submissions we received. Each of our winning students listed here won a \$50 gift certificate. Thank you to all those who participated, and congratulations to our winners!



Elise, 5th grade, NC



Joanna, 6th grade, MD



Most Artistic Jami, 3rd grade, NC



Most Creative Fabii, 5th grade, NC



Our contest winners showcased how important it is to protect the environment, and one of the easiest ways to do this is by recycling your clothes. Textiles in landfills create harmful greenhouse gases as they decompose, so make sure that you aren't throwing your old clothes and shoes in the trash...

drop them in a yellow Planet Aid bin instead!



Planet Aid KIDS' PAGE



CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?

Many of the clothes you donate in yellow Planet Aid bins end up in other countries where they are resold. These secondhand markets provide needy people with low-cost clothing and jobs!

There are 8 differences between these two photos of a woman shopping in Mozambique in a secondhand market. Can you find them all?

FOR PUZZLE ANSWERS, VISIT planetaid.org/planet-aid-post

LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP THE PLANET!



There are lots of ways you can help the Earth. Find and circle the key words. The remaining letters will reveal a hidden message!

T E V R E S N O C Y
 R E C Y C L E T G R
 E O L G E T T R H I
 A E R L A W E E R D
 D C A N F N N E M E
 B A O K E R D E A B
 O D D E I U I F F I
 O E V R C E N E C K
 K A E E S U E R N E
 S A V E W A T E R D

Key Words

- CONSERVE
- DONATE
- READBOOKS
- REUSE
- RECYCLE
- REDUCE
- RIDEBIKE
- SAVEENERGY
- SAVEWATER
- TELLFRIEND

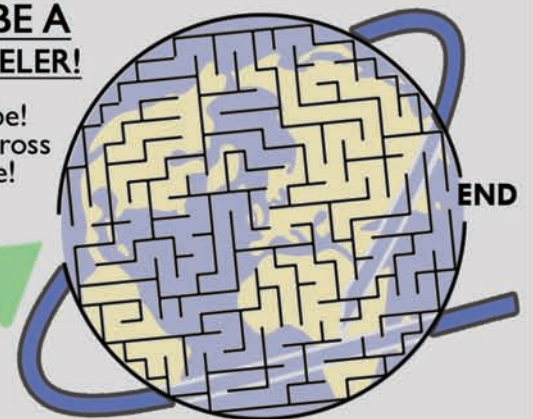
Hidden Message

_____ !

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Explore the globe! Make your way across the planet maze!

START



Join the DROP movement!

Request your free Planet Aid bumper sticker at Planetaid.org/DROP

Donate, Recycle, Our earth, People



Planet Aid is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that recycles used clothing and shoes. It is registered with the U.S. Agency for International Development as a private voluntary organization (PVO).

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