

First and last name of interviewee: Addy Kopp

Occupation: Sophomore at Mountain View High School and president of Green Team

Date + location of interview: 3/17/23 in the MVHS science quad

Aditi

What is your name, grade and role at Green Team?

Addy

Okay. My name is Addy, and I'm in 10th grade. Or I'm a sophomore and I'm president of Green Team.

Aditi

So what exactly is the goal of Green Team?

Addy

Green Team's goal is to spread environmental consciousness on campus and also make our campus more sustainable.

Aditi

When did you join the Green Team?

Addy

So I actually well, I started Green Team or like started it back up because we had had a Green Team, but not really then continued when the seniors graduated. So there had been a couple of years where we hadn't had a Green Team here. So I basically restarted it when I was a freshman.

Aditi

That's cool. What made you want to restart it?

Addy

I wanted to restart it because I have had a Green Team at my elementary school and my middle school and I've always just been interested in the environment, so I kind of thought it would be a good idea for Mountain View, especially because we aren't exactly the most sustainable school and there's definitely still progress to be made.

Aditi

How do you think Green Team is different now from your elementary and middle school?

Addy

Yeah, in elementary and even middle school, we focused more on spreading awareness because a lot of people didn't know about the climate crisis or just anything about the environment in general. So we did lots of like environmental campaigns, presentations and like consciousness activities, but with Mountain View, because a lot of the students are really well educated, we focus more on implementing sustainability practices on campus. And instead of educating our schools specifically because we have such great education here, we've actually gone out to the community instead and gone to local, middle and elementary schools to spread environmental education there.

Aditi

That's really cool. So other than spreading awareness of environmental problems, what other kinds of activities and projects do you do?

Addy

So some of the activities that we do or well some of the projects we're working on right now are composting. So we implemented composting and it's been a struggle to maintain it. And so we haven't been able to implement it in every like place that the trash and recycling is at. So once we understand how to motivate the student body, the best to like actually compost, I think we'll be able to kind of implement it in more spots. But right now our focus is just like how we can get the student body to properly compost, recycle and throw away their items because we don't want to have the custodians be doing all that work, we want the students to do it.

Aditi

Do you have like a favorite project or activity that you guys have done?

Addy

I think my favorite project we've done is we did this WOW day where it was a walk or wheel day, and I think it was just really like fun for people to get to see that biking or walking or carpooling was, you know, appreciated because a lot of people do that every single day. And it's probably a lot more difficult than taking a car, but it has a huge impact. And I like to see how excited people were to receive like a little gift for, you know, doing that every day. It was really fun.

Aditi

Have you ever done--I guess you did mention that in the past you also had a Green Team.

Addy

Yeah.

Aditi

What kinds of projects did you do there?

Addy

Um, so we would do, like, these education activities monthly, and we would focus on, like, a different topic every month, and then we would do a different activity for that topic. So for example, we had like a recycling month where we would stand out at the lunch, like at lunchtime next to the bins, and we would tell people how to recycle properly and if they did we would give them candy. So like that was the recycling one and we had a pollution one where we went around the school with students and picked up trash and in exchange for the trash they got like \$5 or something for a gift card. So, yeah.

Aditi

That's cool! So in your opinion, why do you think preserving and restoring the environment is so important?

Addy

Obviously, there's like a very big climate crisis going on right now, and I think it's hard for people to see that individual actions have such a big impact. So when I'm like sitting at home, thinking about how negative our, our like how negatively impacted our planet is, what kind of like soothes that for me is knowing that I'm doing something at least on an individual and community basis, to work to solve that. And I mean, our school is, is small on a global scale, but it's like it's like 2000 kids, right? Which is like that's a lot of people that you can have an impact on. So even just changing the habits of our school is helping the climate crisis in some small way.

Aditi

Yeah, that's a good point. So I remember earlier you mentioned how, um, getting people to compost here was challenging. What other struggles have you faced in your journey?

Addy

I think a big one is when I was a freshman trying to start a club, it was really hard to get members to come and to be consistent because I didn't really have like a big influence on campus and it was members like, I don't think a lot of people knew about our club or the impacts that we had because we hadn't really had like any events or done anything that would make people want to join. So it was, yeah, that was difficult. And last year we had we like established a small group of people that have become our board this year, which has been really great. So even though last year we didn't get to accomplish that much because it was such a small group of people, it did help us and I think it was influential in building our club up to the place we are right now. And now we have like over 70 members signed up

and like around 30 consistent members, which is I mean, even 30 is great because last year we had like five. So for me this is like amazing. But yeah, definitely that was a huge struggle and it was really frustrating to have to go to this club every week and not really see that much done because we just didn't have the manpower to do everything that we wanted to do. But this year we've been able to accomplish a lot of our goals and it's just it's really exciting to see.

Aditi

What do you think you've learned from these challenges?

Addy

I've learned so much like what I was talking about before with the people and like not having enough recruitment and people in our club. I've learned a lot about leadership, I think, and a lot about like trusting the process, especially around like, I think last year I was more focused on like, we need to like, get stuff done. We need to like, do this, do that. And I tried to like, tell people what to do and like, try to have everything done by a certain time and have hard deadlines because I thought that would motivate people to get stuff done, which isn't really how it works because a club is an optional activity and people don't want to be forced to do things. So I learned so much from last year and to this year. We have a more Choose Your Own Adventure, where you can pick a project that you feel passionate about and pursue it. Like, for example, one of the kids in our club went to the waste management facility near us and he learned that you can pick up free fertilizer. And so his project this semester is implementing that free fertilizer into our gardens, which I just think that's amazing because like I would have never thought of that. And it's a project that he feels really passionate about, and because he feels that passion, he'll be able to follow through on it, which if it was like someone else doing it, maybe they wouldn't. And yeah, I feel like I learned a lot about like letting people kind of relax and have room to be creative and pursue what they want to pursue at the time they want to pursue. And yeah, I think that was a really valuable lesson.

Aditi

How do you think on a similar note, how do you think other people, and especially fellow students, can help preserve the local environment?

Addy

So a big one on campus is definitely composting. But other than that, I think the small choices we make every day, whether we realize it or not, have a big impact. So just processing when we're making a decision that negatively impacts the environment, like choosing plastic over paper or accepting a plastic straw, bringing a reusable water bottle instead of grabbing one at the store, even buying a canned soda is better than buying, you

know, a plastic one because aluminum is so much better to recycle. So I think just like thinking more consciously about our consumption could really help on the individual basis. And if you want to get even more involved, you can look into local action groups that do protesting around local you know, advocacy for laws and policies that will really actually make an impact on the global scale. And if you want help out in our community you can join Green Team because we're really working hard to try to improve the sustainability of our school.

Aditi

So as I've been researching for my paper, I read a lot of sources that have pointed out how nature is really important for our physical and mental health, because being in nature, for example, help reduce stress levels and improve concentration. So I was just wondering if you agree with that or what are your thoughts on it?

Addy

I totally agree. And I kind of almost wish that we could get out of the classroom more. I really like a lot of the quad area that we have. And I don't know, I feel like sometimes with kids stuck inside all day, we forget that our natural world, the world is so beautiful and like definitely it helps to like, get outside every once in a while. And I just wish we could do that more in the classroom. But yeah, I agree. And you know, what is actually really great is our APES class because it focuses a lot on those types of issues and like, I think that they get to do more hands on stuff. But yeah.

Aditi

Are you planning to take APES?

Addy

Yeah, I'm going to take it next year, definitely. Yeah, I'm so excited.

Aditi

I have friends who are taking that class this year and they said it's really fun.

Addy

Oh, good. Okay. Yeah, everyone said it's great. So I'm just so excited. It's like the classes made for me.

Aditi

Yeah, it is very similar to, um, Green Team.

Addy

Yeah.

Aditi

Um, that was all my questions, is there anything else you want to talk about?

Addy

Um, I think that, like, maybe just if you want to join Green team, you can email me and yeah, just think about the stuff that I said about environmental consciousness.

Aditi

Just curious maybe going a little more into... I guess maybe if you want to go more in depth into the types of projects you do.

Addy

Yeah, that was a good one. I think the other thing I wanted to talk about was some of the other projects, which is we do Waste Management, which focuses on better signage for the recycling and trash cans, and that team was able to do help the local elementary and middle school presentations, which is great as well. Additionally, we had a um, sorry, let me think for a second.

Aditi

Take your time.

Addy

Okay. Oh, we had a transportation group that did an audit on how many people bike to school and like over half the school bikes or walks or carpools, which is amazing. We had a group that did a... sorry, let me think about it. I'm going to look. Okay. Oh, we had a group that did the Walk or Wheel day, which was the Community Involvement group. And then we have a group that's working on like fundraising and they do like the beach cleanups and team bonding activities. And I think that's everything I already talked about. The yeah, the presentations, Yeah. Oh, and we yeah, I think that was everything.

Aditi

Why do you think like informing people, especially elementary and middle schoolers about what's going on with the environment is important?

Addy

That was a big one and that was, I think mainly because we saw how bad high schoolers are recycling and composting and throwing away properly. So we decided that in addition to educating our student body, we would also start younger and try to target them because I

think younger kids are a lot more receptive and we've actually seen that in the presentation and a lot of the schools we've gone to and said that like surprisingly, because I didn't think having like one presentation would be that much of an impact. But the principal said, emailed us after. And then like our recycling and sorting has gotten so much better after you guys came and like, that's really yeah, which is great. So I think that was really helpful. And yeah, it's just about like kind of education at every aspect so that we get more, yeah, more people on board younger and hopefully that means that the eighth graders coming in next year will already have the skills to like be able to sort.

Aditi

Is there anything else you want to add?

Addy

I don't think so, but thank you so much.

Aditi

Thank you!