

Working in Del Norte County to address climate change

September 25, 2019



The Del Norte Climate Justice Alliance is hosting its first community-wide event, the “Week for Future Generations,” to educate and empower Del Norte County on climate issues.

“It’s really a chance for us to educate our local community about local issues that have to do with climate change and climate justice,” said alliance member Jermaine Brubaker.

The week, filled with informational sessions, began Sept. 20 and continues through Sept. 27.

The alliance is collaborating with the the Del Norte County Library, Centro del Pueblo, the Yurok Tribe and other community members to plan a week dedicated to information about climate change.

Throughout the week, attendees are participating in educational panels, a tour of a food forest, a documentary night at the library, workshops, non-violent direct-action training, and a rally and panel on the

concluding Friday that features local scientists, fishermen and indigenous people speaking on climate change.

“This is for the people to step into roles of leadership and to network and build relationships in order to create change, meaningful change, in our community,” said Chrystal Helton, a member of the alliance.

Many of the sessions will discuss local water issues, since water is a central aspect of Del Norte County, with its rivers and ocean.

Along with education, the alliance also is encouraging residents to attend the Coast Cleanup of rivers and beaches, led by the Smith River Alliance, and to participate in redwood trail hikes throughout the week.

“We want people to be out in nature, too, because we know that when people are connected to nature, they care about it and they want to make changes to help save things they love about it,” Brubaker said.

The sessions will include discussions of the small changes people can make in their daily lives to help the climate, rather than becoming overwhelmed by the scope of the issue. And to put politics behind them.

“This is all hands on deck,” said Helton. “We don’t have time to play politics in this. We have to get to a place where we are doing everything we can, collectively, to make sure that people are living well and that they can continually live well.”

The Del Norte Climate Justice Alliance was spawned only a few months ago when four friends decided to band together to bring awareness and action to the local area.

Chrystal Helton, Mahlija Florendo, Manuel Saavedra and Jermaine Brubaker have been volunteering for social justice issues for more than five years, they said, but came to realize there was a notable lack of action in Del Norte County. Sitting along the Smith River in July, watching Helton’s children play in the water, they decided to take action.

“We’re not doing the work we need to do here. That’s how we felt, and so we started having meetings,” Helton said.

With little time and few resources, they began planning the “Week for Future Generations” to encourage local conversations about climate change. Other local organizations joined in.

The “future generations” are particularly important and deserve to have changes made right now, they said. “It’s not about what can we consume for ourselves now, but what are we leaving behind that will continue,” Brubaker said.