

Climate Champions from Miramonte

By Sophie Braccini

Miramonte juniors Patrick Ouziel and Devin Finzer have been named Climate Champions by the California Air Resources Board (ARB).

More than half of the population of our blue planet is under the age of twenty four, and according to the ARB, "They will be affected in some way by climate change. We are also aware that many young people are concerned about climate change, particularly the impacts it is already having and will have in the future, and want to do something about it."

"That's why, when the British Consulate contacted ARB to launch the American version of the Climate Champion competition, the administration jumped on the opportunity," says Lio Kay, Communication Officer for the ARB.

The Climate Champion program was launched in England by

Tony Blair, and it has spread all over the world. What better place than California to start propagating it in the US? "We realize that we need to affect behavior change, one household at a time," says Kay, "legislation is one thing, but what needs to happen is a cultural shift. Our young people are in the best position to take ownership of the issue and affect change."

Ouziel and Finzer created a film and entered it into the competition. They interviewed their peers about what global warming meant to them and if they intended to do anything about it. The result won them a trip to Sacramento where they were interviewed and selected along with thirteen other young Californians.

"We were very impressed by the maturity of these two young men," says Kay, "they are passionate about affecting change and al-

ready have serious knowledge of the scientific aspects of climate change."

"My motivation came from my love from the outdoors," says Finzer, "I believe that the climate challenge is only starting and will affect all of our lives."

"It is up to our generation to change the way we do things," adds Ouziel, "every little thing that can be done at the individual level will add up."

"On Friday the 9th, we asked our peers to trace their footprint on recycled paper and write on it a pledge to change something in their behavior that will affect climate change," explain the two students. "I am personally pledging to shop locally for my food," says Finzer, "and will take more trips to the farmers' market."

The two young men are just getting started. They have pre-

sented many more ideas to Principal Raul Zamora, including encouraging carpooling, having the school use only recycled paper, replace plastic bottles with metal ones and make sure that water fountains are working, and having students calculate their carbon footprint.

At the next G8 summit in Tokyo, Japan, three American Climate Champions will meet winners from other countries; they will bring their ideas and proposals to decision makers and then report back to their regions. The two Miramonte students are collecting suggestions at school to pass along to the Tokyo forum in July.

"Our peers are very receptive to these ideas," says Ouziel, "they just need to get the right information and a little incentive to do the right thing."