



SPARE THE AIR YOUTH

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Engaging middle and high school youth
in climate change initiatives.

MAY 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Spare the Air Youth is a regional program that aims to educate, inspire and empower San Francisco Bay Area youth and their families to walk, bicycle, carpool, and take transit. A partnership between the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Spare the Air Youth promotes effective ways to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by providing a regional resource for students, parents, teachers and program providers.

SPARE THE AIR YOUTH IS PART OF MTC'S CLIMATE INITIATIVES PROGRAM.

LEARN MORE AT www.sparetheairyouth.org



Middle and high school students are the best advocates for active transportation to their peers and can help implement programs at their schools.

INTRODUCTION

Youth leadership programs that engage middle and high school students in transportation issues are an effective method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting walking and bicycling. Middle and high school students can make their own transportation decisions and are full of new ideas to share with peers. Developing teen interest in the environment is a great way to promote sustainable transportation and develop new materials to promote the program to younger grades.

This guidebook provides information on how to promote walking, biking, transit, and carpooling with middle and high school students, how to develop a Green Team, and sample classroom activities for this age group. Additional resources are provided in the last chapter.

For more information, and for additional resources about walking school bus, bike train, and carpooling programs in your area, visit our website:

www.sparetheairyouth.org

www.sparetheairyouth.org/walking-school-buses-bike-trains

www.sparetheairyouth.org/carpooling



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MESSAGING AND OUTREACH



Using promotional contests and fun social media campaigns helps students share their experiences with peers.

MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

While Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs have historically focused on elementary school age children and their parents, working directly with students in middle and high school is an effective method of engaging champions and helping students make a difference in climate change.

Middle and high school students:

- Have more independence than younger students and can safely walk, bike, or take the bus without parent supervision.
- Tend to travel further for school, sports, and other activities.
- Have more freedom to make their own transportation choices.
- Can be more influenced by their peers.
- Are looking for opportunities to add to their resume for college.

- May seek leadership opportunities to prepare for college or for entering the workforce.
- May be required to undertake a service learning project or participate in community service.

To promote sustainable transportation choices to youth, use the communication tools students use and consider appropriate messages.

Methods of Communication

Teens communicate using new and cutting edge methods. Students are more likely to use their phone than their computers and communicate via text message or mobile app. Students frequently switch to the latest social media platforms and therefore any Youth Leadership program should determine which platform is currently in use but also be prepared for students to switch again quickly.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be used to promote clubs, events, and activities that focus on green transportation choices. Students, clubs, and schools may have a Facebook page, Twitter account, or Instagram for photos. It is beneficial to have a broad social media presence since not all teens will use all of these sites. Most (all) sites will enable Cross-posting to reduce time spent updating statuses. Hashtags are a great way to promote an event and can be used across social media platforms. The youth Leadership Team can have its own hashtag, and event-focused hashtags should be developed as well. Some examples



The Santa Monica Family Bike Fest used a photo booth with a sticker for attendees to share the fun with their networks.

include: #SR2S/#SRTS, #TeensGoGreen, #CocoaforCarpools, and #YESCONF15.

Youth can also be engaged as social media interns to craft messages that will engage their peers while obtaining work experience and gaining exposure to a variety of technologies.

Social media campaigns or photo contests can be fun ways to have participants spread the word about your program. It can be as simple as setting up a photo booth at an event and giving people a sign, having them write a message on a whiteboard, or having a sticker on the photos to promote your program or event.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS

Videos are a great tool to engage students at every step in the process. Students can be involved in the development, filming, editing, and promotional phases.

Consider creating a YouTube Channel to highlight videos developed by local students and include others that students find inspirational.

If your school or district has media classes, consider hosting a video contest or have students work together to develop short Public Service Announcements about active transportation. The San Ramon Valley Street Smarts' [Be Reel Middle School Video Contest](#) has some good resources and examples.

The [STAY Videos Guidebook](#) provides suggestions for working with youth to create videos to educate and inspire their peers. Sample videos developed by or for teens include:

- [Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools student-created videos](#)
- [Marin Safe Routes to School promotional videos](#)
- [Drake High School Distracted Driving video](#)
- [Spare the Air Youth Partner Videos](#)

MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Students can use websites and blogs to promote activities and events. Blogs can show students that peers are choosing active transportation modes. Students can take turns posting articles about upcoming or recent events, or about the benefits of exercise and active transportation.

Example blogs include:

- [Safe Routes to School National Partnership blog](#)
- [San Francisco SRTS blog](#)
- [Alameda County SR2S blog](#)
- [Marin County SRTS blog](#)

Websites that highlight youth involvement in climate change and transportation include:

- The [Alliance for Climate Education](#) suggests ways youth can take action to fight climate change through their Do One Thing (DOT) pledge challenge.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency's [A Student's Guide to Global Climate Change](#) provides information and tools to learn about climate change.
- [Young Voices for the Planet](#) features a film series profiling youth for their low greenhouse gas lifestyles and provides discussion questions for teachers.

- [ManagEnergy Kid's Corner](#) is a project of the Intelligent Energy Europe and includes curriculum materials and activities about reducing fossil fuel and energy use.
- The [Eco2School](#) team works with classes, clubs and student leaders to develop a comprehensive climate change education program that focuses on student leadership and empowerment.

MESSAGES

Messages that tend to resonate with youth speak to their increasing independence, being role models, and having fun with friends.

Environment

Messages about the environment can be integrated into science classes by discussing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions. Teach students how their daily transportation and lifestyle choices have a large impact on the environment.

Sample messages include:

- Marin County Safe Routes to School's [Teens Go Green Co2 & Pollution Facts](#)
- The US Environmental Protection Agency's [Climate Change Emission Calculator Kit \(Climate CHECK\)](#)

Health

Physical activity levels affect health and learning. Walking and biking to school is a great way to get some exercise and arrive at school ready to learn. Health classes can promote walking and biking to school as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Sample messages include:

- Marin County Safe Routes to School's [Teens Go Green: Transportation and the Effects on Physical Activity & Learning and Health Facts](#)
- New York Times article on [How Exercise Changes our DNA](#)

MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

Safety

While safety may not be at the forefront of teenagers' minds, it is an important message that bears repeating. Avoid scare tactics, but reinforce positive walking, biking, and driving behaviors. Students can get involved in by organizing a walk audit for their school or for a neighboring elementary school.

Sample safety campaigns include:

- [San Ramon Valley Street Smarts' "It Happens" Traffic Safety Campaign](#)
- [Marin County Distracted Driving campaigns](#) discourage cell phone use while driving
- [#YOLOWalkSafe Campaign](#)
- [Arrive Alive. Dnt txt n drv.](#)
- [Distraction.gov](#)

Reframing the Message to the Positive

Use positive messaging to help students feel that they can make a difference.

| SCARE MESSAGE | POSITIVE MESSAGE |
|---|---|
| Cell phone use while driving is deadly, especially for teens. | Drive focused, without distraction of talking or texting on your cell phone |
| Speed kills. | Drive like you care: Follow the speed limit and moderate speed for driving conditions. |
| Every 22 minutes someone dies in an alcohol-related motor vehicle accident, and teens are especially vulnerable. | Drive alert -- substance-free and well-rested. |
| In 2011, 58 percent of teen drivers killed in crashes were not wearing a seat belt and 50 percent of passengers killed in crashes involving a teen driver were not buckled up. | Buckle up for every ride. |

Adapted from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's [teen driver source](#).

MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

Independence

Increasing self-reliance is an essential part of middle and high school students' lives. Messages should make a clear connection between transportation and independence, such as:

- Walking, biking, carpooling, or taking transit to school provides more time to spend with friends.
- Walking, biking, or taking transit offers opportunities to travel without help from a parent.
- Traveling on your own shows parents that you're responsible.

“When youth become engaged in community activities, they develop the skills needed to be an effective leader.”

The Postive Effects of Youth Community Engagement, Texas State

Leadership

Students involved in leadership programs gain new knowledge and skills, learn responsibility, and build their networks. Students can also address issues that directly affect their lives, as well as gaining experience for a college application.

Sample messages include:

- Participating in a Green Team or club will help build your leadership skills.
- Involvement with environmental initiatives helps strengthen your college application.
- Leadership roles add to your resume.
- Leadership roles will lead to letters of recommendation.
- You can have a greater impact on climate change by being a community leader.

INCENTIVES

Incentives can encourage participation in activities and events, promoting long-term involvement in sustainability efforts. Raffles and awards that include larger give-aways tend to be more appealing to older students, even if fewer people receive the prize.

Effective incentives for teens include:

- Food at meetings or events
- Gift cards
- Technology, such as an iPad or GoPro Cameras for larger competitions
- Bike lights
- Key chains
- Reusable bags with items, such as Bike to Work Day giveaways

Other types of incentives:

- Letters of recommendation
- Community service hours
- Credit for service learning projects
- Internship credit
- Special privileges, such as tickets to school events or games, first place in line, etc.



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GREEN TEAMS

GREEN TEAMS

A Green Team is a fun, social committee focused on reducing the school's ecological footprint. Teams focus on solutions ranging from recycling programs to reducing energy consumption and car usage.

Forming a Team

It is essential to bring together the right people. Teams can be formed within a classroom with the teacher following a specific curriculum, or they can be set up as a club for students across grades. If the Team is a club, a faculty advisor will be required to help guide students and suggest activities.

Teams can also be formed by leveraging existing classes or clubs with an affiliated focus. Some high schools incorporate environmental tracks into their elective classes and most middle and high schools have leadership classes. These classes offer a dedicated audience to engage students in Safe Routes to School activities on their campus.

For more information about Green Teams:

- [Spare the Air Youth Clubs webpage](#)
- [Marin County's Teens Go Green](#)
- Green Star Schools website



Alameda County SR2S high school leaders present at the STAY YES conference



Students celebrate by making smoothies on a bike blender and receiving free bike repair.

Ideas for Activities & Events

Activities and events focused on sustainable transportation at schools benefit from youth engagement in both the planning and implementation phases. Students are the experts on what motivates their peers and will provide valuable insight for messaging the activities appropriately.

Events can be common SRTS activities with a new spin, or new ideas that students come up with.

Walk & Roll to School Days

Middle and high school students can put a new twist on common Safe Routes to School activities, such as Walk and Roll to School Days.

Some sample events, developed by students, include:

Green Day/No Cars on Campus

No Cars on Campus events focus on everything but cars. These events help promote transit use, and other active modes such as skateboarding. By encouraging everything but car use, teens think about how transportation impacts the environment and their health. Students can host lunch time activities or special presentations in the empty parking lot.

Monthly ABC (Anything But the Car)

Similar to a Green Day event, ABC Days are another way to market all types of sustainable transportation. The Green Team at Los Altos High School holds monthly ABC Days to encourage traveling to school by bike, public transit, or on foot.

GREEN TEAMS



The Golden Sneaker winning classroom proudly display their trophy.

Golden Sneaker Contest

The Golden Sneaker Contest is a competition between homeroom classes that rewards the classroom with the greatest percentage of green trips (active and shared modes) in a given time period. Green trips are tracked each day on a tally sheet that includes a calculation for total pounds of CO₂ saved during the contest.

The winning classroom receives a Golden Sneaker trophy. Encourage participation with a smoothie or pizza party for the winning class. Also consider promoting a social media campaign at participating schools.



Students in Marin County ride a tandem bike during their bike field trip.

Bike Trains

A bike train is a group of students riding to school together. In middle and high schools, students are old enough to ride on their own. Bike trains can be organized through classes or using an online tool and students can pick up their peers along the way. Holding a bicycle safety class is a great first step to launching a bike train as it provides safety skills that students can practice on their rides to and from school. See the [SchoolPool](#) guidebook for more info.

Bike trains can also help reinforce helmet use. As high school students with helmets become a frequent sight, peers will also be encouraged to wear helmets.



Bike field trips are becoming increasingly popular among students in Marin County.

Bike Field Trips

Bike Field Trips can offer an alternative to renting a bus or recruiting parent drivers, when the destination is within biking distance and the route doesn't pose undue hazards. Students who do not own a bike can often borrow one to join their peers. Law enforcement can be involved to monitor the route and/or help direct traffic.

Always give a brief safety update before the ride. Teachers and other volunteers can ride along to help supervise.

GREEN TEAMS



Carpool to School Days are celebrated as "Cocoa for Carpools" events planned by students in Alameda County and Eco2School participants in Sonoma County.

Carpool to School Day

Carpool to School Day is a great winter activity. Students can plan the event, develop materials, and conduct outreach. In high schools, students who have passed the graduated licensing requirements can drive their friends to school, while younger students can carpool with another family.

Carpool Lot

Through Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools, Foothill High School in Pleasanton implemented a carpool lot in 2013. 30 designated carpool parking spaces launched in conjunction with a Carpool to School Day. Student drivers must have at least one passenger daily to qualify for a free carpool space.

Amazing Transit Race

The Amazing Transit Race was piloted in Marin County to encourage students to try transit in their communities. Students from [Terra Linda High School](#) in Marin formed teams, riding buses to at least two destinations, and snapping photos of themselves at designated sites. See the Terra Linda High School [Amazing Transit Race Video](#) for more information.

GREEN TEAMS



Students at Irvington High in Alameda County make bike-blended smoothies with Kaiser's Super Weevil during a mini bike fest.

Youth Task Force/Fellows Program

Safe Routes to School Task Forces are often comprised of local champions, city officials, school district officials, and program implementers. Including youth on these task forces is a valuable way of getting another perspective.

Programs can also establish a Youth Task Force of students from high schools who meet to develop new activities and events and plan the activities at their schools.

Conferences for Youth

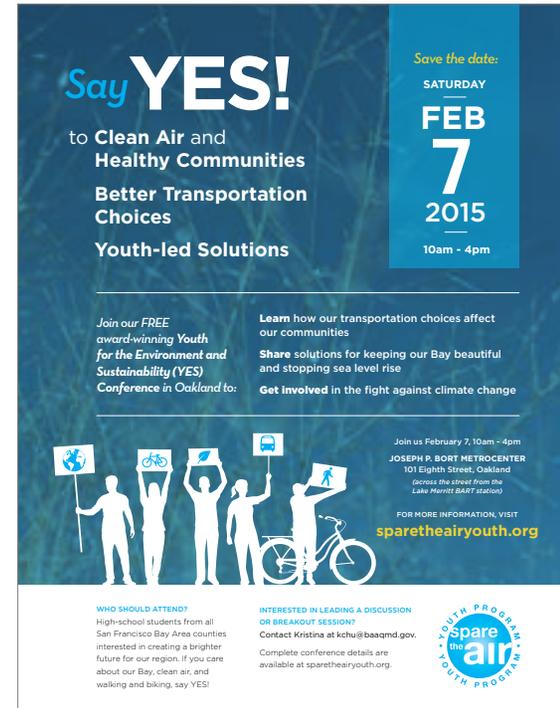
Youth-focused conferences are an empowering way of sharing the great work students are performing around the country. Spare the Air Youth's Youth for the Environment and Sustainability: YES Conference has been held since 2012, and brings together youth from around the Bay Area to share their work and experiences.

Youth-focused conferences examples include:

- Students for Green High Schools Conference
- EarthTeam's Leadership and Environmental Action Forum (L.E.A.F)
- Recycle-A-Bicycle's Youth Bike Summit

Youth for the Environment and Sustainability (YES!)

Each year, students from around the San Francisco Bay Area join together to discuss transportation issues, learn how their decisions can impact climate change, and share ways of encouraging others to walk, bike, take transit, or carpool to school.



Poster promoting Spare the Air Youth's YES Conference for high school students

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Climate and transportation curriculum can be integrated into middle and high school classrooms. Here are some topics and activities that can be covered in classes.

CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

ECO2school - Bike, Walk, Carpool: Practical Solutions to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The ECO2school program has a [classroom curriculum](#) linked to California State Standards in a variety of subject areas, including Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies.

Marin County Safe Routes to School: Green Curriculum

The Marin County SRTS program has developed a [green curriculum](#) covering the following topics:

- [3-D Bike Maps](#)
- [Pollution and Evolution](#)
- [Marketing Strategy and Transportation](#)
- [The Cost of Transportation](#)
- [What Do I Stand For?](#)

- [Travel Journal](#)
- [History of Transportation](#)

Spare the Air Youth's Climate Change Education Resources

- [Climate Change Education Resources](#)

TRANSIT EDUCATION

Programs can partner with local transit agencies to bring transit education to the classroom. This can include:

- Guest speakers providing information about transit and potential career opportunities in sustainable transportation
- Transit-use travel training
- Free transit passes to encourage students to try transit



Classroom curriculum includes presentations about pollution reduction through transportation choices

The Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) promotes transit use among middle and high school students through a 'Try Transit to Schools' campaign each September, providing students with free rides on all regular fixed routes the first two weeks of the month, to coincide with the back to school season. Efforts of local transit agencies can be leveraged with youth-led transit encouragement activities.

Walk Audits

Youth can participate in a walk audit/assessment around their school to identify traffic safety concerns and potential solutions, while learning about urban planning and civil engineering. Ideally, the school can partner with City planners and engineers, who can explain their roles to develop and improve transportation infrastructure.

Students can help design solutions using SketchUp or other online tools, and can write letters of support for grant applications to help fund identified projects.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cool the Earth Activities:
<http://www.cooltheearth.org/>

YOLO Walk Safe Campaign for High School Students:
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/safety/index.html>

ECO2school Program Manual:
<http://www.eco2school.org/eco2school-manual>

How to #BeUrbanful: riding the bus like a boss: <https://urbanful.org/2015/03/19/how-to-ride-the-bus-like-a-boss/>

Active4Me: <https://www.active4.me/>

Bay Area Youth Councils

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Alameda

<http://alamedaca.gov/recreation-uncategorized/events/696>

Albany

<http://albanyca.org/index.aspx?page=104>

Berkeley

http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/Children_Youth_and_Recreation_Commission/

Dublin

<http://www.dublin.ca.gov/index.aspx?nid=87>

Emeryville

<http://www.ci.emeryville.ca.us/93/City-School-Committee>

Fremont

<http://www.fremont.gov/345/Youth-Advisory-Commission>

Hayward

<http://www.ci.hayward.ca.us>

Livermore

<http://www.cityoflivermore.net/citygov/clerk/comms/yac.asp>

Oakland

<http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/teens/get-involved/youth-leadership-council>

Piedmont

<http://www.ci.piedmont.ca.us/committees/city-school.shtml>

Pleasanton

<http://www.cityofpleasantonca.gov/gov/depts/lib/teens/commission.asp>

San Leandro

<https://sanleandro.org/depts/rec/programs/yac.asp>

Union City

<http://www.ci.union-city.ca.us/departments/leisure-services/youth-and-family-services-yfs->

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Brentwood

<http://www.brentwoodca.gov/gov/boards/youth/default.asp>

Danville

<http://www.danville.ca.gov/Services/Recreation-Services/Teens/Danville-Youth-Council/>

Lafayette

<http://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/city-departments/parks-trails-recreation/youth-services-commission>

Moraga

<http://www.moraga.ca.us/Default.aspx?PageID=6957155&A=SearchResult&SearchID=11105813&ObjectID=6957155&ObjectType=1>

Oakley

<http://www.ci.oakley.ca.us/subpage.cfm?id=729942>

GREEN TEAMS

Orinda

http://www.cityoforinda.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={D8327BC1-BFD9-4EA8-9835-20BCEBCA77C7}

Pinole

<http://www.ci.pinole.ca.us/youth/index.html>

Pleasant

<http://www.cityofpleasantonca.gov/gov/depts/cs/youth/commission.asp>

Richmond

<http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=1074>

San Pablo

<http://www.sanpabloca.gov/index.aspx?nid=881>

San Ramon

<http://www.ci.san-ramon.ca.us/bcc/teen.htm>

MARIN COUNTY

Marin County

<http://www.yli.org/communityprograms/113/marin-county-youth-commission-mcyc>

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

San Francisco

<http://www.sfbos.org/index.aspx?page=5585>

SAN MATEO COUNTY

Belmont

<http://www.belmont.gov/Home/Components/StaffDirectory/StaffDirectory/232/213>

Brisbane

<http://www.ci.brisbane.ca.us/city-government/committees/youth-advisory>

Burlingame

<https://www.burlingame.org/index.aspx?page=1011>

Daly City

http://www.dalycity.org/City_Hall/Departments/LibraryandRecreationServices/rec/Youth_and_Teen_Services/Teen_Services.htm#

Foster City

<http://www.fostercity.org/parksandrecreation/youthandteens/index.cfm>

Milbrae

<http://www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/index.aspx?page=174>

Pacifica

http://www.cityofpacifica.org/depts/rec_department/teens/youth_advisory_board/default.asp

Redwood City

<http://www.redwoodcity.org/parks/kidstuff/advisoryboard.html>

San Carlos

<http://www.cityofsancarlos.org/depts/pr/scyc/council/default.asp>

San Mateo

<http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/index.aspx?nid=1151>

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Campbell

<http://www.ci.campbell.ca.us/183/Youth-Engagement-Steering-Committee>

Cupertino

<http://www.cupertino.org/index.aspx?page=1001>

Gilroy

http://www.cityofgilroy.org/cityofgilroy/city_hall/boards_commissions/youth_commission/default.aspx

Los Gatos

<http://www.losgatosca.gov/1316/ContactLocate-Us>

Milpitas

<http://www.ci.milpitas.ca.gov/government/commissions/youth.asp>

Morgan Hill

<http://www.morgan-hill.ca.gov/273/Youth-Action-Council>

Mountain View

<http://www.mountainview.gov/council/bcc/youth.asp>

Palo Alto

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/csd/recreation/teens/leadership.asp>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

San Jose

<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=3080>

Santa Clara

<http://santaclaraca.gov/index.aspx?page=245>

Saratoga

<http://www.saratoga.ca.us/cityhall/comms/youth/default.asp>

Sunnyvale

<http://sunnyvale.ca.gov/Departments/CommunityServices/CommunityServicesDivisions/YouthandFamilyResources.aspx>

SOLANO COUNTY

Fairfield

<http://www.fairfield.ca.gov/gov/comms/youth/default.asp>

Vacaville

<http://www.cityofvacaville.com/index.aspx?page=469>

Vallejo

<http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/cms/one.aspx?portalId=13506&pageId=32625>

SONOMA COUNTY

Cloverdale

<http://www.cloverdale.net>

Cotati

<http://ci.cotati.ca.us/search/search.pl?Match=2&Realm=All&Terms=youth+council>

Kenwood

<http://www.sonomawib.org/>

Petaluma

<http://cityofpetaluma.net/cclerk/citycommissions.html>

Santa Rosa

<http://ci.santa-rosa.ca.us/departments/recreationandparks/programs/neighborhoodyouthprograms/Pages/default.aspx>

The Sea Ranch

http://www.elkgrovecity.org/city_hall/city_government/commission_and_committees/youth_commission/

THIS GUIDEBOOK WAS PRODUCED FOR THE SPARE THE AIR YOUTH PROGRAM,
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LEARN MORE AT WWW.SPARETHEAIRYOUTH.ORG.

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