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# GOING GREEN IN EDUCATION: INSPIRATION YOU CAN USE

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*The following is a guest post by Shaya Kirkpatrick. Her bio follows.*

Do you want to be a part of helping save our planet now and for future generations? If everyone does something, whether it's small or large, we can collectively make our Earth a cleaner and safer place for everyone.

Grades of Green is changing the course of the future by instilling environmental values in students today. Grades of Green began in 2008 at Grand View Elementary in California by four moms wanting a better world for their children. After receiving an award from the EPA, the founders created a non-profit so that other schools would have free and easy access to the tools and information needed to empower and inspire students to care for the environment. Grades of Green offers 40+ Activities aimed to instill environmental values in students. Whether you want to concentrate on conserving air, energy, waste, water, or toxins, Grades of Green has an array of Activities that will help protect the environment today while instilling environmental values in students for years to come.

## **Two Wins: Schools and Environment**

Statistics show that greening schools protects the environment but also saves schools money, decreases absences, and increases test scores! But most schools lack the guidance and resources to produce tangible results. Grades of Green fills that gap by helping students, parents, and educators bring environmental education to the broader school community.

I am one of those four moms who saw a need to instill in our children a lifetime of environmental practices that will ultimately help their school, community and our planet. I saw a need and worked with others towards solutions to get things started and get things done! The issues facing our environment are extremely important. In fact, our lives depend on it. With a little planning and commitment, you could be on the road to making some significant contributions to our planet.



## **WHERE DO I BEGIN?**

There is so much going on in the environmental sector as sustainability feeds into almost everything. How do I know where to begin to find a job in the environmental field? Attending events in your community and speaking to people first-hand allows you to gain insights, ask direct questions and, most importantly, make contacts.

## **MAKING CONNECTIONS:**

When meeting people in the environmental field, you can find out about their backgrounds, what their job involves and what their goals are. This makes it possible to identify areas where you could potentially collaborate or promote each other's work and achievements. You can also ask about people's interests as it helps to gain an idea about the bigger picture, such as people's motives and routes to joining the environmental sector, which then helps communicate and engage others in environmental issues.

Whether you're in school or in the workplace, contacts are everything. If you are in school, studying environmental science, biology, chemistry, engineering, industrial hygiene or construction management, there is more than likely a job career center with a focus on the environment. That would be the place to start as many colleges/schools have internships and work study/jobs connections. If you're just starting out in the workplace, there are so many environmental jobs in fields like education, construction, health and safety, environmental planning for starters.

The beauty of the environmental sector is you meet people who are all out to achieve a common goal, yet are all approaching the goal from a different motive, background, perspectives and are faced by different challenges. It's important to be aware of as many of these factors as possible.



## **VOLUNTEERING AND INTERNSHIPS:**

Grades of Green offers volunteer opportunities and internships which have so far helped many young people make that first step into gaining experience in the environmental world. Internships are a great place to show your commitment and ability to work in the environmental field and get an inside track if a part-time or full-time position becomes available. You can also use the networking resources of that company to find other positions in the same or related fields.

Volunteering can help you make important connections with people who can help you find your “dream job” in the environmental field. Call local groups, agencies and businesses to see what you can do to help and make a difference!

Sign up for all the environmental news, job websites and newsletters that appeal to your level or interest.

Working as an environmental professional is a terrific career. You work with dedicated people and have a positive impact not only on people today but also on future generations. The work is exciting as it is always changing as new challenges emerge and fresh solutions are developed.

# Shaya Kirkpatrick



*Shaya Kirkpatrick is a co-founder of the non-profit Grades of Green (<http://www.gradesofgreen.org/>), an environmental education organization whose mission is to inspire and empower kids and the broader school community to care for the environment.*

*Previously, Shaya was a founding member of Planet Pals, an environmental program working with schools in Southern California to help children take a hands-on approach to help the environment. In that role, Shaya helped lead Grand View Elementary School start an e-waste recycling program and plant their first native garden. Shaya received the Environmental Hero Award by Assemblywoman Betsy Butler in 2011. Shaya received the 2008 Environmental SBBEC Steward of the Year Award; recognizing her leadership in protecting our local environment.*

*In that same year, Shaya received the Congressional Commendation Award, which was given to her by the United States Congress for her exceptional efforts in promoting environmental conservation. In 2009, Shaya was the recipient of the Environmental Award from the Environmental Protection Agency which recognizes individuals and groups outside of the EPA who are*

*working to protect public health and the environment. Shaya also received the County of Los Angeles Green Leadership Award for recognition in commemoration of environmental public service. In 2007 Shaya served as an advisor to PeaceJam, an international organization helping youth and Nobel Peace Laureates working together to tackle the most pressing issues facing our global health. And in 2006, Shaya served as the Chair for Growing Great, a non-profit whose mission is to adopt healthy eating habits through innovative classroom lessons, school gardens and community events.*

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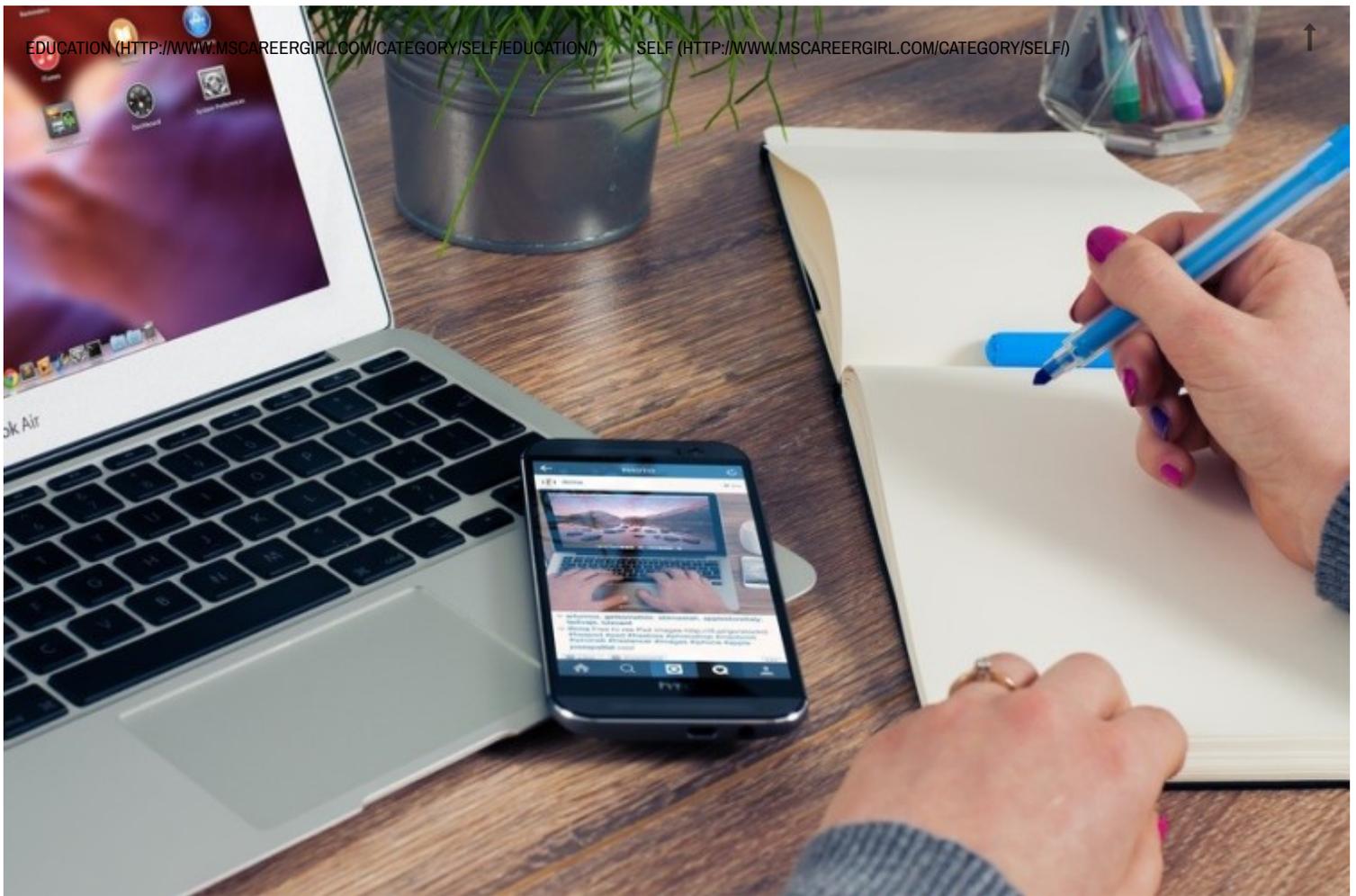


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