



Plastic to metal: JDHS students lead silverware revolution

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FOR THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

JUNEAU - Juneau-Douglas High School switched from using disposable plastic utensils to metal silverware this week, after a yearlong campaign by students involved in Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA).

"I think it's a great idea, go metal!" said senior Katie Poor, who, as a JDHS student, has seen firsthand the reduction in school waste.

Each year Juneau-Douglas High School spends over \$1000 on disposable utensils which then adds over 400 pounds of material to our landfill and takes over 500 years to decompose. Now, with the donations of silverware from our community, Juneau-Douglas High School students have lowered our local carbon footprint and saved tax-payer dollars.

"[The switch] is going to save us a lot in the long run, I think it's a good idea," said Assistant Principal Dale Staley.

Students were concerned about the amount of waste coming from their cafeteria and decided to take action. They started by meeting with school administrators to discuss a possible solution. After buying and organizing the necessary items for the switch, they held a community-wide silverware drive and collected over 1,500 forks and spoons. Although washing the utensils will have some cost, the amount saved far outweighs the expense.

"It's a relief to know that kids can make a difference in an environment where we normally feel powerless. The whole experience was really empowering," said AYEA members and JDHS students Hannah Wilson and Laurel Stark.

Thank you to Alaskan and Proud, Rainbow Foods, Superbear, and Walmart for accepting donations, as well as to our supportive community whose donations made this possible.

AYEA inspires and trains diverse youth leaders to impact environmental issues through community action projects and campaigns; skills training in leadership, environmental education, civic engagement, and community organizing; and green jobs that sustain our communities and future. Learn more at www.ayea.org.

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