

Climate-Friendly Communities

A Guide to Using Video Stories for Climate Action

Overview

The Climate-Friendly Communities video collection includes short video stories (1.5 to 2 minutes) showcasing individuals and groups from diverse cultures taking actions that benefit their communities and the climate at the same time. They are intended to demonstrate that climate action is part and parcel of all of our cultural histories and embedded in our everyday lives. Many of the stories also highlight creative, community-generated solutions to climate change that either complement common solutions often promoted, such as recycling, changing light bulbs, and taking public transportation, or put particular spins on them so they fit the local culture and advance community goals.

This guide provides a snapshot of the original six videos in the collection and some guidance for using them to engage communities in understanding their own relationships to climate action and identifying additional action they can take moving forward—that's good for them and for the climate.

Why Stories?

Climate change is often a concept that feels distant to people, like something about polar bears or ice caps; even if people do think and care about it, they often feel powerless to make a difference. Stories help people relate this vague concept to their lives—especially when they are told by people who are relatable, “like us.” Stories incorporate climate change into our shared narratives, which are based on values and worldviews that shape our interpretations of the world.

Telling climate change and climate action stories rooted in community and culture helps people better understand and relate to climate change and its effects, and provides impetus for taking climate action in creative ways that link community concerns to climate change mitigation (lowering greenhouse gases to prevent more changes in climate) and adaptation (coping with changes already happening). Solutions often feel distant as well, and stories help make them feel personal and possible. Often, they help people see that they can make a difference by building on their existing knowledge and assets. An extra benefit is that sharing stories helps people see that despite what the news media suggests, most people do care about the climate and want to figure out how they can help.

In the words of one of the storytellers featured in the original videos:

Storytelling is important because it helps us to remember. I think that stories are...like a bridge... like glue...like a foundation. And that they are critical to allowing a people, a community, a culture to reinvent itself without forgetting its past.

Objective: Demonstrate that climate action is embedded in your culture and that it takes many creative forms

Audience: Middle school and up

Materials: Internet access, phone/equipment with video-recording capability

Time Needed: 1-4 hours, depending on whether you will record your own video stories

Want to learn more about storytelling?

Check out these storytelling resources from the Climate Access Network:

<http://www.climateaccess.org/storytelling-resources>

—Emily Hooper-Lansana, *In the Spirit*

Why *Video Stories*?

Videos can be especially effective in helping people relate to climate change because they are visual and include sound. Climate change can sometimes feel distant and less than urgent. Visual prompts, like videos that depict familiar people and communities, often help people understand climate change as something relatable to their particular histories and lives. They can help people recognize different ways they are already taking climate action—even if they do not realize it—and begin to envision themselves as a key part of climate change solutions.

The Original Videos

The original six videos feature stories collected in 2010 as part of a climate action stories project conducted in Chicago by The Field Museum with community leaders from neighborhoods across the city. The stories are performed by the storytelling team *In the Spirit*. Here's a brief overview of these videos, including their stories, the climate strategies they highlight, and the community benefits that result from their actions. Note that the video collection is growing, as people using this tool contribute additional stories, so check the collection periodically to discover additional video stories.

Climate-Friendly Communities Video Collection

View videos at the [Connect YouTube Channel](#):
<http://tinyurl.com/Connectccactionvideos>

Climate-Friendly Communities Video Collection

VIDEO FILE NAME AND COMMUNITY	STORY	COMMUNITY BENEFITS	CLIMATE CONNECTIONS	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
 <p>Video File Name: <i>Pilsen — Chalupita Community: Pilsen, Chicago</i></p> <p>Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.</p>	A Latino business owner reduces waste by partnering with a local baker to make a chalupita, or dough bowl.	Collaboration, supporting local businesses	Waste reduction	

VIDEO FILE NAME AND COMMUNITY	STORY	COMMUNITY BENEFITS	CLIMATE CONNECTIONS	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
 <p>Video File Name: <i>Roseland—George Washington Carver</i> Community: <i>Roseland, Chicago</i></p>	<p>George Washington Carver F.A.R.M.S., named after renowned scientist George Carver, Ph.D., supports African American farmers and sustainable practices through a network extending from Chicago to the southern U.S.</p>	<p>Supporting African American farmers and business networks, healthy food</p>	<p>Gardening, composting</p>	<p>Find a local farmers' market near you using the USDA Farmers Markets Directory or Local Harvest</p>
 <p>Video File Name: <i>Roseland—God's Gang Community: Roseland, Chicago</i></p> <p>Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.</p>	<p>God's Gang trains youth in sustainable agriculture to promote self-esteem, entrepreneurship, and personal growth. Featured work includes a public poster campaign created as part of God's Gang's participation in the Energy Action Network, showing local residents engaged in energy- saving actions.</p>	<p>Youth development, cultural pride</p>	<p>Gardening, energy efficiency</p>	
 <p>Video File Name: <i>West Ridge—Renewable Energy and Recycling</i></p> <p>Community: <i>West Ridge, Chicago</i></p> <p>Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.</p>	<p>South Asian residents of Chicago have brought climate-friendly practices with them to Chicago, including indigenous practices of renewable energy and re-use.</p>	<p>Maintaining cultural traditions</p>	<p>Renewable energy, waste reduction, carpooling</p>	
	<p>A Roseland resident talks about her lifelong love of gardening.</p>	<p>Connecting to nature, intergenerational</p>	<p>Gardening</p>	<p>Many gardeners are making their gardens more</p>

VIDEO FILE NAME AND COMMUNITY	STORY	COMMUNITY BENEFITS	CLIMATE CONNECTIONS	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
 <p>Video File Name: <i>Roseland—Gardening Community: Roseland, Chicago</i></p> <p>Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.</p>		relationships		climate-friendly to cut greenhouse gases and adapt to change. Learn more online from the Union of Concerned Scientists’ “Climate-Friendly Gardener” guide and animalia project’s “Gardening in a Changing Climate” series.
 <p>Video File Name: Pilsen—Chickens Community: Pilsen, Chicago</p> <p>Photo courtesy of The Field Museum.</p>	A Mexican family in Chicago strengthens their children’s connection to nature by raising chickens.	Strengthening connections to nature, maintaining cultural traditions, healthy food	Urban agriculture	Animals share the world with us, and they are affected by climate change, too. Learn more at: EPA, National Geographic, and National Wildlife Federation.

Use the Videos to Collect Your Own Stories

These videos can be used as prompts for discussion about climate action traditions and practices that are embedded in people’s own communities and lives. Choose a few of them to show and then facilitate a short discussion. Try to show a diverse selection of videos highlighting very different stories to ensure that people with different interests will have stories to relate to. (If you have limited time, you can also show just one video, especially if you want to focus discussion on the type of action showcased in that video, such as gardening.)

Here are some questions to help people relate the stories to their own lives:

- Which video was your favorite, and why?
- Which story did you relate to most, and why?
- Do any of the stories, or parts of them, remind you of things that you do or that your family or community does?

- How do these stories relate to climate change? Were you surprised to think of any of them as “climate action”?
- Can you think of other things now that you or others do that might be “climate action”?

After they respond to the questions, have people create their own, very brief community climate action stories, about themselves or people they’re close to. Ask them to jot down short responses to the following questions, then share and discuss them as a group:

- Who is your story about? (yourself, a relative, friend, colleague)
- What community does this person live in? (community, city, state)
- Describe the action (or tradition, value, practice, program) you want to share.
- How does this benefit the person the story is about or their family, friends, or community?
- How does this benefit the climate?

If you think that the last question about the climate might be too difficult for people to answer on their own, just ask them to jot down answers to the first three questions and then work on answering the last one with them, ideally as a group, so that everyone is thinking about these connections together in creative ways. The key is to get people thinking about something that they or others they know do that they see as meaningful and somehow related to climate action—and then to help them connect it more specifically later on.

Making the Connection to Climate: Some Additional Suggestions

If you feel you need some additional resources to help connect community actions to climate actions, here are few suggestions:

- Before the discussion, identify any climate action plans for your town, city, or region and print out a list of their climate action strategies.
- If you know a bit about your audience and their interests, make an educated guess about the types of topics they might focus on (such as food, pollution, beautification, natural areas, parks, gardens, recycling/re-use, transportation, or particular cultural traditions) and do a little research into the relationship between those topics and climate change/climate action. Start with the Climate Connections series. These two-page summaries explore the relationship between climate change and other topics people know about in their communities. Each Climate Connections guide includes an assessment of climate impacts, ideas for climate action, and links to additional resources.

Keep in mind that the point of this activity is to help people connect to climate change and climate action, and to see what they are already doing as something that is good for the climate. So it’s important to make the connection to climate—even if this means you have to think in creative ways. Remember the concept of six degrees of separation? It argues that any two people are connected by six people they know. That is the point here: to encourage people to participate in climate action by helping them see that it is embedded in their own values and lives. For example, many people enjoy spending time outdoors and have a special fondness for particular outdoor areas. That strong connection to nature and place provides a foundation for taking care of it—and can be connected to climate-friendly land practices that are central to climate change adaptation strategies, such as increasing green space and habitat, climate-friendly gardening, monitoring, and stewardship.

Record Your Stories on Video

If you have equipment—even just mobile phones with video capabilities—encourage people to record their stories on video, and then we can upload them to the Connect YouTube channel ([http://tinyurl.com/ Connectcctionvideos](http://tinyurl.com/Connectcctionvideos)). The videos will then become part of our video collection and help inspire others across the Midwest to think in creative ways about how they are contributing to their communities and helping the climate. To upload, contact Connect Project Manager Jennifer Schwarz Ballard at jschwarz@chicagobotanic.org. Remember to get written permission from the people who made and are featured in the videos before posting them publicly.

What's Next?

If you want to go beyond stories, you can now move into a conversation about ideas for future action. Facilitate a closing discussion about what additional actions people are interested in taking and how they might do so, using questions such as these:

- Are there things that you saw in the videos, or that we've discussed together, that you think about doing but have not done yet?
- What are these things, and what appeals to you about them?
- What are barriers to getting started, and where might you get some support?

Wrap up by suggesting ways that participants can learn more and get more engaged. If there are people within the group who have knowledge and skills to help others, point that out. Share particular resources that might be helpful, including materials and organizations. Write down names and contact information of people who want specific connections or information and promise to follow up.

You might also want to think of other venues for sharing participants' stories—especially if you captured them on video. And, if you will have more opportunities for people to share and record their stories, encourage participants to spread the word and come again in the future, with friends, to help more people realize that their community is making a difference.

Web Addresses

Links from the chart:

- Pilsen—Chalupita
Video: <http://tinyurl.com/pilsenchalupita>
- Roseland—Georgia Washington Carver
Video: <http://tinyurl.com/roselandcarver>
 - Additional resources:
 - USDA Farmers Markets Directory: <http://search.ams.usda.gov/FARMERSMARKETS/default.aspx>
 - Local Harvest: <http://www.localharvest.org/>
- Roseland—God's Gang
Video: <http://tinyurl.com/roselandgodsgang>
- West Ridge—Renewable Energy and Recycling
Video: <http://tinyurl.com/westridgeenergy>

- Roseland—Gardening

Video: <http://tinyurl.com/roselandgardening>

- Additional resources:

- Animalia Project, Citizen Science and Project Opportunities (<http://animaliaproject.org/citizen-science/>)
- Union of Concerned Scientists' Climate-Friendly Gardener guide:
http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/what_you_can_do/the-climate-friendly-gardener.html#.VUfhafm6fIU

- Pilsen—Chickens

Video: <http://tinyurl.com/pilsenchickens>

- Additional resources (animals and climate change):

- EPA: <http://www.epa.gov/climatestudents/impacts/effects/ecosystems.html>
- National Geographic: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140331-global-warming-climate-change-ipcc-animals-science-environment/>
- National Wildlife Federation: <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Threats-to-Wildlife/Global-Warming/Effects-on-Wildlife-and-Habitat.aspx>