

Give Earth A Hand

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Young “Ambassadors for Climate Justice” at the Plant-for-the-Planet Earth Day talk / Photo: Plant-for-the-Planet

International organization Plant-for-the-Planet launched the initiative with school children, and with the guidance of Mexican Association of Arborists and government authorities to promote the wellbeing, care and fruition of the urban forest

On April 22, Earth Day, César García Lagunas and Raúl Negrete Cetina, director and national president for Plant-for-the-Planet, an environmental organization whose national flagship center is in Playa del Carmen, invited government authorities from CONAFOR and Rafael Reynoso Valdez, from the Mexican Association of Arborists, to speak with teens from the Center for Technological Studies of the Sea (C.E.T.-MAR), about the significance of the work they are doing with Plant-for-the-Planet, in terms of reforestation and taking care of the urban canopy.

The Plant-for-the-Planet initiative, whose founder, a 12-year-old German boy, Felix Finkbeiner, had been given a school assignment to talk about the climate crisis in 2007. He was inspired by Nobel Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai who planted 30 million trees in Eastern Africa. Felix then launched a mission to reach all the kids around the world and have them plant a million trees in every country. The reason, every mature tree extracts three tons of CO₂ emissions from the atmosphere. Today, through Plant-for-the-Planet, 10 billion trees have been planted in 178 participating countries.

In 2010, Plant-for-the-Planet came to Mexico, with Felix visiting Playa del Carmen. Since, the Playa contingency has organized various events including the First National Environmental Youth Forum in Cozumel 2014, the first

Climate Change Forum of Quintana Roo in April 2013, as well as planting 500,000 trees around schools, hospitals and avenues throughout the state with 94 percent survival rate. Locally, 10,000 kids and teens have been trained out of which 15 percent are now Ambassadors for Climate Justice.

During the Earth Day talks, representatives from CONAFOR told the students “Things that are accomplished come from the heart” as they congratulated the teens and the organization for their hard work, which involves stewardship of the environment and reforestation of the urban area. The arborist Rafael Reynoso highlighted the fact that the teens were the next generation of decision makers. He also stressed the invaluable services provided by city trees, such as those provided by shade trees Ceiba and the endemic *Ficus* – highly important on a day with 27°C and near 90 percent humidity.

Their campaign “Give Earth A Hand” is hoping to match their last viral campaign “Stop Talking. Start Planting.”

The association does not receive any governmental support or funding from the main headquarters in Germany and runs 100 percent from donations. To find out more and to support them in their cause, you can contact them at info@plant-for-the-planet.org or directly tocesar.garcia-lagunas@plant-for-the-planet.org.