CAMPUS STORY - TREE HUGGERS CLUB

         Attn: Local editors; C. Adams

New environmental activism club at American University gauges necessity and interest at first meeting

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         American University

WASHINGTON – The Tree Huggers Club at American University, a new organization this year, held their first meeting on Tuesday, unveiling their mission to 23 students.

 The first thing its president, Nicole Loy, discussed was their mission, which is to provide sustainability education both on and off-campus.

The meeting was informal, often the executive board asked questions of the attendees, trying to gauge what they were most interested in. Most of the attendees found out about the club at the involvement fair or through social media. The executive board consists of all sophomores.

During the meeting, the executive board focused mostly on potential activities outside of their mission statement, primarily getting American to include compost bins in the residence halls again. Other activities include stream and park cleanups, clothing swaps and working with other clubs to change the harmful practices of American’s dining program.

Attendees of the meeting seemed excited about the activities cited. “I’m really excited for cleanups,” sophomore Rosalie Filippone said. “I haven’t been able to do any of those around D.C. yet so I hope I can do those.”

Mollie Russell, an executive board member of American’s Zero Waste Club did not attend the meeting, but when asked what her club had coming up this semester, she mentioned it’s clothing swaps. The Tree Huggers Club also cited clothing swaps as a potential activity.

“I don’t know about this club,” Russell said. “I think it’s just a repeat … I don’t think it’s needed, just because of the efforts already (present).”

One key point to the Tree Huggers’ composting plan was hanging posters near trash cans educating students on what can go in each can. One attendee pointed out that the trash cans themselves have information and photos on them outlining what can be disposed of where. The executive board responded saying the posters would be in a more prominent position.

At the end of the meeting, executive board members handed out compost bins for attendees to take and use. These bins were provided to the Tree Huggers Club from the Zero Waste Club.

In addition to the Zero Waste Club, American has an Office of Sustainability and three other environmental clubs, including Engineers for a Sustainable World, Kogod Sustainability Club and Sustainable Ocean Alliance. When asked how the club would distinguish itself from preexisting groups, members of the executive board did not have a concrete plan.

“I think the biggest thing that we want to do differently is just by actually going out and doing things,” President Loy said.

“In our first year, I just want to see the awareness grow about these issues and about what we're doing to stop them,” Caeden Cloud, an executive board member, said. When asked specifically what the club would do to stop the issues, Cloud cited previously mentioned examples of tackling composting and river cleanups.

The Tree Huggers’ executive board did not address the possibility of combining with a preexisting group on campus, only working alongside other clubs.

You can find more information on the Tree Huggers Club on Facebook and Instagram or via their email treehuggersau@gmail.com.

SOURCING INFORMATION

Claire Andersen, American University student; in-person interview September 24, 5-6 p.m.; (847) 650-2409, ca6269a@student.american.edu. I interviewed her because she attended the first Tree Huggers’ meeting. I have no personal or professional connection with her.

Rosalie Filippone, American University student; in-person interview September 24, 5-6 p.m.; (203) 641-1102, rf8145a@student.american.edu. I interviewed her because she attended the first Tree Huggers’ meeting. I have no personal or professional connection with her.

Mollie Russell, American University student; in-person interview September 24, 5-6 p.m.; (302) 317-6438, mr2590a@student.american.edu. I interviewed her because she is on the executive board of the Zero Waste Club and attended the first Tree Huggers’ meeting. I have no personal or professional connection with her.

Caeden Cloud, American University student; in-person interview September 24, 5-6 p.m.; (267) 250-1230, cc0047a@student.american.edu. I interviewed him because he is on the executive board of the Tree Huggers Club. I have no personal or professional connection with him.

Nicole Loy, American University student; in-person interview September 24, 5-6 p.m.; (859) 806-6806, nl4621a@student.american.edu. I interviewed her because she is the president of the Tree Huggers Club. I have no personal or professional connection with her.