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Guest view: Future Women Leaders to gather April 6

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By Sruchi Patel



Young women around the world are beginning to find their voice, whether it be through the fight for gun regulation like Emma Gonzalez, environmental change like Greta Thunberg, more diversity in the media like Yara Shahidi or global education like Malala Yousafzai. In case those names don't ring a bell, they are young leaders who all have something in common: exceptional leadership skills and the ability to share a powerful message with society.

Being passionate about women's issues and the perception of women in today's society motivated me to join the planning committee for the Future Women Leaders Conference. I knew that if I was collaborating with other strong young women, not only would I be able to gain leadership and communications skills; I am also helping to pass those skills onto the next Malala's and Greta's of the world.

This year's FWLC will be held April 6 at the Community And Cultural Center, 17000 Monterey Road in Morgan Hill. The conference is sponsored by the American Association of University Women and the City of Morgan Hill.

It is the students, however, who create this event. Student advocacy groups from GECA, Live Oak, Oakwood and Sobrato high schools come together for six months of planning with the purpose of bringing together the young women of our community and offering the skills and knowledge of those who have gone before them. Topics include self-care, public speaking, confidence building and many more. In fact, we have 14 workshops on the schedule, each presented by an expert in their field.

The conference will include entertainment at lunch with young women performing instruments, singing and showing their interest for the visual and performing arts and a living library of Powerful Women, represented by some of Morgan Hill's most influential members.

Finding out about the Grateful Garment Project from the Women's March, committee members thought it would be a great way to combine the conference with a community service project. The conference is asking attendees to bring a pair of leggings to donate to the Grateful Garment Project, which gives those clothes to women who have survived sexual abuse.

In six months, participants will receive a postcard that they will write to themselves at the event about a motivational moment, a skill that they learned or a new friend that they met, rekindling that energy that might be starting to decline.

Everyone will gain something different from these few hours together. As a member of the planning committee, I personally believe that my ability to confidently collaborate and share my ideas about something that I'm passionate about has made me a stronger person, more self-assured and ready to take on the challenges that I face as I go off to college in just a few months.

Emma, Greta, Malala and Yara all found their voices in different ways, and we can, too. There is no limit on what we can do if we trust ourselves to follow our passions and not be afraid to ask others to join us. We are the future and the future is now.

Sruchi Patel is a senior at Sobrato High School in Morgan Hill. For more information and tickets for the Future Women Leaders Conference, visit fwlc.eventbrite.com.