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WHITE HOUSE CHAMPION OF CHANGE

Tupper Lake, NY – One person’s idea can impact the world. That thought reveals itself every day. One person’s idea resulted in The Wild Center and one person’s idea created a pivotal program at the Center that is now sending two people to the White House. Gina Fiorile, an alumna of Saranac Lake High School and freshman at the University of Vermont, and Wild Center Director of Programs, Jen Kretser, will join other “Champions of Change for Climate Education and Literacy” at the White House on Monday, February 9th. The event celebrates Americans who are doing extraordinary work to enhance climate education and literacy in classrooms and communities across the country.

Gina is being recognized as a “Champion of Change for Climate Education and Literacy” for her passion for the environment that developed in high school, where she took a leadership role in many projects related to waste reduction, environmental education, and climate-change mitigation. Since freshman year, she was instrumental in planning The Wild Center’s annual Adirondack Youth Climate Summit, which has now been adopted in locations across the country as a model for environmental education. She was a featured student in a recent PBS documentary The Resilient Ones: A Generation Takes on Climate Change that followed the Adirondack Youth Climate Summit and its efforts to reduce the effects of climate change in the Adirondack Park. She represents the many young people who are committed to climate action and the protection of our future environment. Gina is still involved in the Adirondack Youth Climate Summit, leading the University of Vermont team during their inaugural involvement and inspiring a Vermont Summit shortly afterwards.

The Adirondack Youth Climate Summit, founded in 2009 by The Wild Center, was the brainchild of Lake Placid High School student, Zach Berger and was realized by Wild Center’s Jen Kretser, who has coordinated the event, along with students and teachers, each November at the Center in Tupper Lake, NY. The Summit is a model and has already led to financial savings and shifts in mindsets across the Park. The Adirondack Youth Climate Summit has inspired Summits in Finland and Vermont.

In December 2014 the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) launched a new Climate Education and Literacy Initiative to help connect American students and citizens with the best-available, science based information about climate change. The Wild Center’s innovative Adirondack Youth Climate Summit was recognized as a nationally important tool to move this conversation forward. This Champions of Change event builds on the Initiative by honoring those who are inspiring students, educators, and citizens to learn about climate change and to develop and implement solutions.
The Champions of Change program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals, businesses, and organizations doing extraordinary work to empower and inspire members of their communities. The event will be live-streamed on the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/live. You can join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtags #WHChamps and #ActonClimate. To learn more about the White House Champions of Change program, visit www.whitehouse.gov/champions.

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