

Residents Issued an Environmental Challenge



Above: At Lafayette Village in Williamsburg, CHP Chief Operating Officer Orlando Artze takes his turn signing a pledge to eliminate meat from his diet one day a week in order to help reduce carbon emissions.

One thing the Resident Services team at Lafayette Village Apartments knows for sure is that their residents love contests! So, for the second year in a row, AmeriCorps member Dan Emmanuel rallied residents to take the *Environmental Challenge* as part of a service learning project about reducing their negative impact on the planet.

The goal of the 2010 *Environmental Challenge* was to educate Lafayette Village youths about the critical issue of climate change while promoting awareness and initiating action both within and beyond the community. Specifically, the participants in the program learned about the relationship between the global livestock industry and climate change. Young participants worked on a campaign to educate the wider community about climate change and collected signatures pledging to eat all vegetarian meals for at least one day of the week for a year.

All of the signatures were gathered by the youth participants, with a “*Young Environmentalist Award*” going to the individual who collected the most names. This year, 7-year-old *Asantewah Melvin* garnered 13 signatures to win the award.

Said Melvin, “It was exciting to win! I learned that people are proud of you when you try to save the environment, and that the animals are glad, too, because it means they might not get eaten!”

Melvin added that the hardest part of the project was explaining climate change to people, but getting the signatures was a breeze.

“My mom was very proud of me,” declared Melvin.

This year’s challenge concluded with 307 commitments received, which will net an estimated savings in carbon emissions of 44 tons over the year ahead. In comparison, these carbon savings are roughly equivalent to 12 average American drivers switching from a 2005 Chevy Suburban to a 2005 Toyota Prius for an entire year.

“This was not only a great way to educate the kids about global warming,” said Emmanuel, “but it helped them learn to go out into their community and interact with folks they may not have known.”