

The Summer of 2015, our son Jared Foxhall participated in SDC's Green Dragon Environmental Action program in China. This was a tremendous opportunity for him. Jared has always been intrigued by the Chinese culture, so he was elated to have been selected. One of the many impressive aspects of SDC's project was the diversity of its participants. SDC was not just another project for students with financial means but rather they carefully selected students from different backgrounds and economic status. Without the financial support from SDC, Jared would not have been able to participate in this life changing journey.

This experience exposed him to an entirely different culture from his own. He learned how to listen to, and take into consideration other people's perspectives. They tackled the important subject of the environment issues that face us. It was a humbling experience for him, as it taught him to check his assumptions about people who are different. He made friends and most importantly had a fantastic experience. Upon his return, he was more determined to one day return to China.

Jared has since spoken at the United Nation's peace day celebration (Sept 2016), at which he represented Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots foundation to speak about Something Good in The World's Children's peaceful Garden, a project he has been a part of for many years. In May of 2017 he gave a TEDx Talk called Reconnecting with Nature, about the importance of exposing children and youth to nature as a means to protect the environment in the future. Children who grow up loving nature are more likely to invest in protecting it, he stated in his talk. Upon graduating high school this past summer, he decided to take a gap year and is currently residing in China through July of 2018, immersing himself in the Chinese culture while studying Mandarin.

I believe that when young people are exposed to different cultures, it gives them the opportunity to realize the interconnectedness and oneness of all people. It is these kinds of experiences that lead to mutual understanding and respect of other people, something that is essential in the world today. Experiences like these inform their future choices and potentially raises up future leaders who will hopefully be more tolerant and just in their decisions. We are immensely grateful to SDC for this opportunity and know that they will continue to inspire young people for years to come through Student Diplomacy.

Ridvan Foxhall