

### #CLIMATEACTION

**Introduction:** Jack O’Neill is a sixth-year student in Colaiste Iosagain, Portarlinton, Co. Laois. In September of last year, Jack had the opportunity to attend the UN Youth Climate Action Summit, which was held in New York. We spoke to the 18-year-old, who is now a climate ambassador for Ireland, about his experience.



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**RE: Link:**

What kickstarted your interest in climate justice?

**Jack:** It first kickstarted when I became more aware of the world around me. I noticed how people treat this world and how this world is falling to pieces, yet nobody talks about it. People often care more for money, power and fame than they care about things money can't give you, so I decided to step up myself and take action.

**RE: Link:** What did it mean to you to attend the UN Climate Action Summit last year?

**Jack:** It meant everything to me, it showed me that the last three years of work had been noticed, and that my message got out and I was being listened to finally. Most of the world has finally opened their eyes to the matter at hand and it's my job to get the remaining people to join us as well.

**RE: Link:** What was the main message that you took away from the UN Climate Action Summit?

**Jack:** The main message that I took away was that I was not alone. A lot of people, especially the older generation reject my call out and try to put me down in many ways, but going to the summit and seeing everyone else, inspired me to keep standing tall. I made friends all across the world because of it, such as from Austria, France and Denmark.

**RE: Link:** What does your role as



climate ambassador entail?

**Jack:** My role in the shortest description possible is to educate the youth and people on climate change. I go from school to school and give workshops to students and run stalls at festivals, as well as giving speeches at ceremonies and staffing national events.

**RE: Link:** What role do you think young people should and could play in climate justice today?

**Jack:** The youth today can take any

New York, NY - August 28, 2019:  
16-year-old climate activist  
Greta Thunberg arrives into  
New York City after crossing  
the Atlantic in a zero carbon  
sailboat at North Cove Marina



role they want to in climate justice, all they need to do is stand fearlessly. It may sound easier said than done but it's all about practice. We need to get the message out and the only way to do that is to stand tall and speak out. If that isn't possible, there's always the small things that need to be done, as every little thing makes a difference like litter-picking or making Bug hotels.

**RE: Link:** Who inspires you in the world of climate justice and why?

**Jack:** The main people that inspire me are my peers working alongside me and against climate change around the country and the world. Everyone works so hard and constantly for this goal and it makes me want to do more, to keep up with everyone and to do my part. My friends and I make whatever fun out of it we can too, to keep it interesting for ourselves and challenge each other on how much we can do.

**RE: Link:** What advice do you have for a young person who wants to get involved in climate justice?

**Jack:** The advice I'd give is to believe in yourself. Stand up and be yourself. There will always be people in this world who will want you to fail and take you down, but you should stand tall no matter what. If you believe you can, then you can. Those who try to take you down are only afraid of what you can achieve! Do all that you can to help this world but don't push yourself too hard. Know your limits and surpass them.

**RE: Link:** What school subjects, if any, do you think enforce the message(s) of climate justice?

**Jack:** I think that geography, chemistry and biology classes really enforce the knowledge of climate. Those classes teach us all the vital things we need to know about biodiversity and what we need to do to continue our survival.

**RE: Link:** As a member of your school's Green School Committee,

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how important do you think this committee is in schools and how does it contribute to your message as a climate ambassador?

**Jack:** I believe without them the school would be far from eco-friendly and environmentally aware, and that the schools' waste systems around the country would be under greater pressure than they are now.

**RE: Link:** Finally, do you have anything else which you would like to share with our readers?

**Jack:** The one thing that I would like to share is to open your eyes, the climate is all around us, the climate emergency has been proven everywhere and it needs to be solved before it is too late. Don't be afraid to stand up and speak out. Those who tell you otherwise are only afraid



Jack O'Neill at the UN Climate Action Summit, New York

for they don't understand and when people don't understand something, they push it away. You can do anything when you put your mind to it!

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## Competition **WIN €30**

Write in to us about how your school is grappling with the climate crisis and be in with a chance to win thirty euro!

Send your entry to  
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The Sacred Heart Messenger,  
37 Leeson Place, Dublin,  
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Please include your name, age & school.  
Closing date: 24<sup>th</sup> of the month.

**WINNER  
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