

Empowering Our Children

Our kids are tomorrow's environmental stewards BY ELISHA YOUNG

One of the biggest paradoxes I have encountered as a parent is how to teach my little one about our failing Earth without scaring the ever living hell out of him.

It challenges me to my core. I want to educate my son, for him to be fully empowered, but I also don't want him losing sleep over the deeply dire situation on our planet and the air we breathe.

Our children are inheriting this Earth, and all of the environmental disparity right along with it. As parents, we must inform our children and teach them how to be a positive steward in these uncertain times. But how do we accomplish this?

Enter Eugene author and climate justice crusader Mary DeMocker.

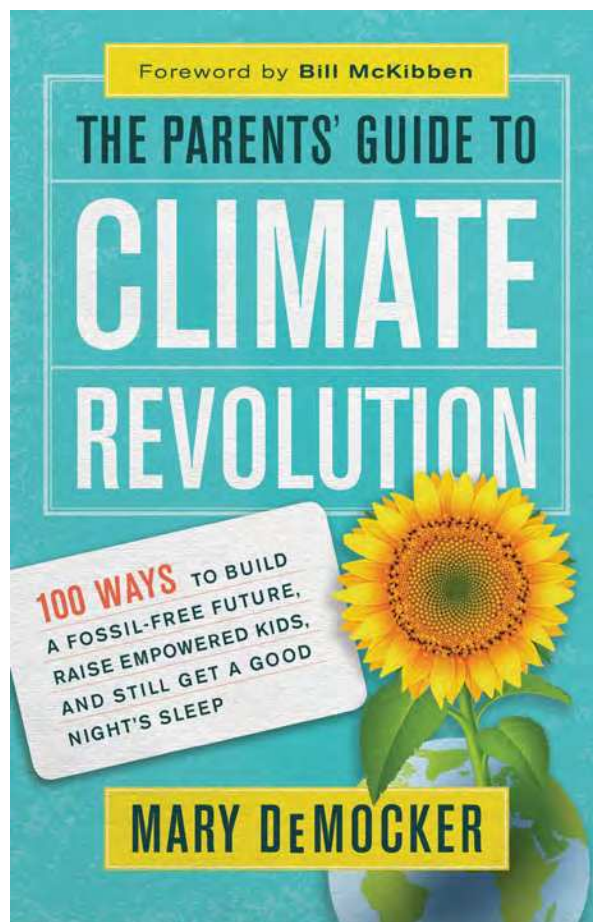
Since 2013, DeMocker has played a strong role in the fight for a livable planet and the efforts of climate integrity in the Northwest. This year, she stepped it up and published *The Parents' Guide To Climate Revolution: 100 ways to build a fossil-free future, raise empowered kids, and still get a good night's sleep*. In this artfully crafted book, DeMocker teaches us that we can parent and save the Earth all at the same time.

A prescription of sorts, DeMocker takes a head-on approach to addressing our climate crisis and exactly what we can do to make a positive impact. Even better, the steps she gives are actually attainable even for the busiest and broke of parents.

DeMocker is not pushing "eco-superheroism," as she calls it — the "overwhelming pile of parenting to-dos designed to shrink your family's carbon footprint." Rather, she offers a holistic approach of lifestyle actions, community engagement, and empowering our future generation with the education they need to create a livable future.

One continuing theme in DeMocker's book is the correlation between air quality, air pollution and climate change. Whether it's fossil fuels, overconsumption or factory pollution, one thing is clear — there is a direct link between climate change and the quality of the air we breathe.

DeMocker quotes President Richard Nixon emphasizing the importance of "clean air, clean water and open spaces for future generations of America" while he was signing



the Clean Air Act over four decades ago.

This section of the book really struck a chord with me after the American Lung Association's 2018 State of the Air report where Eugene is listed as one of the top 25 U.S. cities with short-term particle pollution (see story this issue).

Several studies have been reported on the direct link between the current climate crisis and worsening air quality. Rising temperatures, air stagnation and changing weather patterns attributed to climate change create spikes in short-term particular pollution.

Thanks to several initiatives, including the Clean Air

Act, we have improved air quality overall, but climate change is stifling that progress. It is clear that climate change presents a significant challenge to air quality. The more we learn about the climate crisis and educate our children about it, the more we can do to improve the air we are breathing right here in Lane County.

In addition to air, *The Parents' Guide To Climate Revolution* features 100 different topics that directly relate to the crisis of climate change we are facing. It sounds like a lot, but DeMocker has managed to make each of these areas completely approachable for anyone, in any situation.

Actions related to each topic are broken down into several options, addressing family budgets, time concerns and material access. She carefully curates plans for families with lots of time but little money, families lacking on time, households with resources, and every situation in between.

The best part of this book is there is no pressure. DeMocker quickly teaches us that climate crisis is a parenting crisis, but she does so without eliciting blame, guilt and despair. A parent herself, she understands that while raising our children we do our best, do what we can, with what we have.

In between funny anecdotes, quotes to live by and personal stories, DeMocker gives us exactly what we need — actionable feedback that can easily be completed, and taught to the tiny humans in our lives. If something listed is not workable for your family, gentle reminders throughout the book tell you that it is OK to move on to what you can.

The Parents' Guide To Climate Revolution was a delightful read for me, and for the first time in a long time left me with positive hope for our children's tomorrow. I immediately devoured the book, and started taking action, completing some of the activities with my own son. It's an exciting, and downright terrifying adventure to begin, but I will sleep well knowing that my child has some insight in how to turn this mess around — insight that he can share with his fellow children of the Earth, insight that I hope spreads like wildfire.

The final topic in the book is "Consider Yourself Invited," a call to join this crusade of change, to address the paradoxes of parenting in an ill world, and to raising future stewards of the Earth. I have accepted this invitation.

Will you? ■

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!

