Wednesday, December 4, 2019

|  |
| --- |
| **Climate Strike movement in region**  Teen: ‘We want to have awareness, but we also want to work on passing more laws’  **Sommer Brugal** Treasure Coast Newspapers USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA  STUART – Paige Scott, 17, hopes to become a senator. Abbie Nauss, 17, wants to be a pediatric surgeon; Isabelle Wilkinson, 16, a marine biologist.  Others hold dreams of owning a vintage clothing store, studying communications and business and becoming  a neurosurgeon or a politician.  As high schoolers, these young women are working toward career goals that span fields and specializations. But as the Martin County Youth Climate Strike organizers, they’re working toward one mission: raising awareness among their peers, community members and local politicians about climate change.  "Our goal is really all of the above," Scott said. "We want to have awareness, but we also want to work on passing more laws. We also want to get more youth involved."  Part of U.S. Youth Climate Strike, a national grassroots organization raising awareness about climate change, local chapters across Florida — including the  only one on the Treasure Coast — are planning to "strike for immediate climate action" on Friday.  The peaceful protest is scheduled 12:30-1:30 p.m. at Riverwalk Stage in downtown Stuart. The demonstration will begin with student speakers and a slideshow, according to the organizers.  Participants then will march through downtown to the office of Rep. Brian Mast, R-Palm City.  The event follows the Global Climate Strike, a peaceful march in cities around the world that attracted more than 4 million people. The global event, held Sept. 20, was led by youth climate activist Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist who has become a spokeswoman for the cause.  Many Treasure Coast students attended the Palm Beach Climate Strike in September because there wasn’t one locally, Mackenzie Abbott, 17, said. Abbott hopes Friday’s location encourages more youth to attend.  Martin County students  will not be excused from Friday classes to attend the strike without a parent’s note, school district spokeswoman Jennifer DeShazo said.  **Raising Awareness**  Some of the organizers first learned about climate change during the 20 16 election cycle; they heard presidential candidates talk about it on the campaign trail. Others, such as Abbott, saw social media posts about one year ago featuring Thunberg.  "I saw how passionate about (climate change) she was and thought if she’s this hyped about it, I want to know what she’s talking about," Abbott said.  After finding more information online, Abbott wondered why more people weren’t talking about it and why she wasn’t learning about the topic in school.  The young women became more educated about climate change. As their passion and interest in the subject deepened, they wanted to ensure those around them were educated.  They formed the local Youth Climate Strike chapter, but have learned different audiences warrant different approaches.  When speaking to elders such as grandparents, for example, they often frame conversations around climate change impacting their family and lineage, Kayla Keating, 18, said.  Reaching their peers, however, is best done through social media, Connor Ehrich, 15, said.  "I post about the topic all the time, really making sure to get the message out and explaining it," Ehrich said.  People spend their day-to-day life scrolling through social media, she said. Seeing information about climate change from peers can get them thinking, "This is something people care about. Maybe I should, too," Ehrich said.  For the group of young women, Friday’s event is a chance to gather individuals from both sides of the political aisle and those who are hoping to learn more about climate change. They’re hoping local and statewide elected officials attend.  "We want everyone to come out," Scott said. "It’s not a simple issue, but we all can do this if we all come together." |