

ParentMap 2020 Superheroes Jamie Margolin and Kendall Kieras: The Climate Crusaders

By Gemma Alexander

For high school seniors Jamie Margolin and Kendall Kieras, climate change has always been a fact of life. They have never experienced a month with a [below-average global temperature](#), and Margolin has been trying to do something about it since her early teens.

“There was a perfect storm of things that really pushed me over the edge to start [Zero Hour](#),” says Margolin. One of those triggers was Donald Trump pulling the United States out of the Paris Climate Agreement. Then a cluster of climate disasters occurred that were not being treated with the urgency they deserved: Hurricane Maria and Hurricane Harvey, and then a disaster closer to home.

“There were these massive wildfires in Southern California that covered Seattle in a thick layer of smog. And that was just the final straw. So, I posted on my social media, ‘I’m going to start a youth climate march. Who’s with me?’ and I got a response from a girl named Nadia Nazar, who lives in Baltimore, and we started planning,” she says.

At first, Kieras, Margolin’s best friend at Seattle’s Holy Names Academy, watched from the sidelines.

“I was sort of an internet activist,” says Kieras. “I spent a lot of time reading around online, but didn’t know how to get involved.” Then, on their school’s Peace and Justice Day — a day filled with guest speakers and workshops — Kieras listened to Margolin’s presentation about Zero Hour. Kieras only attended out of friendship, and in retrospect, Kieras says it wasn’t even a particularly good presentation.

“But I signed up, and I sort of just kept going and didn’t stop,” says Kieras.

Last fall, Kieras took over as executive director of the local chapter of Zero Hour. Now, both Margolin and Kieras are deep into planning for the climate strike on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day this April. Ironically, though they are close friends at school and both are involved in the leadership of Zero Hour, they rarely work together.

“We do different things,” says Kieras.

“I lead the national organization and organize the chapters,” says Margolin, “while Kendall does more local stuff and tasks for the national communications team.”

This year, Margolin also has been working on a book titled “Youth to Power,” a guide to intersectional activism for young people. Coming out in June, the book features interviews with successful youth activists; and advice on organizing events and protests, balancing school and activism, and using media to spread a message.

Zero Hour also is partnering with the National Children's Campaign on [#Vote4OurFuture](#). This campaign is aimed at increasing voter turnout among first-time voters and young people from marginalized communities to combat environmental racism and environmental injustice.

While different projects take the friends to different places, they remain united in their cause, each working toward the same goal of building a sustainable world.