



## 25 Stories For 25 Years

In celebration of the [25th anniversary of Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots](#) in 2016, we're featuring 25 current and former Roots & Shoots leaders whose stories inspire us. Ready to start your own Roots & Shoots story? [Sign up!](#)

We're releasing **25 Stories For 25 Years** throughout 2016! Check back in a few weeks for more stories.



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**Lauren Gibson**

*Stanford, California*

*Founder, Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2009-2014

**Position(s):** Great Lakes and [U.S. National Youth Leadership Council](#), NYLC Representative to Roots & Shoots Canada

"Before joining Roots & Shoots as an eighth grader, I felt disheartened and intimidated by the world and the problems it faces. Although I cared about people, animals, and the environment, I neither had the awareness that one young person like me could have a significant impact on the world nor the knowledge on how to make that positive impact. Roots & Shoots changed all that. Roots & Shoots gave me the realization that each individual makes a difference, the inspiration to want to change the world, the skills to work towards positive change, and the network of incredible Roots & Shoots members and staff people to support me along the way. Because of Roots & Shoots, I now run a small nonprofit, pursue environmental science at university, and work every day towards creating a more sustainable world. I know that I can and do make a difference."





**Anthony Vargas**

*New York City*

*Student at University at Buffalo; Explorer Assistant Chief for the NYPD Explorers Program*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots: 2014**

**Position:** [U.S. National Youth Leadership Council](#)

"Roots & Shoots has helped me build a network of amazing individuals that will be the future of this world. They have helped me in terms of development for projects and in methods to reach out to my community. I thank Roots & Shoots for all they've done for me and cannot be anymore grateful for the support of Roots & Shoots staff."

**Poulyn Mukango**

*Kampala, Uganda*

*Assistant Regional Coordinator, Africa Youth Leadership Forum*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2007-2010

**Position(s):** School Coordinator

"Through Roots & Shoots, I have learned a lot about the environment and also how best I can be of influence to others in protecting the environment."







**Mitch Paine**

*Lincoln, Nebraska*

*State National Flood Insurance Program Coordinator, Nebraska  
Department of Natural Resources*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2005-2010

**Position:** College [Youth Leadership Council](#)

"Roots & Shoots taught me how to look around my own community and figure out both the problems and the solutions. At so many levels, be it your school or city, there are problems that need a champion. Roots & Shoots shows people how to do that and how to truly make meaningful change in your community. Not everybody can participate in writing international climate change proposals, but everyone can do something to make their own community a better place."

**Xin Lu**

*Beijing, People's Republic of China*

*Teaching Assistant, British School of Beijing, Sanlitun*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2009-2016

**Position(s):** Group Member, Group Leader, and JGI-China-Beijing Staff

"My first experience with Roots & Shoots was during college when I started a club at my university. In 2014, I became a Roots & Shoots project coordinator for JGI-China-Beijing which helped me understand the core value of Roots & Shoots and gain knowledge about environmental education. During my time working in the Beijing office, I had also found my passion for education. I changed my career path and now I am leading a Roots & Shoots club at a school. My past experiences with Roots & Shoots have taught me how valuable a child's heart is and how many things they can do in their life. Now, I am using all of my past experiences and knowledge to help my students follow their hearts."





**Pam O'Halloran-Blevins**

*Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*Middle School Science Teacher*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots: 25+ years!**

Pam and her late husband, Tim, were already leading a unique environmental program for young people in Tulsa when they met Dr. Jane in 1989. The three became fast, lifelong friends. As Pam recalls, "For the next twenty seven years, I worked with Dr. Jane on Roots & Shoots programs and student projects, wrote environmental curriculum with groups of educators across the United States, and walked arm in arm with Dr. Jane as we dreamed about how we could help make the world a better place. It was then we all began discussing, dreaming, and creating the North American Roots & Shoots environmental youth program twenty five years ago.

"I have had the opportunity to have taught children in 1<sup>st</sup> grades through the 8<sup>th</sup> grades for the last 43 years. Words cannot describe the impact Dr. Jane and the Roots & Shoots program has had on me and my students over a twenty-five year period. Dr. Jane is my hero and I have received so much from our friendship. My hope has always been to share her love for animals and the environment, her words of wisdom, and her radiance of peace with not only my students, but with my family, and friends."



**Jesus Terrazas**

*Hometown: Mexico City, Mexico*

*Current: Santa Barbara, California*

*Student, Santa Barbara City College*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2009-2016

**Position(s):** National [Youth Leadership Council](#)

"With Roots & Shoots I have been able to accomplish things I never imagined I would be able to. Roots & Shoots also allowed me to set future goals for myself and be even more aware of the impact I can make on the world."







**Katherine Kulik**

*Washington, D.C.*

*Energy Analyst, Alphataraxia Management*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2007-2011

**Position(s):** New England [Youth Leadership Council](#)

"The Roots & Shoots community has introduced me to some of the most supporting, inspiring, and genuinely good people that I know. Being involved throughout high school, I have also learned how to be a leader and how to motivate others towards a common goal. Furthermore, meeting and talking with Jane Goodall through Roots & Shoots events and retreats has motivated me as a young woman pursuing science as a field of study. Through Roots & Shoots I have had many wonderful mentors that have always encouraged me to pursue my goals and definitely helped me to grow as into a more confident and thoughtful individual."

**Khalifa Stafford**

*New York City*

*Research Assistant & Student, Hunter College of CUNY*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2007-2010

**Position(s):** New England [Youth Leadership Council](#)

"I was in elementary school when I learned of Dr. Jane Goodall. From this day, my dream to become someone who could make a difference was planted. However, it wasn't until high school, when I participated in the Roots & Shoots program, where the roots and foundation of this dream was made. Participating in the Roots & Shoots program ingrained within me the desire and passion for making a difference through the acquisition of leadership skills. By contributing to our New England's Peace Through the Arts campaign, through participating in various youth leadership summits, to meeting other individuals who also desired to make a difference, and by visiting Tanzania where the Roots & Shoots seed was first planted by Dr. Jane, I learned about what it actually takes to become a great leader to make a difference in my community."





**Chase Pickering**

*Asheville, North Carolina*

*Marketing Manager, [Biltmore](#)*

**Years Involved with Roots & Shoots:** 2003-2014

**Position(s):** [National Youth Leadership Council](#), First Youth Leadership Fellow, [JGI Board Member](#)

"Roots & Shoots was an important part of my life beginning when I first saw Dr. Jane speak at age 15 all the way through my early career at Disney. By being involved with Roots & Shoots, I built deep friendships with people around the world and connected with new cultures. My Roots & Shoots involvement gave me the feeling that I was part of a larger movement and that I could give back to my community in a meaningful way. Roots & Shoots also instilled in me a philosophy that each and every one of us can make a positive difference every day. I also carry on a lifelong conservation value to respect the interconnectedness of people, animals and the environment."