

AMERICAN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AWARDS

High School Students



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FINALIST'S PROFILE

Shrusti Amula

Rise N Shine Foundation

In Maryland, the State Department of Environment reports an alarming annual generation of 900,000 tons of food waste, constituting a staggering 17% of landfill waste.

To address this, I founded the youth-led non-profit organization "Rise N Shine Foundation" with two primary goals: diverting food waste from landfills to compost facilities to reduce greenhouse gasses and rescuing surplus food from businesses to feed vulnerable community members experiencing food insecurity. Our food composting initiatives in schools divert food scraps from incinerators to compost facilities, mitigating harmful greenhouse gas emissions and enriching soil for growing nutritious food.

Our programs serve as models for replication, assisting student leaders in starting similar initiatives at their schools. And, as advocacy remains pivotal for systemic change, we collaborated with County and State legislatures, playing a crucial role in the approval of State bills SB 124 and HB 150 that allocate \$1.25

million for Maryland schools to implement composting and food recovery programs. In support of this, we spearheaded a postcard campaign involving 63 high schools across 14 counties that demonstrated overwhelming student support and delivered 17,000 signed postcards to Governor Moore. Furthermore, our food recovery program has become mandatory to run in all 211 Montgomery County Public Schools. Over four years, Rise N Shine Foundation diverted 152,379 pounds of food waste, equivalent to planting 1,005 seedlings or abstaining from driving 151,159 miles, in 12 schools. And, our food recovery program that runs in collaboration with local businesses and food banks has provided over 300,000 meals, valued at \$450,000. We are committed to fighting for systemic change to make a lasting impact.

