**Meg Jastran**, a registered dietitian who loves to cook and a passionate advocate for climate change, has been volunteering her time to promote plant-based diets and reduce the consumption of animal products in her community. Meg is motivated by her belief that shifting towards plant-based diets is more beneficial for mitigating climate change and protecting people’s health because animal agriculture is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane and nitrous oxide. Additionally, the production of meat and dairy necessitates more land, water, and energy, resulting in deforestation, water scarcity, and exacerbating climate change.

Her journey began when she read about a local climate stewards program in the newspaper and decided to pursue it out of curiosity. Utilizing her training and professional background, Meg organized and taught local cooking classes where she shared handcrafted alternative meat and dairy-free recipes with others. In order to make this possible, she spent countless hours planning and preparing for these sessions, including packaging food and bringing all the necessary supplies. Attendees were provided with all the recipes to take home after classes, which were a huge success and not
only provided a learning opportunity for participants but also fostered a sense of community with people from different towns coming together to learn and bond over food.

This effort was also made possible with funding and staff help from the STEPS (Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions) granting agency and allowed Meg’s program to be free for all participants.

Meg has expressed concern that people in her area may not be aware of the impact they can personally make on the environment, and that some may not even believe that there is a problem. She lives in a largely rural, economically depressed, and politically conservative area where there is a lot of rhetoric against even some of the governor’s suggestions for electrification of homes to cut down on carbon emissions. Despite this, Meg’s dedication and leadership is continuing to inspire many to rethink their dietary habits and take action towards a more sustainable future. While it has been time-consuming, Meg hopes that the information she shares will have a ripple effect and inspire others to adopt a plant-based diet.

Meg is grateful for the support of her friends and family, including her husband who assists her with grocery shopping and transporting supplies. She also cites her son, who runs the Finger Lakes Cider House in Interlaken, as an inspiration who encouraged her to become more passionate about sustainability and to do what she can to address environmental issues in her community. Meg’s mission to promote plant-based diets and sustainable agriculture is inspiring, and her volunteer work is, without a doubt, making a positive impact on her community. She is proud of the work she has done and plans to continue teaching these classes.