



Captain Planet: A Philanthropic Environmental Leader

John R. Seydel, Turner Foundation, Mayor's Office of Resilience, Atlanta

☀ Call to Action

Looking to become a Planeteer? Check out Captain Planet and the Turner Foundation on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, & Facebook. Reach out to John R. on Twitter & let him know you read about his story here: @JohnRSeydel

☀ Values

- Philanthropy
- Leadership
- Public Service
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Remember the Planeteers' words: The power is yours!

Strive to preserve the legacy of those who worked to improve the world before you.

We are all citizens of the Earth. We must work together for a common goal: preserving our home.

Growing up, John R. Seydel loved the cartoon series Captain Planet, which was co-created by his grandfather, media mogul and environmental philanthropist Ted Turner.

At the end of every episode, there would be a Planeteer Alert, where the diverse team of global heroes would talk directly to the audience about ways to find solutions to the environmental problems in their communities. "It taught us how to be part of the solution, not part of the problem—and to inspire others along the way," he says. John R. is carrying on this legacy through serving on the boards of a variety of Turner family foundations, including the Captain Planet Foundation. He is also currently serving as the City of Atlanta's Director of Sustainability; in that role he is proudly working to make Atlanta a top-tier sustainable city, and to help them reach their goal of 100 percent renewable energy by 2035.

☀ Language Arts

John R. was inspired and empowered by Captain Planet and his Planeteers. Using these characters, create your own original story about Captain Planet tackling one of the issues facing your generation when it comes to climate change. You may write your response as a short story, or if you are more artistically inclined, as a graphic novel (with original artwork).

In this [video](#)¹, John R. lays out several reasons (environmental, economic, and business) why sustainability is crucial. Choose one of the reasons he mentions and expand on it, by creating your own 3-minute video explaining (from the perspective you have chosen) why we should all become involved in sustainability.

What does the term "endangered" mean? Conduct research

about endangered species in your area of the country and choose one to learn about. Write an argumentative essay about the importance of saving that one particular species, and the impact its disappearance would have for the region.

STEM Activities

Select an endangered animal and research why it is considered an endangered species. Do human choices play a role in the sustainability of animal species? What are some of the things we can do to save the species you chose? Present the animal you have chosen to the class.

In this [set of activities from PBS](#)², learn about sustainability in an urban context. Then describe your vision of a sustainable city; identify the challenges facing cities; and discover the ecosystem services nature can provide cities.

Using this [PBS lesson plan on renewable energy](#)³, explore various sources of energy (both renewable and nonrenewable). Then, in groups or individually, design, model, or build a prototype of an invention that uses renewable energy in the community or region where you live.

Sustainability Innovations

Assess the [Captain Planet Foundation Programs](#)⁴. Which of these programs would be effective for the students at your school? Write a letter to your principal detailing why this program could be an important addition to your school's extracurricular activities.

As the Director of Sustainability in Atlanta, John R. is one of the key leaders of the city in implementing their [Resilience Initiatives](#)⁵. Which of the resilience initiatives can be used as an example for other cities and communities to emulate?

In addition to John R.'s work, there are many other funds and organizations that are creating sustainable solutions for a brighter future. The [Kendeda Fund](#)⁶ divides their work into seven program areas to assist in building leaders and advancing ideas for a more sustainable community.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Urban Sustainability. Through his commitment to making Atlanta more sustainable, John R.'s story reveals several different career paths: sustainable urban planning; urban farming; lobbying for 100 percent renewable energy; and working with the mayor to make the city more resilient to climate change. Many big cities have sustainability and resilience departments now, and urban planners are needed everywhere. Here's a great introduction to [opportunities in the field of urban sustainability](#)⁷.

Working with Endangered Species. Are you as passionate about saving endangered species as John R. is? There are many ways to work to protect and help endangered species and their habitats: from wildlife veterinarians and biologists, to wildlife forensic scientists and conservation officers. Want to learn more? [Here is an article about eight careers that help protect endangered species](#)⁸.

Storyteller. Telling stories is a powerful way to mobilize people, as Captain Planet's influence on John R. so clearly demonstrates. Stories can inspire, inform, and encourage others to take action. Becoming a journalist (including for your school paper), or a blogger, novelist, filmmaker, cartoonist, or other type of communicator can channel your storytelling skills to make a difference in the world. Learn more about effective storytelling for leaders in [this Forbes article](#)⁹, and receive training in climate communications at the [Climate Reality Project](#)¹⁰.

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- 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=5lAaWdFuKV4>
 - 2 <https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/nature-works-everywhere-sustainable-cities-lp/nature-works-everywhere-sustainable-cities-lp/>
 - 3 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/lesson-plan-how-to-turn-a-lake-into-an-electric-battery/>
 - 4 <https://captainplanetfoundation.org/programs/>
 - 5 <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/mayor-s-office/executive-offices/office-of-resilience/sustainability-initiatives>
 - 6 <https://kendedafund.org/>
 - 7 <https://www.trade-schools.net/articles/wildlife-jobs>
 - 8 <https://www.trade-schools.net/articles/wildlife-jobs>
 - 9 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/09/30/leaders-seven-tips-for-becoming-a-better-storyteller/?sh=1be3e1d94606>
 - 10 <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/training>

