

COMMUNITY VOICE



Abby Fenton

High School Senior

There was a thriving black market for parking passes at Abby Fenton's high school. Students paid about \$200 for a parking pass that the school issued for \$25 to seniors and those juniors who got lucky in a lottery.

To a budding economist like Abby, that 800 percent mark-up is a sign of a broken market in transportation options. There is not enough parking, students get fined if they park in the surrounding neighborhood, and still students insist on driving to school alone. Abby even knows twins who live under the same roof who each drove their own car to school. Her solution, which she developed in SACOG's Youth Leadership Academy, is a carpooling plan that would incentivize shared trips with points toward local treats.

"There are so many people who live near each other and are driving to school and have this massive congestion and parking issue," said Abby, who is now an economics major at UC Berkeley.

"I would hope that the educating of why it's important is enough but we're talking about high schoolers who couldn't care less."

By contrast, Abby could barely care more. Just 18, she has already co-founded a non-profit, Humanity Reboxed, that supports her church youth

group's regular visits to San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood. There the teens forge relationships with homeless people by passing out boxes filled with socks, hand sanitizer, snacks, and other items. "It's a ticket into a conversation," said Abby, which is a way of humanizing people who are often passed by in California cities, where homelessness is rising rapidly as housing unaffordability sky-rockets.

Abby said she has learned that these are often people "who have been broken by things out of their control" and she was especially struck by the tales of what homeless women have to endure.

"These are some of the strongest women you could ever meet," she said.

As Abby and her peers look forward to the future, climate change is uppermost in their minds, she said. They worry about declining air quality, whether they will be able to afford to own a house, and increasing traffic and congestion. But mostly they are mad about the lack of real action on solutions to climate change.

"The disconnect of something that my generation knows to be true and yet the people making decisions about these issues don't even believe the science. It's a debacle."