

Student Surfrider Clubs Join Jack Johnson's Tour To the Sea

by Andrea Swayne

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When a popular musical performer like Jack Johnson announces a local tour date, teens clamor to get tickets for the show. Live concerts are some of the best must-see, memory-making events in the lives of most young people—and music lovers of all ages for that matter. But what happens when an artist connects with their audience on more than a purely musical level? A concert can become more than just a concert. In the case of the Jack Johnson's October 12 tour date at the Verizon Amphitheater in Irvine, Johnson connected with some local teenaged fans of his music on multiple levels—not just for the betterment of the kids, but also for the betterment of the environment.



Jack Johnson stops by the Surfrider Foundation South OC Chapter booth on the Village Green at his October 12 Irvine concert date to meet and greet Surfrider high school club member volunteers from (L to R) Dana Hills, Secretary Lulu Erkeneff, Kevin Skelly and Sophia Reznicek, Jack Johnson, Surfrider Foundation South OC Chapter Chairman Rick Erkeneff, Volunteer Programs Coordinator Henry Chou and San Clemente High Founder/President Madi Swayne. Photo by Andrea Swayne

Johnson's To the Sea concert tour and All at Once campaign offered a group of local high school students the opportunity to get out into the community to share their passion for protecting the environment through their involvement with Surfrider Foundation Clubs at their schools. Tour dates include a collaboration of community groups and nonprofits that focus on working toward plastic-free initiatives, sustainable food systems, ocean and watershed cleanliness and other environmental education and activism programs. The concerts provide a venue—The Village Green—where concertgoers can have the opportunity to visit many educational booths hosted by members of organizations working toward these goals.

Club members from Dana Hills, San Clemente and JSerra high schools, under the guidance of the Surfrider Foundation South Orange County Chapter, manned an informational booth aimed at educating the public about the Foundation's Rise Above Plastics campaign, anti-cigarette butt campaign and other environmental programs. Sophia Reznicek, Kevin Skelly and Secretary Lulu Erkeneff from the Dana Hills High School club, San Clemente club Founder/President Madi Swayne, JSerra club Founder/President Kirsty Hibbard and her sister Katie volunteered for four hours before Johnson took the stage.

The teens engaged with the public, answering questions and making an impact on many who stopped by their booth for information. The passion of these young people makes a powerful impression on both the adults and other kids they speak to said Surfrider Foundation South OC Chapter Chairman Rick Erkeneff, who served as their mentor at the event. "These kids are some of our star high school club members," Erkeneff would say when introducing the kids to visitors. "I'm really proud that the South Orange County chapter has grown to mentor clubs from 10 schools across the region and we now have the largest student club population in Surfrider worldwide. Thanks to my wife, Denise's leadership and our dedicated local kids, the youth program has really flourished."

The teens explained the need to do away with single-use plastics and collected signatures for Surfrider's petition on the issue. Connections were also made with other teens and a few teachers from schools interested in forming clubs of their own.

As the kids worked the booth, Jack Johnson himself paid them a surprise visit. Johnson stopped by to meet the kids and speak with them. "Thank you for all of your hard work," he said as he chatted with the teens. Johnson's wife also stopped by to meet them. Then, later on as he took the stage, he dedicated a song to Surfrider Foundation as the kids watched from their place of honor in the pit area, right up front.

"It was an honor to be part of the To the Sea concert tour and the All at Once campaign," said Swayne. "For Lulu [Erkeneff] and me, it is especially cool to also have a love for surfing in common with Jack Johnson, besides our passion for environmental causes. Meeting him was an inspiration to all of us, as people who all care deeply about the protection our oceans—a memory we will never forget."

For information on how you can get involved with the Surfrider Foundation or Jack Johnson's All at Once campaign, log on to www.surfrider.org/southorangedcounty and www.allatonce.org.

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