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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Work for Voigt '06 at Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy reflects personal practice and Morris experience

Summary: Academics and out-of-classroom experiences influenced Voigt's "green" career path.

(November 24, 2010)-The University of Minnesota, Morris prides itself on its dedication to being “green,” a principle that students are encouraged to not only practice during their time at Morris, but in their later lives. Clara Voigt '06, a native of Rice, is one such former student who has made "environmental consciousness" her career.

For just more than two years, Voigt has been working with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a nonprofit partner of the National Park Service and Presidio Trust that helps preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This area, 80,000 acres of parkland, follows the coastline from San Mateo County all the way to Marin County.

“This position keeps me busy in providing support to the five nurseries within the park,” says Voigt. “It involves doing anything to support the nurseries in growing area native plants for the park’s restoration projects—from designing volunteer recruitment and educational materials to entering and analyzing data about our plants.”

Voigt also organizes “Park Academy,” a program of approximately 50 classes per year at which incoming interns, volunteers, and employees learn the ropes. “Anything from learning Excel to experiencing the history of the park through an interpretive walk,” shares Voigt.

Dealing with plant nurseries is no recent achievement. Voigt has been employed by nurseries throughout high school and part of college.

“Working at Morning Sky Greenery in Morris with owner Sally Finzel really opened my eyes to the beauty and necessity of maintaining Minnesota’s natural landscape and helped me to apply what I was learning in the classroom. This knowledge base has definitely been utilized in my current position, except I’m applying it to California instead of Minnesota. I moved to California a week after graduation in 2006, because I wanted a change of surroundings and to see what I could learn by being in a different environment. I’ve lived in the Bay Area for nearly five years now, and I’m still amazed by and learning so much about the area, inside and outside of work.”

Aside from her experience working in a Morris nursery, Voigt’s background as a biology major with UMM has proved essential in her chosen field. “Ultimately, I was attracted to pursuing biology because of its practical application, the amazing staff I would be learning from, and because of how I could get more deeply involved in environmental issues by having the scientific basis and knowledge of how our planet works.” A minor in studio art also aids Voigt in her work, helping her “keep the creative juices flowing,” creativity necessary to think outside the box and innovate.

In addition to academics, it was the attitude of the campus itself that greatly influenced Voigt.

“The fact that Morris was trying to be an environmentally friendly campus also helped. It took what I was learning in

some of my classes and applied it, 'practicing what was preached' in the classroom.”

Clara Voigt now lives in Oakland and works in San Francisco. She enjoys visiting Yosemite for rock climbing with partner and Morris alumnus Henry Wallace '05.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.