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Morris inaugural GreenCorps members imagine the future

Summary: The inaugural members served as specialists in local government conservation, school waste prevention, and living green outreach.

(September 1, 2010)-In 2009, The Morris campus, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and ServeMinnesota launched a new program to protect and preserve Minnesota's environment while developing the next generation of environmental professionals. Minnesota GreenCorps, an environmentally focused AmeriCorps program administered by MPCA, helps communities conserve energy, reduce waste, and, through proper recycling and conservation education, reduce the amount of toxic chemicals discarded.

Chris Droske '11, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Katie Laughlin '10, Faribault, Ellie McCann '10, St. Joseph, and Sydney Sweep '11, Bismarck, North Dakota, served as inaugural members through Morris's Center for Small Towns. Their positions as specialists in local government conservation, school waste prevention, and living green outreach afford opportunities to assess the present and imagine the future. Minnesota GreenCorps is funded through a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service with additional support from ServeMinnesota. Troy Goodnough, sustainability coordinator, oversees the Morris program.

Meet the GreenCorps

Left to right: Troy Goodnough, sustainability coordinator, Katie Laughlin '10, Faribault, Chris Droske '11, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Sydney Sweep '11, Bismarck, North Dakota, Ellie McCann '10, St. Joseph

Droske, chemistry and environmental science major: "UMM has done phenomenal work in promoting renewable energy and sustainable living however, these themes need to be comprehensible to all students, not just those with environmental focuses. The future of the campus involves the incorporation of sustainability into the curriculum of all disciplines, while adding additional majors with environmental focuses, such as environmental engineering. The future of our homes involves energy conservation without the sacrifice of comfort. Progressive homeowners will witness increases in utility bills and may consider renewable energy options, such as geothermal or solar photovoltaic. They will observe the same increase and may turn to simple retrofits ranging from \$5-\$50 which will also significantly lessen their energy consumption. Regardless of political party association or mind set, our communities will accept that energy prices are increasing, and the best way to address these concerns is by incorporating communal renewable energy while decreasing individual consumption."

Sweep, economics and history major: "Ellie and I worked with two schools near Morris to determine and improve the state of environmental performance. We focused the majority of our work on establishing recycling programs with help from school administrators and the local disposal hauling company. By the end of our service, we will have placed recycling bins in school hallways, larger corresponding containers outside by the dumpster, and established a system supported by school administrators, the recycling facility, and, hopefully, students. This first step will help children learn how to recycle and why it's important, and may provide a starting point from which other initiatives may develop. If the

recycling programs are cemented and sustained, teachers and students may be more likely to push for a composting system for the school's food waste, for solar panels on the school's roof, etc. Our county may indeed become a model for achieving carbon neutrality in a rural area, and the GreenCorps work is certainly helpful to advance that goal."

McCann, environmental studies major: "Being a GreenCorps member during the program's pilot year has been an important and defining part of my Morris experience. The program has given me the chance to be engaged in a conversation about topics that are not only important to me but also relevant to the health of our communities and environment. It is important to me that this conversation is taking place, and it is exciting to be involved in shaping the dialogue."

Laughlin, environmental studies major: "Although I have always been passionate about protecting our environment, my passion and drive to defend our Earth intensified through education about the problems the environment faces today and ways that we can fix those problems. I think it is important for everyone to be given the chance to learn about the problems plaguing our environment today, and I hope that this education would instill in them a drive to do their part to fix these problems, as many of them are caused by human impact. Serving as a GreenCorps member has allowed me to educate the community about why it is important to protect our Earth."

Educational outreach at Prairie Pioneer Days in Morris

Photo at top: Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs are a good green decision compared to incandescent light bulbs because they use less power and last a lot longer. But CFLs contain a small amount of mercury, which requires careful disposal. It is against the law in Minnesota to dispose CFL bulbs with general waste. To make the use of CFLs more convenient, the Green Corps placed a CFL collection bin at the downtown Morris Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture office. Shown is Laughlin with Karen Arnold, director.

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.