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Student's bright idea creates 1,000 points of fluorescent light

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Arianna Pattek began with a simple idea and turned it into a success story.

The 17-year-old Boca Raton resident focused on educating the public about the environmental benefits of using compact fluorescent bulbs in place of incandescent ones, and through her hard work, reached her goal of replacing 1,000 light bulbs.



Eliza Gutierrez/The Post

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Arianna Pattek, a senior at Spanish River High School, lights up the room with a fluorescent bulb. Pattek won the Igniting Creative Energy Challenge for her project in which she was able to get people to trade in 1,273 standard incandescent light bulbs for energy saving compact fluorescent ones.

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the environment.

She received a \$300 savings bond, an MP3 player and a \$1,000 check for her school - all while sitting in her chemistry class. Representatives from the competition and the school principal, made a surprise appearance to notify her of her win.

"I was in shock for a good 15 minutes," Pattek said.

The conservation project, which Pattek dubbed Project: Bright Idea, was something she undertook as part of the Pine Jog Environmental Fellowship program during her junior year. Pine Jog is an environmental education center in suburban Wellington that's affiliated with Florida Atlantic University's College of Education.

Pattek said that compact fluorescent lamps cost a bit more than normal bulbs, but that they save energy and therefore save money in the long run.

At first it was just friends and family making the switch. But when Pattek began sending out educational newsletters or "Bulletins" by e-mail, she found that people kept on forwarding them to others. She also created a Web site (www.brightideacfl.org).

"I heard back from people in California and Minnesota," Pattek said.

Another part of the Pine Jog program was to work with youth in the community. Pattek taught students at Del Prado Elementary School about environmental issues and helped them clean up a nature trail on the school grounds.

Pattek said the Pine Job Fellowship program taught the participants how to be environmentally responsible and the importance of passing on these values to others.

"It's our duty, as one of the top nations, to set a green example," she said.

Pattek said she has always found support from her parents, Jeff and Sheryl, who encourage recycling in their home. But support that's not needed, her mother said. "Arianna is a pretty independent young woman."

Of all of the environmental issues, Pattek is most frustrated by the lack of recycling and visible recycling bins.

"My car always has 15 water bottles in there until I can empty them all out at a recycling bin," Pattek said, adding that she drives a Toyota Prius hybrid.

When she's not busy with school or environmental work, Pattek said she likes to read fast-paced mystery novels - as long as they're not required reading.

"My assigned summer reading is at the bottom of my list," she said. "I don't like being told what to read."

With college less than a year away, Pattek said she's not sure about a major or a career path.

"I like environmental science, but I'm also interested in international affairs," she said.

During her sophomore year of high school, she founded Push For Peace, a group dedicated to raising awareness for global humanitarian crises. She also participated in community service projects in Costa Rica and Tanzania through Rustic Pathways high school travel programs.

"I love seeing different cultures," she said. "We take so much for granted living in the U.S. I saw kids who have nothing, but they're still happy."

What is your favorite book?

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah and *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Who is your hero?

"Besides my parents, John Lennon. He never stopped fighting for his message through his music."

~samantha_frank@pbpost.com

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