

Student story: ERM student dedicated to reducing consumption

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University Park, Pa. -- As Jenn Oliver will tell you, changing the wasteful energy-consumption habits of college students is a daunting task, but she tries every day. Oliver, a senior majoring in environmental resource management in the College of Agricultural Sciences, immersed herself in the promotional, conservation and research aspects of the Take Charge program during her 2008 internship with Penn State's Office of Physical Plant. "My assignment was to help the Take Charge committee plan 'road shows,' which are interactive presentations to students in the residence halls about conserving energy," says Oliver. "These shows help Take Charge get its name out there and let students know who we are and what we stand for." At a road show, students fill out a survey about their energy-consumption habits and have the opportunity to spin a game wheel to win a t-shirt, pen or water bottle. She has seen student attitudes about conserving energy begin to shift. "I've learned that big results can come from making small lifestyle changes," says Oliver. "I try to share this information with everyone that I know and the students I meet." Not only has Oliver's involvement in the Take Charge program benefited Penn State students, but it has also strengthened her commitment to explore alternative energy options. "I hope to work in the wind-power field," she says. "I think this type of energy has huge potential in the United States and can be a key component in the country's alternative energy choices." Oliver is confident that she will succeed in her career thanks to her Penn State education.

"Because the environmental resource management program is very technical and focused on problem-solving, I've learned to attack a problem from every angle," she says. "Also, field labs give students the opportunity to work hands-on in a real-world environment to supplement classroom learning with experience."

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