

Hard Work, Perseverance Pay Off For Student

Christopher Sabol recently graduated with an associate's degree in forest technology from Penn State Mont Alto and has transferred to Penn State University Park to study forest ecosystem management.

He will follow the forest management academic path with plans to manage forests for timber quality and wildlife. "I am currently in my second summer as a forestry intern with the Pennsylvania Game Commission," Christopher said when applying for RTA's John Mabry Forestry Scholarship for the current academic year. "While working with the game commission I have been learning many things about managing forests for wildlife habitat."

Post-graduation, Christopher, who was awarded one of two forestry scholarships presented by RTA, plans to take on the role of forest technician with the state to gain additional experience in the field before eventually becoming a forester. "Even though I will have three summers of being an intern with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and two forestry degrees upon graduating, I would like to have more experience working in the field before becoming a forester, even though I will qualify to be one in Pennsylvania as soon as I graduate. If, for some reason, these plans did not work out, I would like to travel to the western United States and fight wildland fire and maybe try to find a forester position out there somewhere."

Christopher said he was inspired to work hard not only in his internships but also in his classes. "I took extra classes while at Penn State Mont Alto so that I could graduate in three semesters instead of four when I transfer to Penn State University Park," he said, adding that he has always been passionate about the outdoors.

"I chose to major in forestry because of my passion for the outdoors. I have grown up living in the mountains of north central Pennsylvania, so hunting and fishing have always been a huge part of my life. I always thought that I wanted to be a game warden growing up but once I figured out that I would have to work during hunting season, I decided forestry was the best option for me."

Christopher said he believes his chosen career path will benefit the wood tie industry, "especially if I stay in northern Pennsylvania and work with either the Pennsylvania Game Commission or the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. At the game commission, we have been doing a large amount of work in what we consider 'degraded' stands. Most of the trees the agency is cutting in these areas are poor quality, small sawtimber and pulpwood-sized trees. Large amounts of this wood is not turned into grade lumber due to poor quality and is actually used for railroad ties and pallet material instead of being chipped for paper."

Christopher said he has worked very hard to make it as far as he has come with his education. "Many people thought I would never amount of much either, especially when I said I was going to major in forestry. Most thought I was going to end up dropping out of college and working construction just like my dad. I strongly disliked the doubt people had in me and made sure I proved them wrong. Not only did I take almost six semesters worth of classes in four semesters at Penn State Mont Alto, I also did it while maintaining a 3.98 GPA, receiving an award for having the highest GPA out of all associate degree programs at the campus. I have shown that I have the academic merit, the work ethic and the financial need to deserve this scholarship."

Associate Teaching Professor and Forest Technology Program Coordinate for Penn State Mont Alto Craig Houghton said he



was proud to recommend Christopher for the RTA scholarship.

"He did excellent forestry field work, worked well in team and group situations, and has focused on gaining forestry experience interning with the Pennsylvania Game Commission," Houghton said. "Chris served as the vice president of the Forestry Club and traveled last fall to the national Society of American Foresters Convention in Louisville, Ky., representing Penn State Mont Alto in the Forestry Quiz Bowl. He also competed for two years on the Penn State Mont Alto Woodsmen Team. Chris is an honest, hardworking, respectable citizen, and will do very well in his forestry career. I highly recommend him for the John Mabry Forestry Scholarship."

You are indeed a very deserving recipient of this scholarship, Christopher, and RTA looks forward to you joining the forest industry after you graduate. ■



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