

Clean Sweep

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

Student chapter of Air Waste Management Association earns national award

Students in the College of Integrated Science and Technology were distinguished with one of three National Student Chapter awards by the Air Waste Management Association last summer for their involvement in environmental affairs. Each year, 45 schools compete nationally to be named top chapter in the categories of small, medium and large institution. The two-year-old JMU chapter beat out 17 other schools for the distinction.

"Each year student chapters submit a report to AWMA explaining their activities for the year," explained James Winebrake, the faculty advisor and an ISAT professor. Once all of the entries are received, a panel of environmental professionals reviews the reports and makes the awards "based on the level of activity and the types of activities the student chapters engage in."

The JMU chapter, composed of about 20 students, was involved in a variety of activities throughout the year. To see first-hand how industries and municipalities handled air and waste management issues, the members toured the Coors Bottling Plant in Elkton, the Harrisonburg Resource Recovery Plant, and the Air Monitoring Station in Shenandoah National Park.

The chapter also invited professionals to the JMU campus to discuss environmental science technology and related issues. David Rodgers of the U.S. Department of Energy spoke to the students about the growing need for alternative sources of fuel for transportation vehicles. Julie Thomas of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency discussed the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. During the academic year, chapter members volunteered their time with JMU Facilities Management to assist with paper recycling on campus, and they helped clean Blacks Run, a stream that runs through Harrisonburg.

The national chapter award provides a great deal of notoriety for the students' abilities and interests, according to Winebrake. "The AWMA is one of the largest professional organizations in existence, with close to 14,000 members."

Along with the recognition for their efforts, the competition also served as a learning experience for the students involved. "The actual activities we have pursued," said Winebrake, "have given students an opportunity to learn about environmental issues and practices outside the classroom, and to help them understand what it means to be an 'environmental professional.'"

The award came as a surprise to some students. "To win an award like that was shocking," said current chapter president, Stacey Thruston, "But it's exciting at the same time. We're looking forward to reaching out to more students and the JMU community as a whole."

Founded in 1907, AWMA is an international nonprofit, nonpartisan professional organization that strives to strengthen the environmental profession, expand scientific and technological responses to environmental concerns, and assist professionals in critical environmental decision making.

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