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### Twin Passions

Kasey Evans '12

*Illinois Wesleyan University*, [iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu)

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# Twin Passions

**For Kari and Emmy Grace, green is a matching color**

**By Kasey Evans '12**



**Kari (left) and Emmy Grace got interested in sustainability projects as first-year students. (Photo by Marc Featherly)**

Two Illinois Wesleyan seniors have dominated the environmental scene on campus since their sophomore years. Kari Grace, sociology and Hispanic studies double major with a minor in environmental studies, and Emmy Grace, environmental studies major, are more than just leaders in the sustainability movement — they are twin sisters with what could easily be called twin passions.

It wasn't until coming to IWU that Emmy and Kari really became involved in environmental causes.

“Growing up, we were never wilderness people. We're definitely

not a hiking family,” Kari says. “We've always recycled, and starting in high school we would hear about environmental problems and wish that we could do something, but we didn't really know how to get involved,” Emmy adds.

That all changed for the two during their first year at IWU when they joined the environmental group in their residence hall's leadership involvement team. They were then encouraged to join the student-run Sierra Student Coalition (SSC), for which Emmy now serves as co-president. The five-year-old organization has conducted numerous sustainability projects, including planting and maintaining a prairie plot on the southwest side of the Center for Natural Science Learning and Research.

“As members of SSC, we go around to all of the campus buildings on Friday evenings to turn off the lights and electronics so that they aren't using energy unnecessarily,” Kari says. The SSC also collects one-sided pieces of recycled paper from The Ames Library and parts of cereal boxes to create recycled notebooks which are available for purchase in the University Bookstore.

Kari serves as a co-chair on the GREENetwork, and Emmy contributes to its efforts by chairing the group's carbon-footprint subcommittee. She states that it is important to "know your emissions and make an effort to reduce." While admitting that it is a lofty goal, she would like to see Wesleyan's emissions net zero by 2020. In joining another effort of the GREENetwork, the twins are working with fellow students to improve campus recycling. "We're doing an audit to see where more recycling bins are needed," Emmy says. "We're also trying to work on consistency with recycling signs by adding pictures and details of what can be recycled."



**As members of the student-run Sierra Student Coalition, Kari and Emmy turn off the lights and electronics of campus buildings on Friday nights to prevent unnecessary energy use. (Photo by Marc Featherly)**

In addition, Kari and Emmy are among nine student sustainability educators charged by the Office of Residential Life to help introduce environmentally sustainable practices to students living in University residence halls.

Emmy and Kari have taken their pursuit of environmental knowledge beyond campus. The two have traveled to a national SSC summer training conference to improve their organization and participated in Alternative Spring Break to help rebuild the Cumberland Trail in Tennessee. During a May Term trip to Wales as sophomores, they stayed at a slate-mine-turned-environmentally-friendly living center called the Centre for Alternative Technology. "Everything they do there is self-sustaining," says Emmy. "They compost all waste, grow their own food and use solar, hydro and wind power for their energy."

In their junior year, they traveled to Ecuador, an ecologically diverse country now trying to deal with major environmental problems such as erosion and deforestation. Though Ecuador is the first nation to approve a constitution recognizing certain inalienable rights of nature, enforcement of those rights has proven difficult. "Attitudes in Ecuador are definitely more environmental than they are here, but implementation is not as strong due to a lack of resources and infrastructure," Kari notes.

Though neither sister is firm on her post-college plans, both anticipate that their futures will include an environmental focus. In the meantime, they continue striving to make an impact on the campus in ways large and small — even though their efforts may often go undetected. When she served as recycling house manager for her sorority, Kappa Delta, Emmy replaced some environmentally toxic cleaning supplies with a homemade mixture of vinegar, water and lemon oil. "It worked just as well in cleaning the house — and no one seemed to notice the difference," she says with a laugh.