

I have known in my heart since I was a little girl what I wanted to be when I grew up. It was not a stereotypical child's dream such as a doctor or an astronaut; my vision was instead something that has shaped my actions and decisions throughout my life. In the last few years I have realized that my passion for conserving the environment is a natural calling that I am destined to follow. This intuitive notion solidified while visiting my mother in Maryland a few summers ago. In my old bedroom my mother has kept framed memorabilia from my childhood. One night before I went to sleep I looked on the bed-stand to find an old article that dated back to my third year of elementary school. After rereading this article thirteen years later, with a smile, I recognized my destiny is and has always been devoting my career to the conservation and preservation of our ecosystems.

In my third grade class we attempted to introduce higher biodiversity along a creek through adding plants, which in turn attracts other organisms. Some of the older teenagers had rampaged through and stole our plants while trampling the beautiful ecosystem. I wanted to send a message to stop such destruction and the following article ended up in our town newspaper:

GEORGE M.C. LUHRS
Monrovia

Missing plants

I am a third grader from Ballenger Creek Elementary School. We had made a butterfly garden in back of our school where the creek is. It was going to be a beautiful garden for the animals that live in the forest. Then we found out that people dug up about 8-10 plants. We were making the butterfly garden to attract animals like bees, hummingbirds and, as you know, butterflies. Plus we did this to protect the wetlands and the creeks. It makes us very mad because we worked really hard on it. I think the people who did this should stop so it can look beautiful next year.

JENNIFER CARTER
Frederick

Although I was only in third grade, the destruction of the environment affected me more deeply than most of my fellow classmates and continues to do so today.

I wish to embark on an educational journey to beautiful Montverde, Costa Rica for the Tropical Ecology and Conservation program in the Spring of 2009. In order to take this step in my educational career, I am applying for financial aid through the John E. Bowman Travel Grants, CIEE International Study Programs Scholarships, and the Jennifer Ritzmann Scholarship for studies in Tropical Biology.

Throughout my life I have always been passionate about contributing to the conservation our earth. It became clear to me upon entering my college career that my focus should be in wildlife conservation. When I learned about this program I became ecstatic. Partaking in this unique opportunity will prepare me for my future career goals and aid to my growth as a conservationist and a young woman. While participating in this program I will apply the knowledge and resources learned during the courses that I take in Costa Rica to real world situations. I will be working in the field amongst other scientists and gaining hands on experience, which will enrich my current education and my future career. Furthermore, I will be able to contribute to the conservation of the tropical forest through my education as well as gain a better cultural understanding of the world around me.

I come from a broken home and was raised by my mother on a very low income. Thus I do not receive any financial support from my family and little from the federal government to fund my college education. Therefore my financial needs are very high. Throughout my life I have strived to achieve my goals solely on hard work and determination. For example, the last five years that I have attended school I have struggled to receive enough federal loans to pay my tuition and have been working at night while attending school in order to barely scrap by. However, I feel like this makes me a stronger person and gives me greater passion for what I am trying to achieve.

At this moment in time my situation is even more extreme then ever. Instead of working full time all summer to save money, I have been going to summer school in order to complete required courses before I depart for this program in the spring. The demands of summer school leave me no time for a part-time

employment. Consequently, in order for me to embark on this incredible opportunity I am extremely reliant on grants and scholarships to see this experience come to fruition.

These scholarships and grants will assist me in achieving my goals through supporting my trip expenses in Costa Rica. In essence they will allow me to receive an excellent education in an amazing country as well as apply this knowledge to help conserve our precious ecosystems that are in danger of ultimate destruction and demise. Likewise, by supporting my education these funds will enable me to spread my newfound insight and knowledge to further educate the people around me as I plan to teach in conservation programs such as the Student Conservation Corps. I thank you so much for your consideration.