

“... Sustainability in everything she does”

CMC grad leaves long list of accomplishments and her Bachelor of Arts in sustainability studies

<https://www.postindependent.com/news/sustainability-in-everything-julia-farwell-does/>

By Mike McKibbin

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SPRING VALLEY — When it comes to sustainability, there may not be another Colorado Mountain College student who has done more to make a difference than Julia Farwell. Her four-year journey ended with a Bachelor of Arts in sustainability studies degree at Saturday’s commencement ceremony on the Spring Valley campus.

After growing up in Danville, Illinois, about 120 miles south of Chicago, she earned a bachelor’s degree in anthropology from the University of Illinois and moved to Carbondale in 1996. For a time, Farwell worked in the area hospitality industry, including management.

“I decided I wanted something different,” she said, so Farwell worked for Osage Gardens outside New Castle in 2012 and learned about sustainability. Two years later, she took her first class in the subject.

“I loved it,” she said.

Another factor that pushed her toward sustainability was growing up near the woods in Danville.

“My mom was always telling us to take care of the woods,” Farwell added. “And when I was in hospitality, I liked helping people. So now I can serve others and the planet.”

Farwell originally wanted to get her certificate in sustainability from CMC, but her counselor urged her to seek the bachelor degree.

“So I took one to three classes a semester,” Farwell said. “That’s why it took as long as it did. But it was really rewarding. The people are really caring, they are always passionate about helping you.”

Farwell did an internship at EverGreen ZeroWaste and joined the Carbondale Environmental Board. While there, Farwell helped the town adopt an Ecological Bill of Rights.

Farwell volunteered at numerous activities that helped change how the Spring Valley campus embraces sustainable practices. She organized zero waste events at CMC, convinced officials to install healthy food vending machines, and helped establish composting at the Spring Valley and Glenwood Springs campuses. That led to similar changes at Morgridge Commons in Glenwood Springs. Those changes helped the college divert waste it sends to landfills.

Touted by program officials as someone who “embodies sustainability in everything she does,” Farwell was named the Outstanding Bachelor’s Student at the Spring Valley campus.

Along with her classes, Farwell worked part-time since 2017 for the City of Aspen's Environment, Health and Sustainability Department. Her boss is Liz O'Connell Chapman, also an adjunct faculty member in the college's sustainability studies program.

With her degree, Farwell said she planned to spend a year with the AmeriCorps program and seek her master's degree in communication.

"I want to combine communication with sustainability so I can tell people about it more effectively," Farwell said.

She had already signed up for some new media classes at CMC.

Farwell praised O'Connell Chapman, Associate Professor of Outdoor Education Johann Aberger and Assistant Dean of Instruction Adrian Fielder for helping guide and motivate her toward her degree.

"The program is very experiential, very hands-on, so you don't have to wait till you graduate before you put what you learn to use," Farwell said. "The small classes and the student interaction were great, too. I've just really enjoyed this journey. It's just been a joy."