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STUDENT REDUCES CARBON FOOTPRINT AND HELPS THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

TAMPA, Fla.---Megan Sirjane-Samples, a mass communications student at the University of South Florida, is trying to reduce her carbon footprint as well as influence others to do the same through a social experiment. She is trying to achieve this by recycling, reducing waste, purchasing biodegradable and environmentally safe products and increasing other people's awareness and knowledge of environmentally-friendly living.

Sirjane-Samples is a student in Dr. Kelli Burns' public relations writing class. "I chose social experiments as a theme this semester to enhance the experience for my public relations writing students," Burns said. "They are writing press releases, broadcast releases and feature stories as well as blogging about their experiments. Additionally, social experiments get a lot of coverage in the press, and I thought this project would give them practice at media relations."

So far in the experiment Sirjane-Samples has changed all of the light bulbs in her apartment to halogen bulbs. She said she already recycled, but now she understands the differences between the different types of recyclable products, especially the coding of plastic containers. She now purchases products based on their packaging and their ability to be recycled.

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Sirjane-Samples also recently painted her apartment using low VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint. Through the experiment she was able to influence her neighbor to start recycling and was able to convince her friend to use reusable grocery bags when shopping. Sirjane-Samples also said she purchases almost all organic food and hopes that eventually everything she consumes will either be organically or locally grown.

“I chose this experiment because conserving and protecting the environment is extremely important to me and this is a great way to become more environmentally conscious,” Sirjane-Samples said. “Also I want to spread knowledge and awareness to make others more aware of this important issue and hopefully change their behavior.”

For more information on Sirjane-Samples’ social experiment or how you can reduce your carbon footprint read her blog at msirjanesocialexperiment.wordpress.com or contact her by e-mail at msirjane.usf.edu.

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