

Ehrich develops passion for environment in Blue Earth

BY SAM JEFSON
Register Staff Writer

Alexander Ehrich has always called Blue Earth home. The recent North Central University graduate credits the beliefs and work ethic he learned growing up in the area as a springboard for the values he holds today.

The 2007 Blue Earth Area graduate has spent the summer completing an internship with Restoring Eden, a faith based non-profit environmental organization from Minneapolis.

"I think my time growing up in Blue Earth really prepared me for what I have been doing this summer," Ehrich says. "Community involvement was always something that was modeled for me when I was younger."

This is Ehrich's second internship with the grassroots organization after he completed his first stint with Restoring Eden in the fall of 2010.

"Our goal is to love, serve and protect God's creation," Ehrich says. "We want to say that as Christians, we support strong environmental standards."

Ehrich spent the entire summer traveling the Midwest attending six different Christian music festivals to garner support for cleaner air and water. He started on June 1 and will complete the internship on Aug. 20.

"We collected 5,818 postcards at these festivals from individuals who said they stand for cleaner air and water," Ehrich says. "We just finished making copies of all of the postcards and sent them to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)."

The intern traveled to Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota to spread the word about the cause he believes in.

"We would set up a booth and ask people if they had a minute to sign a post card to show support for the environment," Ehrich says. "We would then answer questions, give out information and hand out bumper stickers to those wanting to learn more."

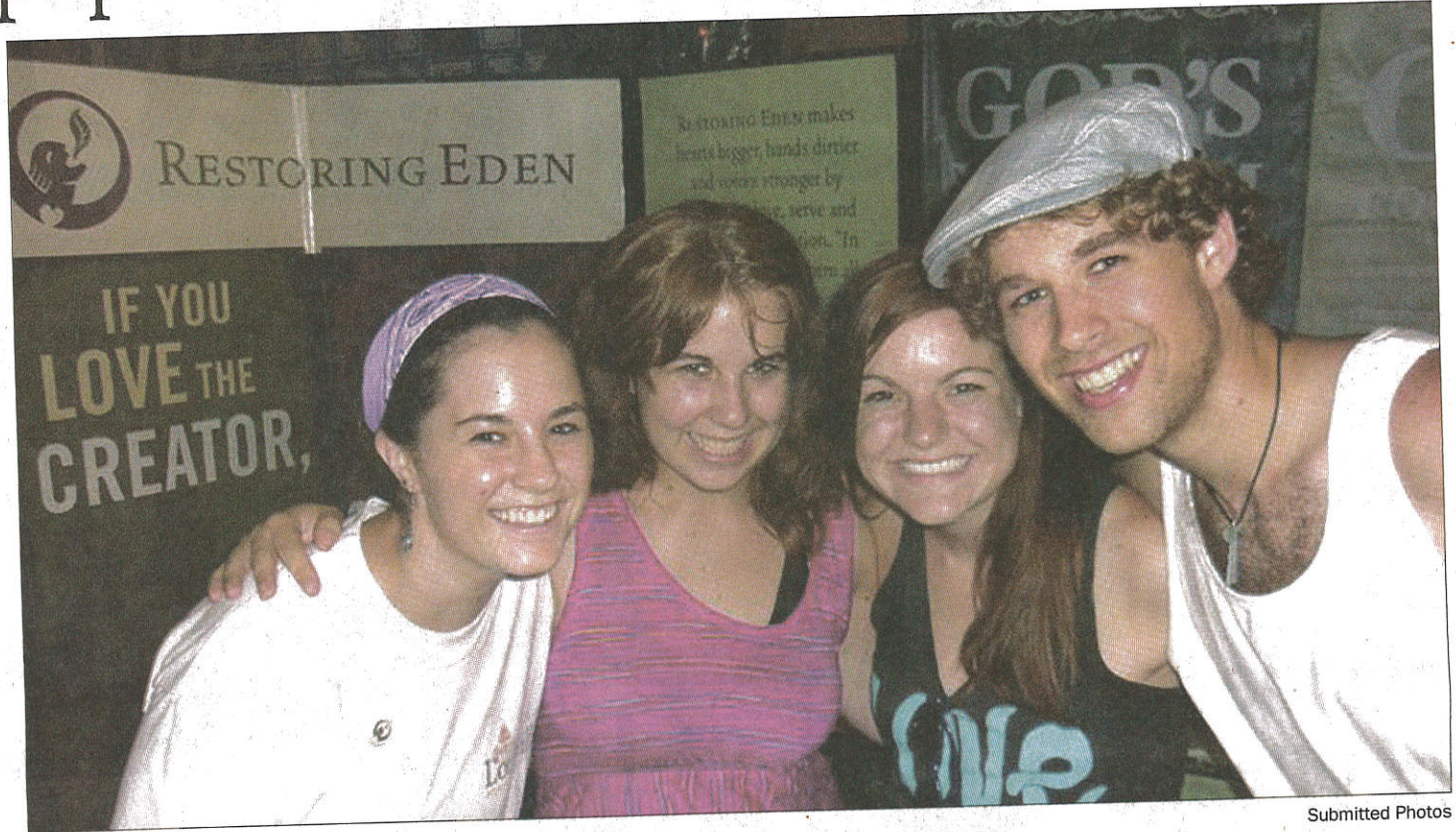
Later this month, Ehrich will present the support for improved environmental legislation in a district meeting to representatives from Democrat Sen. Amy Klobuchar's office.

Until then, Ehrich is spending a lot of time on the phone talking with contacts who had interest in the project.

"Our goal is to ask people to call their senator and invite them to our district meeting," Ehrich says.

Ehrich hopes to have as many people as possible hand deliver the postcards signed in support of tougher environmental standards.

"The wonderful part is that representatives are hearing from this group of young Christians," Ehrich says. "I personally feel



Submitted Photos

Above from right, Alexander Ehrich, is joined by teammates Alyssa Shumaker, Kirsten Wahlberg and Alex Gerrish at the Cornerstone Festival in Bushnell, Ill. on July 2. Below, Ehrich teams up with a young supporter of the environment at the Lifestest in Oshkosh, Wis. on July 8. The Cornerstone Festival and Lifestest were two of six stops made by Ehrich.

politicians need to see there is a Christian voice behind environmental stewardship."

Ehrich hopes Klobuchar will see the support from a younger generation of supporters and act upon their voice.

"I hope she will become a strong advocate of clean air and water," Ehrich says. "It's really about the health of our neighbors and children. It's not political."

Ehrich developed his passion for the environment when he was farming with his grandfather, Gilbert, on a small acreage near the River Road in Blue Earth.

"My grandpa and I farmed 75 acres of corn during my junior year of high school and that's when my concern for the environment began," Ehrich says. "I first became connected with the environmental cause through food because I love food."

The young activist says that through farming he began to see the connection between eating and the importance of a sustainable environment. Ehrich then took it one step further by incorporating the issue with his Christian faith.

"I value the rich farming community of Blue Earth," Ehrich says. "I really enjoyed working at the farmer's market where I sold organic baked bread and fresh vegetables."

After graduating from high school, Ehrich attended North Central University where he majored in biblical languages. The activist spent two years learning Hebrew and two and a half years learning



Greek with an emphasis in Christian theology.

"I focused a lot of my studies on reading about creation and the connection between environmental issues," Ehrich says. "It hit home with me and I learned what it means to be a citizen of the world and part of the kingdom of God."

Returning home during the summer, Ehrich would participate in performances of the Town and Country Players. While working with the group, he learned the fundamentals of grass roots organizing.

"I learned a lot when I saw a great group of people put a huge production

on," Ehrich says. "Having a task and accomplishing something is a perfect model for community organizing demonstrated by the Town and Country Players every year."

After the internship, Ehrich plans on staying in Minneapolis for another year finishing applications to the Peace Corps, missions with the Mennonite Central Committee and Christian Peace Making teams. "My goal in this is to spend at least a year abroad gaining experience in agriculture, community and social development," Ehrich says.

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