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Plastic bottle and rainwater together to make a difference

By BQE Admin on June 12, 2024

A Rockland County student has produced an ingenious way to collect rainwater while repurposing plastic—and her endeavor has taken her invention across the country and across the Atlantic to share her discovery.

Madeline Abrams, a high schooler at Green Meadows Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, developed a rain capture system with empty water bottles that provides an environmentally friendly way to capture rainwater and drain it to an irrigation system, where it is used for landscaping and vegetable gardening. It is simple but highly effective: plastic bottles are cut and joined together to form a pipeline from gutters to bring water to needed surfaces.

Over the past year, Abrams has virtually presented her rain harvesting system via Rotary Clubs to over 45 communities in New Jersey, New York California, the Southwest and across the Atlantic to Africa's Uganda, Namibia, Lesotho, Angola and South Africa.

Through her presentations, she has adapted her invention to the needs of the local areas; during one of those presentations, she learned from Rotarians in Lesotho that porcupines eat the plastic bottles, which led to an adjustment in her plans for that area. Abrams also learned through a recent call with a college professor in Central America that plastic bottles are often routinely burned with garbage, and she hopes her unique invention's creation will eventually reach others who can put plastic to a less harmful use to the environment and be used to benefit it.

The 17-year-old began experimenting with ways to harvest rainwater by experimenting on a shed on her parents' property and eventually developed a way to make it work. Her work has been highlighted around the region, and last week Congressman Mike Lawler visited the school to give kudos to the young environmentalist who hopes Harvest Every Drop will reach as many people as possible, saying anyone build a similar system and hopes her creation will provide a way for many others to benefit from it and also draw attention to how we can help conserve water and reduce plastic waste.