

Local company offers a (green) helping hand

The Little Environmentalists LLC is a Hartland-based company created by Hartland resident Rebecca Mattano.

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The Little Environmentalists LLC is a Hartland-based company created by Hartland resident Rebecca Mattano. Mattano founded the company in June.

"The main motivation for the creation of this company was to provide parents (with) a unique tool to begin teaching their children (about) nature appreciation and environmental awareness," Mattano said.

The Little Environmentalists provided parents with this tool when it published "Nature Discovery in my Backyard" on Sept. 16. Designed for children, the book teaches nature lessons through the eyes of a little girl exploring her backyard. The little girl in the book is Mattano's first child, 3-year-old Sierra Rose.

It is fitting that Sierra Rose was the main character, as she provided Mattano with the inspiration to create The Little Environmentalists.

"I had been thinking about creating a company like this for a long time," Mattano said, adding, "It was not until the birth of my first child that the true inspiration and motivation came."

Mattano recognized a lack of fun ways for parents to teach their children about nature. Along with her husband, Brian Thomas, Mattano employed creative means to teach her own children about nature. Mattano wanted to give other parents the tools to do the same.

"I created this series of books for preschoolers, parents and educators to begin the process of nature awareness and appreciation (by) engaging in fun and exciting learning and reading activities," Mattano said.

By teaching children early about nature, Mattano hopes to instill awareness within them. Ultimately, Mattano wants this awareness to lead to stewardship of the world around them.

"I strongly believe that education is the key to a sustainable future," Mattano said. "It is never too early to begin teaching our children about the world around us."

Mattano has strong roots in education, according to the company Web site, www.thelittleenvironmentalists.com.

After graduating from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, with a bachelor's degree in conservation and environmental science, Mattano began working with government agencies.

She worked with the Bureau of Land Management as well as the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. Her work focused on conducting field research.

Eventually, Mattano went to graduate school at UW-Stevens Point, where she earned a master's degree in natural resources. Soon after graduation, Mattano began teaching at Carroll University. She continues to hold her position at the university.

Mattano holds high hopes for her newly founded company, including continued education projects.

"Our education projects will be age-based," Mattano said.

"We are focused on developing and publishing environmental educational materials to help parents and educators begin building the nature appreciation and awareness," she added.

Mattano expects her company's next publication, "I'm Turning Green," to be released Nov. 24.