Students help teacher earn master's degree

By Jim Anderson
Correspondent

After three years of studying — taking exhaustive exams, conducting field research on Peck's penstamon in the Trout Creek Conservation Area, carrying out intensive scientific investigations in the Amazon and Costa Rica, hundreds of hours teaching ecological principles to her Sisters High School science students — Rima Givot now holds a Master of Arts Degree in Zoology from Miami University through Project Dragonfly's Global Field Program (GFP).

The GFP masters degree is designed for educators and other professionals from all disciplines and settings who are interested in working collaboratively to bring about change in local and global contexts.

Dragonfly and its U.S. and international partner institutions have engaged more than 1,850 people since it began in 2004 in first-hand education and conservation research in communities and zoos throughout the country and at critical field sites in Africa, Australia, Asia and the Americas.

On any given school day, Givot can be found either in her classroom, or out in the Trout Creek Conservation Area with her students studying the ecosystems of a diversity of species found there. Whether it's looking for Jerusalem crickets under a hollow log, nesting cavities for sapsuckers, or Sisters' signature bird, the white-headed woodpecker, Givot uses everything at her fingertips to teach and learn.

Through her Conservation Science & Community course project entitled "Distribution of Peck's Penstemon (Penstemon peckii) Along Trout Creek in Trout Creek Conservation Area Ponderosa Pine Forest, Sisters, Oregon," Givot studied the population of Peck's penstemon, a rare native wildflower along Trout and Whychus creeks. She provided the results to the Forest Service in order to help them implement management plans and practices to protect this plant's habitat.

As another part of her master's project — during the 2014 summer vacation from her high school teaching duties — Givot went off to Baja California to study field methods in desert and marine ecosystems.

Also, in summer 2014, Rima chose to continue her work through Ohio-based Miami University's (MU) Global Field Program, studying the biotic, physical, and cultural forces that affect tropical biodiversity at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve and La Selva Biological Station, Costa Rica.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Rima Givot in her element, standing in the massive trunk of El Ceibo in Costa Rica, one of 10 species of tropical trees in the family Malvaceae.

The next year, she traveled to the Amazon in summer 2015, also through the Global Field Program from Miami University's Project Dragonfly, studying how communities are working to save the rain forest's delicate and irreplaceable ecosystem.

Givot's inquiries and her dedication to education of her students to investigate and preserve their local biological diversity is one of the key reasons she undertook a master's program.

Her statement regarding her goals in earning a Master of Arts from Miami University is best understood in this statement she gave *The Nugget* back in 2014:

"With my Master Plan, I hope to inspire my students, community members, and myself to conduct action projects based on data collected from ecology and/or environment inquiry studies that contribute to positive environmental change in my community.

"I want to help community members — especially my students — connect with nature, the environment, and their community. As a high school teacher, part of my Master Plan will be conducted with my students, and part of it will be based on inquiry projects I do which lead to action projects in the community.

"The inquiry projects my students conduct will be studies that relate to local ecology and/or environmental issues. Some studies will be conducted in the local forest. Inquiry studies I do will increase my knowledge of the local wildlife and plant populations and the ecosystem in general. Based on what I find, I will conduct action pieces to help educate and involve the participation of the community in conservation."

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Rima Givot celebrates with her son George Chladek and mom Winnie Givot.

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