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Yardley student awarded \$150G teaching fellowship

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YARDLEY, Pa. -- Kristin Potts, a Pennsylvania State University undergraduate from here, has been awarded a \$150,000 teaching fellowship in physical science from the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation. The fellowship is awarded annually to students who demonstrate a commitment to teach high school science in the United States.

"I'm very excited to be connected to other potential teachers who understand science's importance," said Potts, who is one of 32 fellows from across 15 states.

Potts will receive a five-year fellowship valued at up to \$150,000 that includes mentoring, classroom materials and professional development.

"Kristin is among the best and brightest of the next generation of math and science teachers," said Angelo Collins, the executive director of the Knowles Foundation. "Our program will help ensure that she reaches her full potential and stays in the profession to become a master teacher and leader in education."

While she originally went to college with the intention of becoming a researcher, Potts' job as a teaching assistant convinced her that education was the right path. "I realized that I really enjoy interacting with students, showing them the relevance of science," she said.

"Kids go into a science class thinking they'll be memorizing a bunch of facts that don't have any meaning for them," said Potts. "But science is so important; it affects politics, it affects everything."

The process began when Potts' college adviser, who had previously received a Knowles research fellowship, encouraged her to apply. She got to work last fall, writing essays and compiling letters of recommendation. Soon, she was one of 75 students chosen for in-person interviews.

"It was all very exciting," she said, noting that she had been working on the application and preparing for potential interviews for months.

The preparation was well worth it, for the interviews were challenging and extensive. In addition to analyzing Potts' teaching ability and leadership skills, the foundation brought in chemistry professors to test her knowledge on the subject. Undaunted, Potts was soon celebrating her fellowship by having cake with the professor who had pushed her to apply in the first place.

As for the future, Potts is planning to graduate in December and would like to become a chemistry teacher. While Potts is currently student teaching in Montgomery County, she would love to return to the Yardley area for a full-time job.

"I'm just very happy to have the chance to work with other people who care about science teaching," she said. "I'd love to work in that area and give back to the community that raised me."