

The Village of Barrington Hills assisted Deema Hawari, a senior from Ridgewood High School in Norridge, Illinois, with successfully informing her Village Board about light pollution and its effect on biology, health and the night sky. Within a matter of weeks, the Norridge Village Board adopted a Dark Sky Proclamation. [Article Attached]

Article written by Jenna Haskitt on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 for the Pioneer Press Norridge and Harwood Heights News and online at <http://www.pioneerlocal.com/norridge/news/1547741,norridge-darksky-042809-s1.article>.

Ridgewood Senior Informs Board on Light Pollution

Ridgewood High School senior and Norridge resident Demma Hawari gave a presentation Wednesday at Norridge's village meeting to discuss a possible dark sky proclamation.

As part of her final astronomy project, Hawari researched light pollution and suggested the village adopt the proclamation and use less lights to cut down on pollution.

Demma Hawari gives a presentation Wednesday April 22, 2009 to the Norridge village board about the dangers of light pollution. Her goal is to ask the village to promote dark sky awareness.
(Tamara Bell/Staff Photographer)



"Light pollution is basically any excessive light created by humans," Hawari said. "It gives off an annoying and harmful glare, and it's dangerous to the environment as well yourself."

Her goal is to have the village join Peoria, Barrington Hills, Homer Glen and Mount Prospect in adopting a dark sky proclamation.

"The reason I chose this project is because light pollution has become a serious problem in society," Hawari said. "Not only does it injure our environment, but it immensely affects our health, hurts our economy and destroys the beating of the night sky."



Ridgewood High School senior Demma Hawari gives a presentation Wednesday, April 22, 2009, in an effort to get Norridge to pass a dark sky proclamation, limiting the village's light pollution.
(Tamara Bell/Staff Photographer)

Light pollution is a problem for many reasons.

"Women living in brighter neighborhoods have a 73 percent chance higher risk of developing breast cancer," Hawari said. "Light pollution contributes to the cancer of the breast, the prostate, the uterus, the colon and the deadly skin cancer melanoma. What happens at night when you go to sleep is melatonin is produced. When any type of artificial glare shining through, whether it be your neighbors garage, street lights, television, or even your child's nightlight, melatonin ceases to be produced."

The question of crime is often a factor when discussing using less lights.

"Statistics show there is a direct negative correlation between light pollution and crime," Hawari said. "In laymen's terms, it means when there's less light pollution there's less crime."

People tend to feel more comfortable when there is more light, but it also allows dangerous people to hide in the glare, Hawari said.

Light pollution disrupts the food chain, she said.

"Insects, birds, amphibians, fish and mammals are affected," Hawari said. "What happens is the insects are dying off because of the light pollution, therefore the level of animals above that section no longer has anything to eat, and then all of their rhythms are thrown off. Trees rhythms are thrown off and trees are dying prematurely."

Hawari presented solutions on ways to cut down on lighting.

Light only what needs lighting, she said, and use motion sensors or full cut-off fixtures.

"The best outdoor lighting is a full cut-off fixture," she said. "This does not allow light to escape above 90 degrees. Full cut-off fixtures are said to use far less energy than mercury vapor, which is what we are currently using in Norridge right now."

"If we switched over from our mercury vapor security lights to our high-pressure sodium cut-off security lights, we would save \$260 per light."

Florescent light bulbs help save money on energy costs, use 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer, Hawari said.

Trustee Rob Martwick agrees that more florescent light bulbs could be used in the village. And the village has looked into using florescent light bulbs.

"In the village of Norridge we thought about really trying to encourage our residents to switch over to compact florescents because of the energy savings and doing our part in reducing our carbon footprint," Martwick said. "The problem becomes with those the disposal, for people to not throw light bulbs in the garbage but actually take them somewhere is a challenge."

"This being Earth Day, it's very appropriate that you're here," acting village President Ron Oppedisano said. "Very timely and well done. A lot of this stuff we're unaware of because day to day it doesn't affect our lives."