

Community College Week

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Illinois College Student Known As 'Compliment Dude'

By WALLY SPIERS, BELLEVILLE News-Democrat

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Not much in this world is free these days, but compliments from Nick Bartosik are.



AP Photos/Belleville News-Democrat, Derik Holtmann
Southwestern Illinois College freshman Nick Bartosik, 19, gives out free compliments to students and faculty on the campus in Belleville, Ill.

BELLEVILLE, Ill. (AP) — Not much in this world is free these days, but compliments from Nick Bartosik are.

The 19-year-old man is a freshman at Southwestern Illinois College and he usually spends parts of his day at the BELLEVILLE campus holding his “Free Compliments” sign and saying something nice to passers-by.

“Nice hat,” he called out to one student. “Love your piercing,” to another. “Awesome bag,” to a third.

Usually he got return smiles and a few compliments himself. He even struck up a few conversations. A few people ignore him.

“Some people just tolerate it,” Bartosik said. “Some love it. Some don’t. The other day I had this guy cuss me out.

“But if I get one smile or person who says ‘you’re awesome,’ it’s worth it. I saw it online. Some guys at Purdue University were doing it and I thought it would be a good idea to bring it here.”

Bartosik takes basic courses at the community college and said he is interested in the sales field. His usual spot is the courtyard north of the main building. “It’s helped me meet a lot of people,” he said. “They know me as the compliment dude. My message is that not everybody in the world is evil.”

“It’s exercise for me,” he told one student. “Soul push-ups.”

It takes some nerve to put yourself out in the open and talk to people who may not know you.

“The first time I tried it, I was shaking so bad,” he said. “My knees were about to buckle. The first time I tried it, (last September at a Target store) they actually kicked me off their property.”

It took him a while after that to work his nerve back enough to try on campus. He said his sign legitimizes the cause.

“Otherwise, I get really weird looks, even more than when holding the sign,” he said. “I love it. I don’t think I’ll ever stop.”