

Crofton News-Crier

A CAPITAL-GAZETTE NEWSPAPER

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Crofton Girl Scout Sarah Sykora, 13, in the "Munch a Green Lunch" T-shirt she designed for her lunchroom-trash-reduction project at Crofton Middle School.

'Operation Eco-Lunch' helps Crofton Middle go green

Crofton Middle School student **Sarah Sykora** is not the type to sit idly by when she sees a problem. She's the type to do something about it.

So, when the 12-year-old became concerned by the amount of waste generated at her school, she devised a plan to reduce lunchroom trash and implement a lunchroom recycling program.

Sarah, a member of Girl Scout Cadette Troop 1632, took on the project — which she christened "Operation Eco-Lunch" — to earn her Girl Scout Silver Award. To secure funding, Sarah applied last fall for a \$500 grant from Do Something Inc., a New York-based nonprofit dedicated to increasing volunteerism and community action among teenagers.

"I never thought I would get the grant but I did," Sarah said.

In January, she attended a "Social Action Boot Camp" workshop hosted by the charity at Georgetown University, in which she learned tips and strategies for



AROUND CROFTON
By Christine Kellar



Crofton Middle School seventh-graders, from left, Reilly Thate, Eileen Shea, Andra Anastasi, Andrea Jones and Caroline Lareuse were among the many participants and prize winners in the "Munch a Green Lunch" trash-reduction contest implemented by Sarah, at right.

implementing change.

Sarah kicked off Operation Eco-Lunch this spring with a school-wide poster contest aimed at promoting the upcoming trash-reduction program.

"Sarah really motivated the kids in the building. She got the awareness piece going," said Crofton Middle Principal **Sharon Hanson**. "Kids were making posters and saying, 'Yes, we can do this!'"

Through talking with the school's

custodians, Sarah learned that an average of 24 bags of lunchroom trash was generated each day. Sarah set a goal of reducing lunchroom waste by 25 percent.

What began as a one-week trash-reduction contest among students from four different lunch periods, ended up being extended to a month-long competition.

Sarah used a portion of grant (See KELLAR, Page A14)

In the meantime, Sarah encouraged her peers to visit the www.DoSomething.org Web site. "It has some really interesting stuff," she said. "Maybe you will get ideas for a project of your own."

The Crofton Branch Library at 1681 Riedel Road will host free 45-minute performances of "Rumpelstiltskin" by Stevens Puppets at 1:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. June 25. For more information, call 410-222-7915.

Send your Crofton news and upcoming event information to christine.kellar@comcast.net.

determined to carry it out. Her dad and I are especially proud of how she adapted her plan when necessary and saw it through to a successful conclusion.

Energized by the success of the lunchroom waste-reduction project, Sarah, who just completed seventh grade, is already looking ahead to helping her school make further progress this fall. She's enlisted the support of the school's PTO to help her use remaining grant funds to implement a classroom recycling program. She also plans to form a student Green Club whose members will be responsible for collecting the recyclable waste from each classroom.

Committee member **Steve Onken** praised Sarah's work spearheading the waste-reduction campaign. "Sarah has a powerful vision for seeing a reduction in waste and an increase in recycling at Crofton Middle School and beyond," he said. "In working with the faculty ... Sarah demonstrated remarkable patience, respect and strong leadership skills."

Sarah's mom and Girl Scout troop leader couldn't be more proud.

"I am really proud of all the girls in our troop who have completed or are still working on their Silver Awards," **Miartha Sykora**, said. "Sarah's project was fairly ambitious but she was quite

a 40 percent overall reduction in lunchroom waste. Along with a well-earned sense of satisfaction, Sarah also gained through her project appreciation of the challenges faced daily by middle schoolteachers: "The kids did a great job reducing trash ... but they didn't behave well when I gave out prizes," she said.

For support during the course of her project, Sarah collaborated with Crofton Middle's Green School committee, a group of half a dozen faculty members charged with leading the school's effort to earn a Maryland Green School designation from the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (www.maeoe.org).

KELLAR

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unds to purchase items for weekly prize drawings for students in the winning lunch periods. Among the prizes were "Laptop Lunch" boxes (www.laptoplunches.com), reusable lunch boxes featuring multiple food compartments. (Sarah is a fan: "All the trash I have at the end of lunch is an empty milk carton," she said.)

Through recycling efforts and more "eco-conscious" lunch-packing, all four lunch period groups exceeded the 25 percent trash-reduction goal, achieving