

History, nature, service pay off for local teen

Tome School senior wins three awards, \$1,500, maybe more

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Jennifer Crick is considering majoring in history when she goes to college this fall.

Until then, the Tome School senior will have to settle for making a little history of her own.

Crick scored something of an extracurricular trifecta over the past month by earning three major awards and scholarships for her work as a historical re-enactor, environmental leader and volunteer.

Tome School senior Jennifer Crick performs as Mary Byrnes, an Irish woman who worked as a laundress at Fort Delaware, a former Civil War prison now used as an interactive museum. Special to the Whig

The 17-year-old's odyssey of accolades began last month when she became the only Marylander to receive the Delaware Governor's Youth Volunteer Service Award.

The recognition was given in honor of Crick's work at Fort Delaware, a Civil War prison now used as an interactive museum.

"I went to a history camp (at Fort Delaware) one summer and I sort of never left," said Crick, the only child of Jerry and Edie Crick, who live near Chesapeake City.

Crick has spent two summers at the fort volunteering as a historical re-enactor playing Mary Byrnes, an Irish woman who worked there as a laundress.

She will return to Fort Delaware again this summer, only this time as a paid employee.

"My friends think it's pretty neat, although I don't think they understand what it means to be a laundress," she said.

Crick's second big honor came last week when the History Channel named her one of 25 national finalists for the 2007 Save Our History Student of the Year Award.

Crick was selected for her work at Fort Delaware and Greenbank Mill, another living history site in Delaware, where she has done everything from de-worming sheep to researching and compiling a heritage gardens manual used in the mill's educational programs.

The honor comes with a \$500 scholarship and digital camera. The first-place winner, to be announced next month, will receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

Most recently, Crick was named the winner of the first-ever Rachel Carson scholarship offered by

the Newton Marasco Foundation, a nonprofit environmental group based in Virginia.

The \$1,000 scholarship was awarded in honor of what would have been Carson's 100th birthday. She is credited with sparking the modern environmental movement with her 1962 book "Silent Spring." Carson died two years after the book's publication.

"I had to write an essay about how Rachel Carson is still relevant today," Crick said. "Without her, there would have been no environmental movement or Environmental Protection Agency today."

Crick said she developed her own love of nature simply by growing up on the Elk River.

"We basically live in a forest on the river, so nature has always been a presence in my life," she said.

As for her self-described fascination with history, especially anything involving the Civil War, Crick credits her eighth-grade history teacher, Tim Waud, who died two years ago.

"He really brought history to life for me by focusing on the human side rather than making us memorize dates and battles," she said. "I like to see the parallels between then and now, and now it's developed into a lifelong addiction."

Crick will attend Swarthmore College outside Philadelphia in the fall, where she plans to major in environmental policy, pre-law or history.

"I would love to be a professional historian," she said. "But my mom wants me to have a job where I can earn enough to feed myself, so I might be an environmental lawyer."

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Eleanor Roosevelt High senior receives Rachel Carson Scholar award for work on Anacostia

by Maya T. Prabhu | Staff Writer

Ever since he was in elementary school, Dietrich Epp Schmidt said he and his family have been active in preserving the environment.

“The Exxon Valdez crashed three days before my birthday [in 1989], and so during my whole life ... my parents have had a strong interest in the environment,” said the Hyattsville resident.

On March 24, 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker struck the Prince William Sound’s Bligh Reef in Alaska and spilled an estimated 11 million gallons of oil, one of the world’s largest environmental disasters. It left an impression on Schmidt, who has maintained his interest in environmental affairs through high school.

Schmidt was selected one of seven chosen as first-ever Rachel Carson Scholars for a project he conducted along the Anacostia River.

A senior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Schmidt received a second-place honor and \$750, which he said will go toward his tuition at St. Mary’s College of Maryland.

The Rachel Carson Scholars is a new program sponsored by the Newton Marasco Foundation to coincide with what would be Carson’s 100th birthday.

Carson, who lived in nearby Silver Spring, is credited with sparking the modern environmental movement with the publication of her book “Silent Spring” in 1962. The book exposed the dangers of chemical pesticides, said Amy Marasco Newton, president of the McLean, Va.,-based foundation.

“A few thousand words from Ms. Carson and the world took a new direction,” Newton said. Schmidt was recognized for his work with a research project he conducted with the Anacostia Watershed Society. Through the project, Schmidt planted American lotus seeds along the Anacostia and monitored their growth for 12 weeks as part of a wetlands restoration and research project.

“We planted the seeds over the summer and watched how the plants grew. But most of them died. The current was killing them,” he said.



Greg Dohler/The Gazette

Dietrich Epp Schmidt, a Hyattsville resident and Eleanor Roosevelt senior, was named a Rachel Carson Scholar for his work planting American lotus seeds along the Anacostia River. The honor came with a \$750 award for Schmidt, shown next to the pond he helps maintain at home.

The American lotus was a native plant along the river before the river was reengineered in the early parts of the last century, said Steve McKinley-Ward, a horticulturist with the Anacostia Watershed Society.

“It was basically wiped out as the Army Corps of Engineers, in a less ‘green’ time, were striving mightily, with the help of Congress, to get rid of tidal wetlands along the Anacostia — and they did in a huge way. They wiped out about 2,500 football fields-worth of acreage,” he said. “It is now a greener time and we’re trying to undo what we did decades ago.”

The Army Corps of Engineers, the Washington, D.C., government and the National Park Service have been collaborating on a wetland restoration project at Kingman Marsh along the Anacostia since 2000, McKinley-Ward said.

McKinley-Ward said Schmidt was an “eager beaver,” working mostly on his own once he was set up.

“He was willing to go out and wade through deep mud. Once, the water and mud was chest-high,” he said.

Schmidt began participating in park cleanups when he was at Rogers Heights Elementary School in Bladensburg. Since then he’s done what he refers to as a lot of low-level environmental projects.

“I don’t feel like I devoted myself to the environment, but I guess it just adds up,” he said.

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