



Student preserves the environment

Howard County is a bit greener this summer, thanks to 15-year-old Ayla Hoffheiser of Ellicott City.

No, she did not water lawns or plant any trees. What the 10th-grader at Marriotts Ridge High School did was collect and distribute cloth bags to Howard County's Food Bank and Foreign-Born Information Network (FIRN) clients to be used instead of plastic bags.

Ayla, a Girl Scout in Troop 128, wanted a project to fulfill the 40-hour requirement for her Silver Award. "I like to save the environment," says Ayla. "To add a twist, I thought I would help the less fortunate at the same time."

Ayla asked the Safeway at Enchanted Forest and the Giants at Hickory Ridge and Dorsey Hall to donate the cloth bags, which normally cost 99 cents each. Ayla collected a total

of 610, and gave half to the Food Bank to give to clients to carry groceries and half to FIRN to cart food and clothes. On July 27, she handed out bags to Howard County Food Bank clients.

So that folks would not miss her conservation message, Ayla put tiny paper tags on each cloth bag explaining that cloth bags help save the environment and made a poster spelling out the undesirable environmental aspects of using plastic bags. Ayla titled her poster “GREEN FOR ALL” and wrote comments such as “More than 20 animal species die from plastic bags” that she discovered doing internet research. The poster is displayed at the Food Bank.

“I will absolutely use the bag,” said Diana Rickard, who picked one up from the Food Bank. “I have been wanting a cloth bag.”