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PROTECTING THE EARTH, ONE BAG AT A TIME

MARCH 27, 2015 BY MARY

By Abby Goldberg



Abby with a sea lion in the Galapagos Islands

My name is Abby Goldberg and I am a sophomore in high school in Illinois. My plastic bag campaign started in 7th grade when

my environmentally focused school asked all the students to come up with a project that helped out the community and the environment. 7th grade was already challenging enough with an increased work load, more responsibilities, and teenage drama.

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One day I was flipping through a magazine and there was a picture of a bird entangled in a plastic bag. Seeing that picture is when I realized that's what I wanted my project to be about, trying to help animals like the bird. I was going to try and convince Grayslake to ban plastic bags.

At first I felt helpless. I was only 12 and I had no idea how a little kid could do all this work. A lot of the kids in school made fun of me for my passion and told me that I would never be able to accomplish my goal. After months of research and frustration I got in touch with a film maker from California. Together, we decided that we I should make a film with kids to try and convince the Village of Grayslake to ban plastic shopping bags. Just as we were getting started, Senate Bill 3442 was introduced and found its way to the Governor's desk. This bill, in basic terms, was a ban on plastic bag bans and instead promoted recycling as a solution to the problem. As I learned through all my research, plastic bags are not recycled into new bags so we keep using more.

I was just about to give up until the film maker suggested I start a petition on change.org. The petition asked the Governor of Illinois to veto the bill. With the help of social media and interviews I was able to get 174,000 signatures on my petition. I was able to hand deliver my petition to the governor himself. And a few weeks later he personally called my house to tell me he was going to veto the bill, we had won. Now any town in Illinois can ban the bag if they so choose. I listened to all the positives around me and not all the negative people who were trying to bring me down. You are all capable of changing the world. If you see something you are interested in, ask for help and get your ideas out there. If you change nothing, nothing will change. As long as you stay true to yourself, anything is possible.

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About Abby: Abby Goldberg, 15, has been named a national winner of the 2014 Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes.

Each year, the Barron Prize celebrates twenty-five inspiring, public-spirited young people from all across America who have made a significant positive difference to people and our planet. The top fifteen winners each receive a \$5,000 cash award to support their service work or higher education. For more information please visit www.barronprize.org

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