

# Nazareth senior struggles to save the planet

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When Sara Moffitt discovered last summer that students across the country were recycling paper at their high schools, she decided it was time that Nazareth Academy became more concerned with the environment.

Sara took the initiative and approached the school administration with a recycling plan, according to Sister Mary Clouser, SSJ, assistant principal of student affairs. Although Sara said she was hesitant to begin the project on her own, she thought it was imperative that the school recycle its paper waste.

"I had noticed all the paper that the school throws away," the Nazareth senior said. "I thought it was ridiculous to continue if there was something we could do to change it."

After the administration listened to Sara's ideas, she took her plan to Monroe County Executive Thomas P. Frey. He told Sara to contact Lynn Schramel, solid waste coordinator for the Division of Solid Waste in Monroe County.

According to Sara, some Nazareth administrators were hesitant about the cost of the project. But after a tour of the recycling projects implemented at the county offices, Sara was able to convince the school of the project's importance.

Under Sara's supervision and according to her suggestions, recycling bins were installed on all three school floors. Crates were purchased to put in Nazareth's 30 classrooms, and three ton-size bins were purchased to hold the collected waste in the school's boiler room.

"It was all Sara," said Sister Clouser. "We did some legwork and cost inquiries, but she did all the research and kept after me to keep it going."

The East Irondequoit resident



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Nazareth Academy senior Sara Moffitt stands in the school's boiler room amid three one-ton containers of waste paper. After noticing how much paper the school was throwing away, Moffitt instituted a recycling program last year.

also formed a small committee of five student volunteers and two faculty members. After the project was implemented, Sara began monitoring the program in order to regulate the biweekly collection of waste. In addition, she took on the responsibility of notifying the recycling company when the bins were full.

Even though the project involves a lot of time and commitment, Sara said she doesn't mind the work. "It's just so simple, that's the main thing," she said.

Sara said she is pleased to see such positive reaction to the project among her classmates — as well as the administration. She said she believes that young people can — and should — make a difference in the world.

"You always hear that one person can't make a difference, but they certainly can," stressed Sara. "You see a change in the attitudes of young people,

but you don't see the action. They need to take the first step.

"We have to fix problems before they become unfixable," she added, "and one of those major problems is the environment."

Sister Clouser said it is refreshing to see someone as concerned and involved as Sara.

"I'd like to think that all youth are like Sara, but I think she is an exception," remarked Sister Clouser. "She is not caught up in herself, which is typical of teenagers today. Her community, society and world are important to her, and she will do what she can to make a safer and healthier world for the next generation."

In addition to raising environmental concern at school, Sara also has helped her family — parents Elizabeth and Thomas, two brothers and three sisters — to become more environmentally aware.

women due to years of oppression that there has to be change. They have to stand up and say "Change is important and I'm going to do it," Sara stated.

The Nazareth senior said she is an optimist about the future of the planet, but she said all people must be open to helping others.

"One person can't change the world; we have to band together. A lot needs to be fixed out there — the homeless is a disgrace to our country and world, too many single women and children are in poverty and many children don't get a proper education," Sara explained. "If we don't go out and change it, it won't get any better."

As part of her commitment to change, Sara plans to work — and live — at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality this summer. Although the job pays only a small stipend, Sara said other rewards make the effort worthwhile. "I love to work with people, and I am thinking about that kind of work later in life. Maybe I'll run a shelter," she said.

If she isn't running a shelter 10 years down the road, Sara said she will probably be doing missionary work in some underdeveloped country.

But wherever she goes and whatever she does, Sara plans to make a difference. Concern for the planet and its people are her main motivations.

"If we plan to stay on this planet, we have to start healing it instead of hurting it," Sara concluded. "We have to heal people instead of hurting them, too — in every sense of the word."

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