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Moraga Teen Wins Best in Show for Photography at Alameda County Fair



Moraga resident Lauren Hlavac points to her prize-winning photograph, "Boat on the Shore." Photo provided

Recent Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School graduate Lauren Hlavac, 15, won Best in Show, Best in Class and Judge's

Favorite in the youth photography contest at the Alameda County Fair. "She discovered she won the awards when she went to the fair on June 18, and her photograph was roped off," said Lauren's mother, Colleen. Lauren took the photo, titled "Boat on the Shore," at Lake Tahoe and said her goal was to capture the beauty and relaxed atmosphere associated with the lake. This is the second contest that Lauren has placed in the top tier; she also won third place in a photography contest at JM. With her father as her inspiration, Lauren plans to enter more photography contests in the future, and continue to learn and improve. *J. Wake*

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Community Service

Bat Boxes Installed at Reservoir as Part of Gold Award Project

Submitted by Kendall Comins



Kendall Comins works on building specialized bat boxes at Lafayette Reservoir Photos provided

Comins with the finished product

Local Ambassador Girl Scout Kendall Comins recently completed her Gold Award Take Action Project by installing specialized boxes at the Lafayette Reservoir for bats to make their homes. The Gold Award is the highest award a girl can earn as a Scout, and it involves completing a project that leaves a lasting impact on the local community. For her project, Comins spent the past year, and over 100 hours of her time, organizing and developing her project all the way up to the final installation in mid-February. She hopes that soon visitors to the reservoir will see a flourishing ecosystem to which bats help contribute.

"Bats are flying mammals, and have striking similarities to humans, particularly in bone structure," says Comins. "However, these creatures need our help. Nationwide, they suffer a risk of habi-

at loss, disease, and extermination by people, many who are afraid of them. Local bat populations are nothing to be afraid of and, in fact, they help balance the ecosystem by eating millions of mosquitoes, and fertilizing native plant species with their guano, which comes at a high price if bought from a nursery." Comins believes that her bat boxes will help provide safe homes for local bat colonies, which will then bring many benefits to the reservoir and community.

Comins worked long and hard to make this project a reality, and grew tremendously as a leader during the process. She remembers, "At first the progress was slow and it didn't seem like I was getting anywhere, but once I started building my team, I found that people were willing to take over some of the work, and the project picked up speed." Through all the hard work

that Comins put in, she found people not only to help out, but also to guide her with the process. She would like to thank her friends, family, and everyone from the community who helped out. Dr. Cushman, especially, who works with a team to approve proposals and projects, as well as offer guidance to make girls a success, was an extreme help, says Comins. "She was the closest thing I had to a mentor while working on the award because she explained the process and worked directly with me on my proposal, to make sure I satisfied the requirements."

The hard work paid off, and Comins is extremely proud that she was able to lead a large group of people on her own. She hopes that her efforts will inspire other girls to become leaders and wants to show that young women can make a difference.

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