

# San Juan Capistrano Patch

## Young Environmentalist Wants Schools to Go Green

A St. Margaret's sixth-grader shares her vision with students and faculty members – and an international panel – to make her school more green.

- By [Stephen Ashby](#)
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Sixth-grader Maddie Barkate is passionate about saving the earth through decomposing organic material commonly found in trash ... i.e., composting.

She's taken that message to her school, [St. Margaret's Episcopal School](#), and now she's part of an international panel which wants to spread the green gospel.

"Composting and recycling are important because it reduces the amount of items sent to the landfill," said Barkate. "People need to realize that if we don't take care of our earth now and conserve its natural resources, then our resources will run out one day.

"And then we will all be sorry."

As a prior member of the recycling team at St. Margaret's, Barkate, a new San Juan Capistrano resident, saw firsthand the importance of recycling daily waste.

Now serving as a current member of the Green Team, which is part of a Southern California-based, national non-profit called [Grades of Green](#), she and her colleagues are working to implement measures to make their school more eco-friendly.

[Grades of Green](#)'s mission is to educate students ages 7-18 on all things green and help them become leaders to educate others on becoming better stewards of the planet, according to the organization's website. The groups counts approximately 70,000 student members enrolled in the program across the U.S., Canada, China, and even in parts of Australia.

Some suggested steps for schools to follow include trash-free Tuesdays, walk-to-school Wednesdays and e-waste recycling, according to Grades of Green.

Perhaps the Green Team's biggest feat at St. Margarets so far was the installation of composting and recycling bins on campus, Barkate said. After much deliberation, consideration and research, she and her team presented their concerns for the environment to the school officials.

The school board discussed it and made arrangements for grants and necessary funding for their project, Barkate said.

“I feel that people are using the bins and getting used to the idea of trashless lunches,” she said.

Grades of Green convened an induction meeting on Sept. 9 in Manhattan Beach, and welcomed all of its all-star student leaders, including Barkate, from parts as far away as Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills and Myanmar, China, as well as San Juan Capistrano.

In addition, the mayor of San Juan Capistrano gave Barkate and her team commendation for their efforts and presented them with an award on March 2.

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