

Seventh-grader organizes food drive for RHM

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A sermon she heard at First Presbyterian Church about hunger made a big impression on 13-year-old Madeline Hoskins.

The Rev. Jim Dunkin's message was about hunger, and how many lives are lost because of it.

"I kind of got inspired from that," Madeline says.

She decided she wanted to do something about it, so she made a plan.

In a service learning class with Kim Petty several years ago, Madeline learned how to organize a service project from scratch, she says. She talked to her parents, Lee Anna and Guy Hoskins, and then she made an outline of what she wanted to do.

That night, she called the head of Salisbury Academy, Diane Fisher, and asked if she could meet with her the following day after school.

Fisher was impressed with Madeline's initiative.

"She came in my office with this very well-organized, meaningful service project to collect food for the shelter.

"How could I say 'No'?"

After getting the OK, Madeline got to work. She took a photo of the outside of the Rowan Helping Ministries building, put it on flyers, along with information about the food drive, and distributed them at school.

She also spoke in a morning assembly to the whole school. Cans of food began to pour in.

The teachers worked the proliferation of cans into their lessons, Fisher said, using them to teach grouping and sorting, and even nutrition.

Madeline's goal was to collect 500 cans.

She figured if each of the 159 students at Salisbury brought in three or four cans, she would meet her goal.

Students did much better than that, with the total can tally coming in at 1,359.

On Thursday, the last day of school before Christmas break, Madeline, her parents, and other students helped load the cans into vehicles.

"Gosh, who knew green beans could be so heavy?" asked seventh-grader John Latimer, as he lifted a heavy box into a van that would soon be headed for Rowan Helping Ministries.

Fisher says that Madeline's preparation, organization and follow-through on the project have been impressive. "Her contagious compassion and excitement about helping others is phenomenal," Fisher says.

As an incentive to give, Madeline added an element of competition between classes. She promised a food party for the class bringing in the most cans.

The seventh-graders — Madeline's own class — emerged victorious.

So in January, they'll be treated to lunch from Hap's, Madeline says.

The project, Madeline says, was "a lot of fun," and she's hoping to do it again.