

Aspiring Eagle Scout to protect Sea Cliff's namesake

BY MIKE CONN
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Scouting has always been a big part of Charles LaMarca's life. He started out as a Cub Scout at six years old, sticking with it for the next decade as a member of Sea Cliff Troop 43. It's also something his entire family enjoys. His mother Linda serves as the troop's committee chair, his father Anthony is the assistant scoutmaster and his brother Christopher, is a Star Scout. Now a 16-year-old junior and Honor student at Chaminade, a Catholic school, Charles is finally ready to submit his Eagle Scout project, something which he hopes can help improve Sea Cliff's natural landscape.

For his project, Charles set up a bench and fence on the edge of the cliff overlooking Hempstead Harbor between 12th and Maple avenues. During his years of walking the boardwalk by the shoreline, he had noticed that the cliff side leading down to the water was eroding, due in large part to human activity in the area. People loiter there and throw litter on the hill. Some even slide down the hillside while intoxicated.

Charles said that the main purpose for his project is to prevent erosion on the hill and to improve the way it looks.

While the fence prevents people from going over the cliff side, the nearby path is still open to foot traffic. Charles put woodchips along the path to make the trail safer by covering up potential hazards such as protruding tree roots.

Originally, he was going to set up birdhouses along some of Sea Cliff's scenic paths, but he decided that his current endeavor was more worthwhile. Although



Photos courtesy Leslie Guerci

THE FENCE WILL prevent people from harming the cliff, and the bench will provide a scenic view of Hempstead Harbor.

the birdhouses would make the paths more aesthetically enjoyable, he said protecting this cliff serves a more practical purpose, as it helps preserve the area, while also helping to prevent human injury.

"I think it really made the area much more beautiful and welcoming," Linda said. "I think the community will use it a lot more and I'm hoping that people will respect that area more and take better care of it."

Charles spent the last few months planning and executing his project starting off with a pair of yard sales, where he raised roughly \$1,000. He then contacted several local businesses to purchase services and products. He bought black locust wood fencing from Williams Fence; a sign reading "CONSERVATION AREA

— PLEASE STAY ON PATH" from A+ Graphics and Signs; and a \$125 stone bench from a local family who had several of them. Charles also called Vito Milanese of Milanese Landscaping for help installing the fence and woodchips. After three days of construction, the project was ready for a ribbon cutting on Nov. 2.

Leslie Guerci, president of the Sea Cliff Landmarks Association, helped Charles with his project. Earlier this year, she published a map of all of Sea Cliff's hidden pathways, and said she was happy to see Charles taking such an interest in the village, which she holds dear. She also said she appreciates the installation of a bench, since it will enable people to enjoy a scenic view of the harbor.

"I think it was a great project for [the

scouts]," Guerci said. "It gives them a little sense of ownership in the future of the paths and public walkways in Sea Cliff."

Troop 43 Scoutmaster Richard Greene said Eagle Scout projects are meant to showcase three main purposes — providing service to the community, displaying leadership and showing an ability to plan and work on a project. Greene said this project serves as an excellent chance for Charles to exhibit his skills in these areas. This is especially true of his leadership abilities, Greene said, because Charles tends to be a soft-spoken and cerebral person. Greene said Charles has used the Eagle Scout experience as an opportunity to break out of his comfort zone and become even more of a role model for younger scouts.

Greene and Charles will work to put all of his paperwork and project book — the latter of which features everything about the project — together and submit them to the Eagle Board. After reviewing the project book and speaking with Charles about what he learned and what sort of difficulties he overcame, the board will make a determination whether he will become an Eagle Scout. He should know by the end of the year.

So much of her son's work on this project made her proud, Linda said, but perhaps most of all was his demonstration of leadership and communication skills. She saw him gradually enhance those abilities when he assigned people to specific jobs, called businesses, made purchases and delivered a speech at the ribbon cutting. It's an excellent way to prepare young men like Charles for the real world, she said, and it was great to see all of his hard work pay off.



CHARLES LAMARCA, FOURTH from right, was congratulated by his troop leaders and fellow scouts during the ribbon cutting on Nov. 2.

Photos courtesy Leslie Guerci