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Cary girl's short film earns national recognition (with video)

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Ask 12-year-old Mary Hilbrink of Cary all about the history behind the Butterfinger and Baby Ruth candy bars. Just don't ask her to eat them.

"I actually don't like them," she said.

Regardless, the candy bars and their ties to Cary – mixed with a bit of history about her hometown and some filmmaking talent – earned Hilbrink the chance to be part of an American History Film Project exhibit in Virginia.

Hilbrink, who will begin seventh grade at Trinity Oaks Christian Academy in Cary in the fall, was one of four students throughout the country to be chosen to show short films about their hometowns. Hilbrink appeared via Skype June 6 as her short film was shown during the American History Film Project's exhibit in Annandale, Virginia.

Students were asked to submit short films about their hometowns with a goal of teaching students they are an integral part of their communities and history.

With Hilbrink's friends and family's acting out scenes as she narrates, the film includes background on how Cary began, as well as history about Otto Schnering, a Cary native who founded the Curtiss Candy Company, which first produced Butterfinger and Baby Ruth candy bars. The company's first confectionary item was Kandy Kake, later refashioned in 1921 as the log-shaped Baby Ruth.



(Photo provided)

Caption

Curtiss Candy Company eventually was bought out by Standard Brands, which merged with Nabisco in 1981. In 1990, Nabisco sold the Curtiss brands to Nestle.

"I had never heard of it before," Hilbrink said of the Curtiss Candy Company. "I knew there was like the Butterfinger and the Baby Ruth, but I didn't know they were made in Cary. My mom [Marcy] told me about that and I was like, 'Oh, it's cool.'"

Encouraged by a friend of her father Mark's to enter the American History Film Project because of her interest in making short movies with her friends on an iPad and putting them on YouTube, Hilbrink decided to enlist acting help to make the video unique.

Her friends recreated scenes of Cary's earliest settlers meeting at the town pump and farming. One friend acted as a young Schnering.

"I just wanted to do something a little bit different than everyone else was doing," she said.

As for the young filmmaker's future, that remains to be seen.

"I want to be a filmmaker, but I also have a lot of other hobbies, such as singing," said Hilbrink, who placed 16th in Suburban Chicago's Got Talent competition and has plans to produce an album. "I really wanted to be a lawyer, too. I guess everything in the world I would be."

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