

# WISE BEYOND HER 11 YEARS

## Atlantic Highlands girl starts own business

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**SARAH MILNE**  
11-year-old from Atlantic Highlands

**By Kerry Close**  
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**RED BANK** — It all started one afternoon last year when Pat Walter, 65, of Middletown was driving to a family party.

On her way, Walter pulled over to allow an ambulance to pass her vehicle. Another car drove by as she was stopped on the shoulder, and the driver called out the window that Walter was an "old bat."

When Walter arrived at the party, she told the family what had happened.

"I teased her about it for a while," said Walter's granddaughter Sarah Milne, 11, of Atlantic Highlands. "On her birthday, I gave her a card, and I drew a bat on it, but with a cane. It became the 'proud old bat.'"

From this birthday card, a business was born. With the help of her family, Sarah found a company to produce car magnets with her Proud Old Bat logo.

The magnets arrived in April. Sarah started selling them to family and friends, and gradually, her business grew more popular.

The design now appears on magnets gracing vehicle bumpers across the area.

"It was kind of cool to find out that people other than my family like them," Sarah said.

Sarah is a gifted entrepreneur, according to her family.

"She doesn't just sell those (magnets), she hawks them," said Sarah's mother, Michele Walter,

42, of Atlantic Highlands.

"She could sell fish in another life," Pat Walter added.

Sarah has shown a sense of responsibility uncommon for a young person, Michele Walter said.

"She's done a neat job," she said. "She's really participated. She really thinks about the business."

Sarah said managing the business has taught her skills that most people her age might not learn for years to come.

"I've learned about the copyright process, about finances and accounts," Sarah said. "I had to pick up a lot of information on my own."

Sarah's drawing skills have also helped the business, which can be found at [www.prouldbat.com](http://www.prouldbat.com). She hopes to design T-shirts and other products with the Proud Old Bat logo.

"I love drawing, and it's been great to explore design," Sarah said.

Her age has sometimes proved an asset, she said.

"People find it hard to say no to an 11-year-old or tell me they hate my product," Sarah said.

But other times, she said, "people are shocked to be talking to someone so young."

Sarah hopes to extend the reach of her product to novelty shops with over-the-hill sections and more important, "a sense of humor."

The Proud Old Bat is set to be offered in Funk & Standard Variety Store in downtown Red Bank.

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