



Girl Scouts Make Orange County a Better Place.

It's a girl thing

Building courage, confidence, and character

EDITORIAL PROVIDED BY: DR. GAIL Bower-Schwarz

A CULTURE OF SERVICE

"I've been a Girl Scout since first grade, and my troop has done a lot of community service projects over the years," says Alyssa, now in grade 12. "It feels great to know that we've made a difference in so many people's lives. I plan to keep doing it for the rest of my life."

Alyssa is one of nearly 25,000 Girl Scouts who contributed more than 500,000 hours of service last year helping the people and communities of Orange County. A focus on community service is one of the ways that the Girl Scout Council of Orange County is different from many other youth-serving organizations.

The culture of service starts in the earliest years. Girl Scout Daisies - kindergartners and first graders - begin to learn about compassion and generosity by performing simple projects like stop-a-loops at assisted living facilities or "helping out" animal rescue centers.

As they gain more experience, the girls learn to plan bigger projects, like cooking and serving food at soup kitchens, making and delivering special care packages to children in hospitals and shelters, or cleaning up beaches and planting trees in

public parklands. As girls progress through Girl Scouting, giving back to the community becomes second nature and prepares them to be the kind of citizen leaders that every community wants and needs.

Even the annual cookie sale is an opportunity for Girl Scouts to help other people. Many troops use cookie sale proceeds to cover the costs of their community service projects. Last year's top cookie seller, a second grader named Emily who sold more than 2,000 boxes of cookies, was motivated by a spirit of philanthropy. "I wanted to help other girls go to camp and Girl Scout events they couldn't afford without some help," Emily explained.

Girl Scout community service work shapes future leaders and is an integral part of the Girl Scout mission to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Girls love Girl Scouts because it's fun, but through their many activities they learn leadership skills for the 21st century: critical thinking, decision making, project planning, communication and teamwork.

Martina, a 15-year old Girl Scout, says she joined Girl Scouts when she was little just to have fun with her friends. "But I've

gained confidence and leadership skills, and I'm only just beginning to see how Girl Scouts shaped who I am today."

Girl Scouts choose from an inspiring array of age-appropriate and fun activities that include nature and wildlife, the arts, hiking and camping, business and financial skills, field trips and travel, outdoor skills, technology and science and much more.

Through adult/girl partnerships that are unique to Girl Scouts, adult volunteers work with the girls to support girl-led, hands-on and cooperative learning experiences that help bring out the unique leadership potential in each girl.

GIRL SCOUTS IS FOR EVERY GIRL

Girls from every corner of Orange County, every cultural background and economic circumstance benefit from Girl Scout leadership experiences. Nearly 40 percent of local Girl Scouts are from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The young mothers who belong to the Teen Moms Girl Scout Troop based at a Garden Grove high school are developing critical life skills that will help them finish school and become self-sufficient.

A unique Girl Scout program based in Santa Ana provides healthy alternatives for girls in high risk, low income neighborhoods and schools. Bilingual Girl Scout staff also work with the girls' mothers to help them develop the skills and confidence they need to become leaders for their daughters' troops.

All of these girls are learning that no matter what their circumstances, they have something to offer to the community, and they have the power to make a difference in the world.

GOLD AWARD IMPACTS THE COMMUNITY

Many Girl Scouts aspire to earn the national Girl Scout Bronze, Silver and Gold leadership awards. The awards, starting in grade 4 for the Bronze, require girls to employ the skills and abilities they have learned as Girl Scouts to complete service projects that address problems in their communities or beyond. As the girls move into higher grades, the requirements for the Silver Award (grades 9 - 10) and then the Gold Award (grades 11-12) become progressively challenging.

To earn the prestigious Girl Scout Gold Award, a girl must possess extraordinary leadership and organizational skills. She has to commit to more than 100 service hours and 1-2 years to complete the rigorous requirements.

The 142 girls who earned their Girl Scout Awards this past year contributed nearly 8,000 hours of community service addressing such urgent issues as hunger, homelessness, disabilities, the environment and education.

Ultimately, Girl Scouts are empowered to use their skills, abilities and values to make Orange County, and the world, a better place.



a proud legacy

- More than 50 million women have benefited from Girl Scout leadership experiences.
- 64% of today's women executives/leaders were Girl Scouts.
- 92% of female astronauts were Girl Scouts.
- 82% of high-achieving alumnae believe that Girl Scouting influenced their success.
- 64% of women listed in Who's Who in America are former Girl Scouts.
- 68% of women in our current Congress were Girl Scouts.