

## Reading, writing, and leadership

### Girl Scouting results in stronger academic performance and better life outcomes

After years of pandemic losses, parents are eager to see their children catch up on the educational and social skills they lost. Girl Scouting offers a way for girls to strengthen their academic skills while also making strong friendships and becoming leaders. Girl Scouts complements the indispensable work that educators do every day.

“There’s just something about Girl Scouts that’s very appealing,” said Michele Mainz, a paraprofessional at Sanborn High School in New Hampshire and this past summer’s supervisor at Camp Kettleford. “I like the fact that we’re teaching them right behavior, we’re teaching them to be brave, we’re teaching them to try stuff even when they’re a little bit afraid.”

Mainz leads a large troop in Raymond, NH, and she is a shining example of the kind of leader who makes sure her Girl Scouts are learning to lead as they explore the world.

Their recent trip to the Seacoast to go tide pooling - exploring ecosystems during low tide when the tide pools are exposed and accessible - meant overcoming some of those fears young Girl Scouts felt.

“Some of my girls were terrified to get near the water, near the critters,” she said. “But they did it anyway! I made a point of saying to them ‘You did it! You weren’t sure you wanted to, you were a little bit afraid, but you still did it! You got in the water, you touched the critters, you did it!’ And I wanted them to know how awesome that was.”

Recent research shows that Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to



Girl Scout Troop 12070, which meets at Nottingham West Elementary School in Hudson, NH, has 37 members in kindergarten through 10th grade. Their diverse membership reaches out to girls who might not otherwise have a chance to participate in Girl Scouting. (Alan Macrae photo for GSGWM)

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***Earning the Gold Award “definitely taught me a lot about how to work with people, how to be a leader, and how to manage a team.”***

*- Elise Towle,  
Gold Award Girl Scout*

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achieve academic excellence, and over-achieve when it comes to teamwork, hands-on learning and reflection, and decision-making.

That’s because Girl Scouts understands the vital connection between a child’s development and their future success, and offers a one-of-a-kind, proven leadership development program that pairs girls with strong, caring role models and mentors who prepare them to take the lead from age 5 to 18, and into adulthood.

The content of all Girl Scout national proficiency badges and journeys have been correlated by grade level to national Common Core standards, 21st Century Skills standards, financial literacy education standards, and curriculum such as health and physical education, language arts, math, science, and social studies learning objectives for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

To close the gender gap in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, Girl Scouts are offered opportunities to explore and try out topics like app development, robotics, coding, and cybersecurity. A 2022 Girl Scout Research Institute student found that Girl Scouts are more likely to maintain their interest in STEM fields through adolescence and develop important STEM competencies critical for

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## Reading, writing, and leadership

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the next generation of STEM leaders.

The formula is simple, but the impact is huge. An accepting environment + supportive adults + a variety of fun and hands-on STEM experiences = girls who see the value of STEM and who have the interest, confidence, and competence to take the lead!

This research shows that engagement in Girl Scout STEM programs is linked to the development of the Girl Scout STEM outcomes and girls' interest in future STEM pursuits. Girl Scout STEM programs offer girls the opportunity to learn about themselves and the world around them through a variety of activities.

Whether they are creating and programming a robot, building a fairy house, or becoming a citizen scientist by adding cloud observations to a national research project, Girl Scouts provides countless opportunities for girls to explore STEM careers that connect to their passions.

We make sure to bring these experiences to Girl Scouts in a variety of ways. Our STEM on-the-go van is on the road, reaching troops in communities across New Hampshire and Vermont that would find it difficult to access this kind of learning in their hometowns. Current programs being offered give Girl Scouts hands-on experience with candy science, spa science, LEGO challenge, and polymer clay science.

We give teachers a break as we bring our programming into their classrooms, introducing the class to Girl Scouts.

What could be more educational than seeing the world? Our travel opportunities range from visiting the local fire station as a Daisy troop to exploring a foreign country through the Destinations program.

Girl Scouts who take on the challenge of our higher awards find that the process allows them to gain valuable life skills in many areas and gives them the confidence to change the world for the better.

Gold Award Girl Scout alums report that the Gold Award process helped them develop essential twenty-first-century employment skills, giving them a boost in their academic and professional lives. They also affirm that the Gold Award helped them get into college or graduate programs, earn scholarships,



Girl Scout Troop 30228 in Waterbury, VT, joined in on the state-wide 'Green Up Day' and helped clean two parks and the school playground. Girl Scouts love being leaders and providing a positive impact on both our ecosystem and communities. (Courtesy photo)

and secure jobs.

Elise Towle, a new Gold Award Girl Scout from Fairfax, VT, took on the challenge of educating her peers about mental health, creating a program for her area middle schools to use. Earning the award taught her leadership and responsibility. (See more on her project on Page 8.)

"I had to be the one reaching out to everyone and doing everything," she said. "So it definitely taught me a lot about how to work with people, how to be a leader, and how to manage a team."

She encourages younger Girl Scouts to stick with the program and go for the Gold Award.

"It ... just feels so good to actually accomplish something that makes the world a better place," she said. "It's a feeling that you're not going to get anywhere else. And Girl Scouts is really good at helping teach you how to do that." ■

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To donate to Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, visit: [girlscoutsgwm.org/donate](http://girlscoutsgwm.org/donate).

To learn more, contact the Advancement office by emailing [advancement@girlscoutsgwm.org](mailto:advancement@girlscoutsgwm.org) or calling 888-474-9686.

## When children learn with Girl Scouts, they're bound for success

Dear Friends,

Guardians, parents, and educators want their children to be successful throughout their lives. Girl Scouting shares this goal for all children and our members. We aim to provide every Girl Scout with the skills and confidence they need to succeed!



As you will read throughout this Trailblazer, the Girl Scout program is linked to a child's greater success in school. This is because the Girl Scout program serves as an informal educational partner improving academic performance and providing essential skills for a child to thrive.

In Girl Scouting, members make their own age-appropriate decisions with the support of a caring adult mentor. Our volunteers and staff work with girls in small groups, encouraging them to think through problems, to ask questions and to make decisions. These activities provide support and essential skills students need to be successful in school, providing them with confidence to speak out.

Girl Scouting also requires girls to learn by doing. In our programming, whether it is badgework within a troop or an activity at camp, Girl Scouts experiment to discover what works best. They get their hands dirty, try different methods to gain success, and become empowered to shape their own future, in their unique way. This non-formal education

approach ensures that Girl Scouts have courage to try new things.

Girl Scouts also connect with others as part of our unique Leadership Experience programming. By working with their troops, camp units, or patrols, they learn to value different opinions, listen to others, appreciate diversity, and develop essential communication skills. Girl Scouts cheer each other on and support each other through their Take Action Projects, as well as life's difficulties and successes. By connecting with others, girls gain the courage to make the world a better place.

Every aspect of the Girl Scout leadership journey is designed to support their growth and academic success. Too often the life skills we put front and center are not within the capacity of local educators. When children learn to listen, communicate, appreciate others, and work together, they are bound for future success!

Thank you for all you do to make their success possible. Your support means the world to our members and their goals for the future.

With grateful appreciation,

*Tricia*

Patricia K. Mellor  
Chief Executive Officer, GSGWM, Gold Award Girl Scout

## New badges give Girl Scouts new opportunities

Girl Scouts have wide-ranging interests, and we have the badges to meet those interests! Girl Scouts of the USA has refreshed old badges and is offering new ones this year.

### Animal badges

Girl Scouts further immerse themselves in the world of animals when they embark on these badge adventures! Animal-based programming enriches girls' lives by fostering a sense of connection, empathy, and environmental consciousness. It also provides them with valuable skills and experiences that can shape their personal growth, academic pursuits, and future careers.

We are expanding our Animals program by adding a Daisy badge, Animal Observer, and modernizing our Junior Animal Habitats and Cadette Animal Helpers badges to provide Girl Scouts with even more valuable experiences to better aid



them in understanding how animals shape our world.

The Animal Habitats and Animal Helpers badges are made possible by the Elliott Values Wildlife Project.

### Maker badges

Girl Scouts love finding new ways to explore their creative side, and with nine new Maker badges, the opportunities are endless! Inspired by the popular Artist and Craft badges, the Maker line incor-

porates Girl Scouts' traditional favorite crafting and art skills—such as drawing, pottery, and painting—while adding opportunities for artistic exploration and expression in additional mediums.

*Art and Design* - Earning the Girl Scout Art and Design badge will teach girls how to find inspiration all around, explore different methods and mediums to create their own artistic masterpiece, and share their work with others.

*Craft and Tinker* - The Girl Scout Craft and Tinker badge will teach girls how crafts can help friends, family, and even the world.

*Create and Innovate* - When girls earn the Girl Scout Create and Innovate badge, they'll use their imagination and creativity to solve different problems.

These badges are made possible by Stanley Black & Decker. ■

## It's a classroom takeover - and teachers get a break

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains has been giving teachers a little break while introducing our programming to kindergarten and first-grade students with classroom takeovers. All students get to participate in these exciting activities, while the girls are given flyers to take home inviting their families to join Girl Scouts.

During teacher appreciation weeks last spring, we brought Girl Scout programming to 15 classrooms in Milford, NH, with a unit on birds and pollinators. Students talked about the birds they see and hear, whether they stay or migrate, and made birdfeeders out of egg cartons coated with bird seed. They also used egg cartons for planters and made cardinals out of paper. While planting seeds, they talked about why plants are important.

The council worked with Leslie Brigagliano, the elementary curriculum and Title I coordinator for the Milford School District, and Principal Timothy O'Connell to combine their curriculum on living things with the Girl Scout Daisy programming on ecology.

In Girl Scouts, girls take a hands-on approach to complement what they are learning in the classroom every day, giving them a safe space to practice STEM and life skills, becoming entrepreneurs, and exploring the outdoors. Research shows Girl Scouts are more likely to earn excellent grades, demonstrate higher academic aspirations, show a higher interest and involvement in their community, and have a stronger sense of self. As active members of their community and school, girls will be better prepared for life's challenges. Participation in Girl Scouts is directly correlated with student success within the classroom. Teacher support encourages parents to join the movement of Girl Scouts for the many benefits for their child.

Based upon criteria set by the U.S. Department of Education, there is promising evidence that Girl Scout programs improve outcomes for girls. Studies show that Girl Scout programs can help girls improve their academic skills and behavior and develop a strong sense of self, positive values, and healthy relationships. The Girl



Learning about birds, their feeding habits, and how they use nests included a craft where Girl Scouts made nests during outreach programming, including at camp. Students at 15 classrooms in Milford participated in the same activities as our council ran a classroom “takeover” at the end of the school year last spring. (GSGWM photo)

Scout Research Institute has found that Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to develop strong leadership outcomes, earn “excellent” grades, expect to graduate college, and to feel hopeful about their future.

The kindergarten classroom takeover is an effort by the Girl Scout council to give students a taste of what Girl Scouting is all about at the kindergarten level and share opportunities for them to join in their communities. The boys in the classroom

takeover enjoyed the experience as well.

“The kids had a great time learning about plants hands-on with a gardening activity,” said Malory Supan, membership growth specialist with the council. “It’s so enriching to see students being able to apply their curriculum outside their normal classes.”

“I would definitely like to continue this partnership into next year with our kindergartners as well as our first-grade students,” said Brigagliano. ■



Girl Scouts of all ages benefit from the skills they learn, while making friendships that last a lifetime. (Alan Macrae photo for GSGWM)

## Making sure every girl can be a Girl Scout

Ensuring that every girl has the chance to participate in Girl Scouts is important to our mission. To do so, we are making partnerships within our communities for after-school programs to provide Girl Scouting to everyone, no matter their economic status.

Catherine Deiley is outreach lead for Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, and she works diligently to bring our programming to girls who may never have heard of Girl Scouts or whose families believed Girl Scouting is beyond their ability to provide.

“We provide our programs free, or almost so,” she said. “We provide uniforms, summer camp for a day if not a week. We rarely meet the parents, so troop meetings are a little different because of that. We have lots of girls from immigrant families, non-English-speaking families.”

This past summer, Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains ensured that these Girl Scouts had the opportunity to experience summer camp. Girls and their families were invited to spend a week or day at Camp Kettleford or Barton Campette, and received almost 30 registrations. Over the past three years, these troops have been excited about a STEM lesson in engineering through building structures

from marshmallows and toothpicks, and gained business and life skills in the Girl Scout Cookie program.

Funding for summer camp was provided by VF Foundation through GSUSA and other generous donors.

Typically, these Girl Scouts meet after school in partnership with programs like 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a federally funded program, and with the coordinator at a school. Boys will be engaged in different activities while the Girl Scout troop meets. There are outreach troops currently in Manchester, Nashua, Concord, and Laconia, NH, and in Brighton and Rutland, VT. Participants are mostly in grades K-5, though there is a troop of girls in grades 6-8 at Rundlett Middle School in Concord, NH.

Deiley said that while there can be language barriers, comprehension is pretty strong and children are able to fully participate. Communicating with parents from places like Sudan, Ethiopia, and even Russia can be the challenge.

“At Beaver Meadow two years ago, I had a girl transfer from Russia two weeks after the Ukraine invasion,” she said. “She told me ‘This is the greatest thing ever.’ She loved origami and painted rocks. She

was learning so much English so quickly. She was so proud to show me what she learned. She really came out of her shell.”

Angiemarie Hart, who leads two troops in Brighton, VT, echos the difference she has seen the program make.

“We have two older girls who have requested to come and help the Daisy girls. They are so kind and responsible. The girl-led philosophy guides our meetings with girls voting and sharing their voice.”

Janet Bhagat is also on the outreach team, leading troops in the elementary schools in Nashua, Concord, and Laconia, NH.

“Most of the girls in my troops would not be able to experience Girl Scouts without this program,” she said. “The schools pass out flyers to the families and have the girls sign up as part of their after-school programs. The girls are very excited to come, and I have had site coordinators tell me that this time makes them feel special and valued. Sometime a girl struggles to learn a new craft or to move out of their comfort zone to perform a skit – and then I am privileged to see that magical moment when they get it! I have worked with some of these girls for several years and it’s so rewarding to lead these girls and to see them grow.” ■

## Julie Robinson - an educator with Girl Scout cred

Julie Robinson is living proof that Girl Scouts can provide the foundation for girls in STEM fields, giving them the confidence to try new things, aspire to reach their goals, and widen their horizons.

Robinson is a professor and department chair at River Valley Community College in Claremont, NH, where she teaches biological science, particularly anatomy and physiology. She is a Silver Award Girl Scout who has taken the many life lessons from her Girl Scout years and applied them to her adult career.

“I actually have a sticker on the other side of my laptop that says ‘STEMinist,’” she said. “I am a supporter and encourager of girls and women that want to go into any STEM field. My mom is a software engineer. She went to college when I went to college. But she was told in parochial school that girls don’t do STEM fields. Girls do teaching and nursing and maybe staying at home or being a secretary, but girls don’t do science and math. It’s just not done. So my mom broke that barrier, 20 years later. She encouraged it a lot in me. Strangely, I still hear that STEM fields are for men. In this day and age. I just don’t understand why that is.”

In her role as a professor, Robinson tries to make sure her students get more than just the plain facts.

“I know my students aren’t going to remember every aspect of the cell biology that I’ve taught them,” she said, “but if they learn to be more resilient, to believe in themselves more, to build confidence even from the really small gains that they make across a semester, and hopefully they’ll remember that the pathway of blood through the heart as well, then I think that’s part of my mission as a teacher. To use my subject matter not only to teach them content they need to know for their future career, but life skills as well.”

Teaching others was a natural part of her Girl Scout experience, as she often worked with younger Girl Scouts as she progressed from Brownies to Senior level.



Julie Robinson (Coutesy photo)

“I found a lot of what I had done, and much of this started early in Girl Scouting, was teaching other people and mentoring other people and helping other people do things that made them happy or reach their own goals, which gives me an immense amount of satisfaction,” she said.

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***“Asking questions is how we learn.”***

*-Julie Robinson*

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She also learned how important it is to simply try new things as a Girl Scout.

“I’m from Rhode Island, so New Hampshire seemed like it was a whole other world,” she said. “But I went skiing with my Girl Scouting troop, I did horseback riding, I did camping.... But I learned things in Girl Scouting. Like, I remember making venison stew. And thought, ‘This is magical!’ I didn’t even know that people ate deer - that you could

do that, that you could hunt them yourself to sustain families.”

Thinking back over the years, Robinson said Girl Scouts showed her that you can try things, make a mistake, build on that, and become better.

“I got to do a lot of things I wouldn’t even know to do,” she said. “I didn’t know that people went out in the woods and camped. And went to the bathroom in stinky latrines. I still remember the smell of the latrine! It was the first time I’d ever smelled anything like that. I just didn’t know people did that! And I thought only the richest of the rich could go skiing or horseback riding. And I think one of the biggest things that Girl Scouting did for me was to see that there is more in the world beyond this little place that you live in. If you don’t know that there’s more that you can aspire to, how do you ever know to aspire to it?”

The courage and confidence she gained led to the desire to travel, so she attended graduate school in the South, and then lived for several years in England before returning to the U.S.

Her advice to girls and anyone trying to progress: Ask questions!

“Somehow I think I had this notion when I went to college that only the dumb people ask questions,” she said, “but I learned very quickly that people who were confident in what they DID know were confident about asking questions and being (maybe) vulnerable to say there are some things I don’t know. And I think that’s perfectly OK. Asking questions is how we learn. In the sciences we’re all about ask questions, learn more. Do more, do better.”

This dog and cat mom and former chiropractor loves teaching and is passionate about education. She has written two lab manuals that have been adopted by 14 colleges in 11 states that are free or low cost for students to use as she strives to provide equity for all those taking her courses. ■

# Donations provide outdoor experiences for all

The following donors played a critical role in providing opportunities for many girls to move out of their comfort zones, seek challenges and develop positive attitudes about themselves and the world around them. They provided funds for our 2023

camperships and girl assistance between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023.

The value of an outdoor experience in a girl's life is beyond measure. Thanks to their support, we are building girls of

courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

*Donors of \$100 or more are listed. We make every effort to acknowledge our donors appropriately. If we have made an error, please accept our apologies and contact Customer Care.*

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Crafts at Camp Twin Hills  
(GSGWM photo)



Paddling at Camp Farnsworth  
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Card tricks at Camp Seawood  
(GSGWM photo)



Smiles at Camp Kettleford  
(GSGWM photo)



Parachute play at Camp Kettleford  
(GSGWM photo)



Waterfront chat at Camp Farnsworth  
(GSGWM photo)

# Mental health is crucial to academic success

Mental health is at the forefront of our educational goals

It has become clear that mental health must be addressed in our society. Girl Scouts are on board with this effort, and have new mental wellness patch programs to assist girls in grades 4-12.

Studies show that girls are disproportionately affected by the increasing mental health crisis in America and new National Alliance on Mental Illness data shows nearly 90% of parents are now prioritizing their child's mental health over academic achievement, yet teachers are overwhelmed, and therapists have patient wait lists up to a year long. The Girl Scouts Mental Wellness Initiative aims to equip our youth and their caregivers with the tools needed to support their own mental wellness and proactively practice self-care.

In the past three years, in response to the national mental health crisis, Girl Scouts has released mental wellness programming and training, including:



Girls Speak Out About Mental Health Report (2020), Resilient. Ready. Strong. (2021), and started offering training for adult volunteers in Mental Wellness 101 & Delivering Inclusive Programs and Youth Mental Health First Aid (2022) to support leaders identifying potential issues, helping foster skills and behaviors that lead to better well-being, and preparing older Girl Scouts with the tools to help friends and classmates in appropriate

ways.

Now, in 2023, we are expanding our mental wellness program with the introduction of three mental wellness patches made possible by HCA Healthcare Foundation and developed in partnership with NAMI: Knowing My Emotions, Finding My Voice, and Showing Up For Me and You mental wellness patches designed for girls from grades 4 through 12 (Juniors to Ambassadors). These patch programs include a council playbook, adult facilitator guides, meeting aids, parent/caregiver resources, teaser activities, and marketing tools to equip council staff and troop leaders to support youth mental wellness.

Girl Scouts of the USA hopes to have 30,000 Girl Scouts participate in the new patch programs by September 2024 and give troop leaders the information they have asked for to help with mental health. These programs give girls the skills they need to take charge of their self-care as well as show up for others in need. ■

## Gold Award Girl Scouts address mental health

Having lived through years of pandemic shut-down, Zoom classes, and isolation from their friends during a time when social connections and learning is critical to their development, two Gold Award Girl Scouts in our council decided to take action to help their peers who are struggling with mental health.

Both Acadia Gelineau and Elise Towle created patch programs for Girl Scouts to earn, along with programs being used in their schools.

Towle, 18, of Fairfax, VT, designed a program called Mental Health in Adolescents, which included a patch program called Mental Health Matters. Having experienced depression starting in middle school and finding therapy to be beneficial, Towle realized the stigma of getting help can start even at a young age. Her project is meant to help young



Elise Towle  
(Courtesy photo)



Acadia Gelineau  
(Courtesy photo)



people understand what concepts like depression, anxiety, and body dysmorphia are and how to get help for them. She created a slide presentation

that is now being incorporated into the health programming at BFA Fairfax Middle School and George Middle School in Vermont.

Gelineau, 18, of Nashua, NH, created a program called Mighty Minds and wrote a book designed to help young children recognize what stress feels like and how to deal with it. She worked with school counselors, school psychologists, and other professionals in the field to outline a series of age-appropriate steps that Girl Scouts from kindergarten through 12th grade can follow. They learn what stress, worry, and anxiety feel like, followed by the chance to actively address their worries by creating a coping skills toolbox and sensory toys like fidget toys.

Both of these young women have achieved the pinnacle of the Girl Scout leadership experience with their Gold Award work. ■