

Girl Scout summer camp reimagined

Families enjoyed camp in person, girls participated virtually during pandemic

This summer has challenged our very definition of camp. When it became apparent in May that we would not be able to open our physical camps, not be able to share a physical space, not be able to open our Adirondacks and nature centers and archery ranges, not even for some girls, we had to pause and then deepen our conversation around what camp is - why we have summer camp.

“What is camp?” we asked. A place for girls to try new things. A place to explore independence. A location, a group of tents, a fire circle, a lake, sunshine, the smell of pine trees. A feeling of freedom, of possibility. “But it is deeper than that,” we said. “What is camp”? It is all the ways that camp is delivered and all the girls who have their own personal experiences at



A dad and his daughter explore the life in Lake Abenaki at Camp Farnsworth as part of their family camping adventure. (GSGWM photo)

camp. “Go deeper still. What IS camp?” Camp is what girls take with them that keeps them warm over the winter, gives them memories for the year, and stays in their hearts forever. And at the very core of everything - like the very definition of Girl Scouting is leadership - we found that the definition of camp is connection.

Camp is connection to each other, connection to a song that speaks to your soul, connection to a moment, a week when you were absolutely centered in time and space, and camp is connection to every part of yourself. Camp could still provide what girls were seeking at a time when they were with their families, but separate from the opportunity to develop their independence, peer relationships, and friendships with each other. Connection provided us a definition and a framework to move forward with summer camp 2020.

We knew we had the right definition when we shared the idea of connection with the seasonal summer camp staff. Each summer about half the counselors and most of the Camp Directors return to their beloved camps. This year, their anxious faces revealed their fears (through Zoom, of course) - would there be camp? And as we defined the purpose of camp as connection, we watched each of them brighten, saw them begin to see camp based on connection, and heard them start generating ideas for an online camp experience.

Their ideas came quickly - unit time would be about connecting with girls their own Girl Scout level. Camper choice would be connecting girls with a similar interest in an activity. Activity



Lily Casciotti of Hudson, NH, enjoys a "twinkle fire" as she camps in a blanket fort at home. (Courtesy Photo)

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time would be about connection to a learning experience: flag time - connecting through the Girl Scout Promise and Law; badge time - connecting to the broader Girl Scout community; and connection to their counselors and camp volunteers - the ones campers idolize, who are role models in leadership and the Girl Scout Law. Virtual camp became a real camp experience, one girls asked for more of, invited their friends to, and shared with their families. And during summer, we watched counselors connect girls through a conversation about favorite vegetables, then compete in a virtual vegetable battle, chanting in their vegetable teams “Brocco-o-li! Brocco-o-li!”, “Tom-a-toes! Tom-a-toes!” and “Carr-ots! Carr-ots!” Can you imagine the stories told at the first family dinner at home that included carrots after the great virtual vegetable battle?

It was one of our seasonal staff who first suggested family programs. “Let’s give our Girl Scouts a way to connect back to

us, to our camps in person,” they said. It took all of us to figure out how to meet the universal guidelines of two states, to get permits, to convert bathrooms and shower spaces for family use. And at family events we watched the families connect to each other, and connect to the camp property because of their Girl Scout.

This summer could have been heartbreaking. But instead, this summer has given our Girl Scouts a time and a place to connect with their families in outdoor places they love. A time each day to connect with other girls in a shared virtual space. A space for our seasonal staff to learn, connect to each other, and shine. A way to connect everyone who supports Girl Scout camp to each other, and make camp happen this summer in a meaningful way. Our challenge now is to take the connections we’ve built and lessons we’ve learned and continue them as we move forward into the next Girl Scout year.



Krystal Timinsky of Londonderry, NH, enjoys family kayaking with her children, Eden and Joshua, at a family camping evening at Camp Kettleford. (GSGWM photo)

Getting girls outdoors is essential



Dear friends,

All of us have experienced massive change, loss, and significant challenges over the course of this past year. We have also witnessed resiliency, creativity and a growing need to connect with our families and others. As you will read throughout this issue, Girl Scouts

of the Green and White Mountains has been busy, not just reacting to all the world has thrown at us and our girls, but creating new spaces and opportunities for our girls and adults to thrive.

This issue focuses on the outdoors – one of our four program pillars. We know that spending time in the outdoors is essential to our well-being. I'm so proud of our older girls, like Chloe, who focus on our environment and the outdoors in their Take Action Projects. I'm proud of the amazing commitment of staff, parents, and our

counselors in training and program aides, as they re-imagined camp to provide at home opportunities for girls to make new friends, try new things, and experience the magic and connections you find at camp.

You, and all of our donors and volunteers, are instrumental to our success. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and commitment to Girl Scouting and the promise of our Movement. Together, we will continue to create amazing new opportunities for girls, rooted in tradition but focused on their future.

With grateful appreciation,

Patricia K. Mellor
Chief Executive Officer
Gold Award Girl Scout

GSUSA introduces 24 new badges



Girl Scouts of the USA released 24 new badges this summer, designed to help girls practice ambitious leadership in the crucial areas of automotive engineering, STEM career exploration, entrepreneurship, and civics, many of which remain male-dominated. In a year of

unprecedented global change, our country's need for strong, broad-minded, and decisive leadership has never been greater. Through new and existing programming, Girl Scouts equips the next generation of female change-makers with the breadth of knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to take charge and do good for the world, both now and in the future.

The new Girl Scout badges include:

- Entrepreneurship (grades K-12)**
- STEM Career Exploration (grades 2-8)**
- Automotive Engineering (grades K-5)**
- Civics (grades K-12)**

For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/gsgwmbadges>.

Gold Award Girl Scout promotes value of nature

Chloe Gross believes that if any generation is motivated to see that climate change and biodiversity issues are addressed this Earth Day and all year round, it will be the youngest among us. This Deerfield, NH, 18-year-old has earned the Girl Scout Gold Award – the highest honor available to a Girl Scout in grades 9-12 – by creating a program that anyone can use to get kids outdoors, spark an interest in nature, and involve experts in teaching them about the value of a healthy environment.

Her project, EcoKids Environmental Program, is designed to be used as a six-hour day camp or summer camp plan, or used in pieces as an after-school program for children in grades 4-6. Available on her website, ecokidsnational.org, activities can be mixed and matched or substituted for visits from experts. While she tested the plan by running a weeklong program through Deerfield Parks and Recreation, she points out that the program can be used in the city, suburbs, woods, deserts, or plains – anywhere.

“Adaptability is the main goal of EcoKids,” she wrote in the program introduction, “so that every child has



Chloe Gross of Deerfield earns the Girl Scout Gold Award for project (Courtesy photo)



Chloe Gross, far right, stands with a group of children who hiked to the top of Mount Kearsarge in July 2019 as part of her program to interest kids in nature and preserving our environment. She earned the Girl Scout Gold Award for her work, which resulted in a program people everywhere can use. (Courtesy photo)

the opportunity to connect to the natural world and create a lifelong stewardship to protect our Earth.”

Incredibly, Chloe created and ran the program, created a website, and designed a curriculum available as a PDF for all to use while sick first with mononucleosis and then Lyme disease during her junior into senior years at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Dover.

“She’s amazing!” said Ellen O’Donnell, Chloe’s former teacher at Deerfield Community School and Gold Award project advisor. “She took on quite a big task. She wanted to share her love of the outdoors and come up with curriculum.”

Once Chloe conferred with O’Donnell, she took her advisor’s suggestions and ran with them, finding experts on her own and becoming skilled at communicating with adults and organizing a huge number of tasks to create her program. She ran her weeklong program last summer in Deerfield, keeping children in grades 3-5 engaged and active. They hiked

locally, exploring trails in Pawtuckaway State Park with rescue and geology experts, had a wetlands lesson from an environmental teacher from Vermont, talked about water quality and native plants on the Dowst-Cate Trail, went bird watching and did other activities at Bear Brook State Park, and finished the week with hike up Mount Kearsarge in Warner.

Chloe now looks to the future with great confidence. “When I was compiling my report I was thinking of all the things I didn’t even know I learned,” she said. “All these ‘adulthood’ memes! But I can write a professional email! That’s one of those things I didn’t even realize I learned. This is so big! Whatever project that is thrown at me, I’ll be able to handle it. It just hit me, if I could make it through last year, being as sick as I was, and still have it be a raging success – not only for myself but the kids who loved it, and the adults. If I really want it, I can put my mind to it, and it can happen!”

O’Donnell agreed. “She’s going to make a mark on the world!”

Alum Profile: Retha Charette - world traveler

Retha Charette is a blogger, influencer and travel expert focusing on adventure travel from the everyday to the epic – and Girl Scouting is a large part of her love for the outdoors and wanting to share it with others.

Charette, of Arlington, Vermont, is a lifetime member of Girl Scouts who has earned her Silver and Gold Awards, led several Girl Scout troops, and was a camp director in Massachusetts. She credits Girl Scouts with giving her the skills that helped her grow personally and professionally.

“I didn’t know it at the time, but everything I did with my troop and at camp prepared me for life, but if I had to choose one Girl Scout experience it would have to be attending summer camp,” she said. “I learned how to take care of myself without help from my



Retha Charette of Arlington, Vermont, is no stranger to adventure, and takes her Girl Scout skills around the world as a travel expert and blogger. (Courtesy Photo)

“Getting outdoors as a girl helped me to connect with nature and taught me skills that I utilize in my work.”

- Retha Charette

parents, how to live with others, take risks that I wouldn’t take at home (think rock climbing and high ropes courses), and how to be a productive member of a community by cleaning and watching out for people within it. Girl Scouts and Girl Scout Camp are a huge part of who I am today. Without it I would be a very different person. It helped me discover my passion for travel, the outdoors, and working with women and girls.”

Today, Charette is a travel writer and group adventure leader with WHOA Travel, and owner of RoamingNanny.com, a blog that aims “to inspire women to get out there and live their best lives

through travel.” While she has traveled the world, she is also a nanny to “four amazing kids.” She has shared her enthusiasm and skills with Girl Scouts and made amazing memories. She has Girl Scout friends all over the country and frequently attends or zooms into meetings with girls of all ages to share her experiences traveling and being outdoors.

“Getting outdoors as a girl helped me to connect with nature and taught me skills that I utilize in my work,” she said. “During the summer of 2019, I ran a backpacking program for a Girl Scout camp for the Girl Scout Council of Northern California. I taught 12 high school girls all about backpacking and then took them on a seven-day backpacking trip through the Santa Cruz mountains. During the two weeks I was with these girls, they went from knowing next to nothing about backpacking to doing everything themselves. Each day they cooked three meals, hiked 6-10 miles, set up camp, and filtered their water. They left

with more knowledge and confidence.

A few of them said they were going to take their knowledge home and teach it to other Girl Scouts in their communities. Several of them even signed up to come back for summer 2020 (which didn’t end up happening) to do it again. We had some tough days on the trail because of heat, too many mosquitoes, and had to search for water. They all persevered and left the trail with more confidence than they had when they first stepped foot on it. The growth I saw still brings tears to my eyes and fills my heart with joy. I wish every girl could have an experience like this, even if they only do it once.”

She offers this advice to anyone facing a challenge: “No matter how challenging things seem, whatever you’re going through now is going to make you stronger.”

You can find out more about Charette and her adventures at roamingnanny.com or on Instagram @roamingnanny.

Juliette Gordon Low Society continues growth



The Juliette Gordon Low Society met by Zoom recently. (Courtesy photo)

In July, we welcomed seven new members to Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains' chapter of the Juliette Gordon Low Society, Girl Scouts' national planned giving society. In a first for us, we held a special virtual reception for current and prospective society members.

Our honored guests were Dianne Belk, national founding chairperson of the Society and her husband, Lawrence Calder, who are also members of GSGWM's chapter as they have included our council in their estate plans. Dianne shared updates on Girl Scouts' national effort to grow planned giving which has proven to be an important source of support for councils. Today, life income from planned gifts amount to over \$80,000 annually for GSGWM.

Dianne also shared her Girl Scout story with us, describing an early childhood when her family couldn't afford much, including her Girl Scout dues. She started her own business with one chicken, selling eggs to local customers. Dianne worked for her Girl Scout experience and along the way added more chickens, grew her

business, and learned to problem solve and persevere when challenges arose. Dianne attributes her successes to her Girl Scout experience and is committed to ensuring that girls everywhere have the opportunity to become the leaders and innovators the world needs. She does this in a number of ways and one of the most impactful has been her leadership and support of councils across the nation in raising awareness of the Juliette Gordon Low Society.

The Society is named for Girl Scouts' founder, Juliette Low, who made the very first planned gift to Girl Scouts: her home in Savannah, GA was our first national headquarters and still serves as a meeting place for Girl Scouts.

We are so grateful to each member of the Juliette Gordon Low Society who has made a commitment to include GSGWM in their estate plans. At right is a list of our current members (new members are starred).

For information about the Juliette Gordon Low Society and ways to include Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains in your estate planning, please contact advancement@girlscoutsgwm.org.

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- Anonymous donors
- Susan Bates
- Dianne Belk and Lawrence Calder Girl Scout Movement-wide Challenge Planned Gift
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- Karen M. and Bruce A. Pehrson*
- Peggy and John Piette*
- Carolyn Pine
- Danielle Pray
- Stephanie Romero*
- Deborah Rossi
- Frances Rousseau
- Carl Thompson*

* New members

Girl Scouts enjoyed the outdoors this summer

Just two months into the pandemic, after having to hunker down in quarantine, Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains knew girls would be eager to get away from virtual classes and enjoy the outdoors. We wanted to make sure they could do that safely, and created our Get Outdoors More Challenge, which ran through the month of May. GSUSA also ran its own challenge, which will culminate with the Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend September 12 and 13.

Our Outdoors team stepped right up, creating ways for girls to participate in “outdoor” activities even from the safety of their own homes, with a huge checklist of activities like singing a camp song, watching a sunrise, or choosing a Leave No Trace principle and making a poster about it. Of course, girls could also make and eat an outdoor s’more, identify trees, or go fishing, among the many suggestions. They were invited to print out a flag they could color with the challenge logo, have their picture taken doing the activity with the flag, and share it on social media or with us. Every girl who participated in our Get Outdoors More Challenge got a special council patch. Our council also produced and shared videos on Facebook and social media during May, including songs around the campfire, virtual hikes, and more.

The GSUSA challenge offered similar activities on a checklist, and girls all around the country have participated. Daisies through Ambassadors had to check off a certain number of activities to get a patch.

Lorelai Ainsworth, 13, of East Concord, Vermont, was up for the challenge. This Girl Scout Cadette is a Space Camp graduate who has met two astronauts



Lorelai Ainsworth challenged herself to explore hiking trails around Vermont this summer and took on the Get Outdoors More Challenge. (Courtesy Photo)

and touched a piece of the moon.

During the pandemic lockdown she was unable to do her favorite outdoor activities, so as soon as she heard about the Get Outdoors More Challenge, she was in! She immediately made plans to explore new hiking trails in Vermont with her mom every weekend of the summer. “I love having the chance to see lots of cute critters, flowers, and plants on our adventures. Being outside in nature really helps me feel relaxed and calm during these stressful times.”

Alanna Bonneau, 14, is a Cadette from Troop 13946 in Dover, New Hampshire, and she goes by her camp name, Splash. With her mother’s help, she started a Facebook page to connect with her Girl Scout friends when the pandemic began. She is working on a Silver Award project on assistive technology and hoped the experience would be a good way to practice her public speaking skills. After having in-person summer camp at Camp Farnsworth and Camp

Low in Savannah, Georgia, canceled, she participated in GSGWM virtual camp.

“My camp name is Splash because I like water and I kept splashing all my friends and the counselors at camp,” she said. “I am on the Oyster River Otters Swim Team and I swim really fast.” She enjoyed the Get Outdoors More Challenge in May. “I got kind of a late start on it, but it was fun. I haven’t been going outside much since lockdown. It was nice to have a list of things to try. I would love to see the challenge go all summer.”

Getting girls outdoors is one of the four pillars of the Girl Scout Experience. Studies show girls are not spending much time outdoors, which is where many develop new skills and appreciation for nature. We know that girls thrive physically, emotionally, and intellectually when they spend quality time outdoors.

Silver Award Girl Scouts make the outdoors safe from ticks



Silver Award Girl Scouts Ella Stafford, Lily Baumeister, Colleen Clark, and Elise Towle made signs and did educational outreach in their community of Fairfax, VT, on the dangers of ticks and the illnesses they carry. The signs were installed last year, before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. (Courtesy photo)

A hunter herself, Girl Scout Cadette Ella Stafford knew first-hand what a problem ticks can be for hunters in the woods. She joined with troopmates Lily Baumeister, Elise Towle, and Colleen Clark to educate their community in Fairfax, Vermont, and make the outdoors safer. They have been recognized as Silver Award Girl Scouts for their effort to improve their community.

The girls made presentations at the Fairfax town offices and library, created signs to warn of dangers, and created a website to inform their community. All four are now actively working toward their Gold Awards.

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The COVID-19 virus required us to reimagine how we offered our summer camp and outdoor programs this year. Fewer girls attended camp in person this year and therefore fewer camperships were awarded. Remaining funds will be held until next year when we anticipate holding camp in person and that many more families may require additional assistance as a result of changing circumstances.