

Pandemic was a lesson in resiliency

Girl Scouts support mental health, keep girls involved in their communities

Never before has the turn of a new year been met with such nervous and cautious optimism. We've closed the door on 2020 with a sigh of relief, juxtaposed with simultaneous feelings of hope, fear, restlessness, and expectation. As is the practice across the world, we at Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains can look back on 2020 not just as a year of frustrated plans, organizational uncertainty, and unexpected change, but also as one of creative and meaningful community action. We are immensely proud of how all our membership - alumnae, girls, and volunteers - met an unprecedented year with positive action, a refusal to back down in the face of a global pandemic, and a creative approach to ensuring that the heart of Girl Scouting's commitment to making the world a better place never wavered through a year many have de-



Girl Scouts Chloe and Colleen sit among the 128 backpacks they collected and filled with school supplies to donate to students in the Stratham, NH, area. (Courtesy photo)

scribed as the worst in recent history.

While inspiring and a cause for celebration, it is also no surprise that Girl Scouts' commitment to community service remained steadfast throughout 2020. In 1912 Girl Scouts was founded - before women won the right to vote - as an equal and safe space for girls to not only develop leadership skills for themselves, but to become community change-makers. Yesterday's Girl Scouts were confronting some of the most pressing issues that Americans are still grappling with today - a global pandemic, civil rights, and gender equality.

ty gardens, fed the sick, and earned the "Invalid Cook" badge. Girl Scouts didn't slow down in the 1930s when the country was grappling with the economic devastation of the Depression. Girl Scouts mobilized across the country by helping families deal with the harsh realities of unemployment and poverty. As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 1960s, Girl Scouts launched "Action 70," a nationwide effort to overcome prejudice and build better relationships among persons of all ages, religions, and races. This history is long and rich, with Girl Scouts garnering for themselves a powerful national reputation



Girl Scouts enjoyed going on a scavenger hunt at our Mall of New Hampshire location. (Courtesy Photo)

In 1918 during the Spanish flu pandemic, Girl Scouts began communi-

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To learn more, contact the Advancement office by emailing advancement@girlscoutsgwm.org or calling 888-474-9686.

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as an organization those in need could count on for real and tangible help.

This legacy continues in strength today and we don't have to look far to see it – New Hampshire and Vermont's Girl Scouts met the challenges of 2020 with a commitment to practical, hands-on community service that has inspired, uplifted, and made a measurable difference to those who need it most.

Just this year, our organization and the Girl Scouts we serve in our own backyard have:

- Sewed and distributed hundreds, if not thousands, of masks, along with dozens of care packages, face shields, ear savers, and hand sanitizer.
- Donated more than 81,000 packages of cookies, four times what was donated last year, to those working on the frontlines of the pandemic. Expanding the Operation Cookie program to include these local and "Hometown Heroes," Girl Scouts delivered cookies to hospitals, medical departments, Red Cross locations, military-related organizations like the National Guard, the Veterans Administration, Pease Greeters, veterans homes, police departments, fire departments, charitable organizations, food pantries, and many others.
- Launched Girl Scouts at Home, which provides engaging, family-friendly activities that girls can complete safely at home or outside while social distancing with either no supplies or simple items that you might already have around the house.
- Exploded the number and diversity of virtual programming on offer so that girls can continue developing leadership skills through hands-on, team-

based, and cooperative experiences. Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is among the country's top Girl Scout councils for producing an unprecedented number of virtual programs that girls from across the country continue to register for.

- Reinforced our commitment to getting girls outdoors, particularly in the midst of a pandemic where screen time has increased to an alarming rate while at the same time studies continue to suggest that the power of outdoor experiences are critical for children's overall well-being. In light of this, we are using the popularity of our virtual programs to encourage outdoor exploration through activities and challenges that girls can do even in their own backyards.
- Increased avenues for our adult alums to connect, serve, and avoid isolation during the pandemic through online programs such as a regular book club meeting and live Facebook events covering topics such as cheese-making.
- Been recognized at the national level for programs girls themselves created – like a progressive hiking program for kids under 13, and the creation and deployment of a mentoring curriculum designed to partner positive high school mentors with middle school-age girls.

And the achievements go on and on.

Communities across New Hampshire and Vermont can be absolutely sure that Girl Scouts will continue to do what they have been doing for over 109 years: providing girls with meaningful programs to make them tomorrow's leaders while at the same time offering a lending hand to those around us who need it most.

Girl Scouting focuses on keeping girls connected



Dear friends,

In today's world, much has been said about the negative impact of the pandemic on our youth. Their world has been upended with in-school learning paused or cancelled, and a new world of Zoom classes filling their days. Throughout these changes, Girl Scouts of the Green Mountains has

been focused on creating and maintaining strong, creative programs to keep girls connected and caring.

This issue of The Trailblazer highlights the efforts of our members to improve the lives around them through community service, their Gold Award project, or their alumni careers. Paraphrasing the words of alum Amity Ziegler (page 4), girls and women have come together and have exceeded their own expectations by thinking differently and innovatively.

It remains imperative that we maintain singular focus on our mission, to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make our world a better place. Our volunteers are the key to supporting and mentoring girls, through troop and

family activities. We know how important it is to support our volunteers and we cannot thank them enough for sharing their time and talents through a difficult time.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to supporting our girls as they learn essential business skills in the new world of digital cookie sales and social distancing. Knowing the magic, and importance, of summer camp, our plans are well underway for the upcoming day and resident camp season. Careful planning has gone in to ensure girl and staff safety at all of our properties. And, virtual programming has continued to be expanded, though we are beginning to plan and offer more in person programs in the out of doors.

On February 22nd, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the globe will celebrate World Thinking Day. Please join us in Standing Together for Peace. Your support and partnership enables our girls to find their voice and continue their advocacy. I cannot thank you enough for all that you do.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Patricia K. Mellor

Girl Scout alums took action during difficult times



When the pandemic started, the Alumnae Advisory Board immediately took action to serve the needs of alums and the girls of the Green and White Mountains. We knew the need would be great. Geographical barriers were diminished as alums took to the digital world! They leaped into action creating

digital events such as an ongoing book club, shared skills from cheese-making to canoe safety, and gave members the opportunity to socialize virtually while sharing the challenges of isolation. Friendships have grown and relationships deepened.

The Alumnae Association also looked for ways to support girls during this pandemic. The council Facebook page became a library of presentations on vocations and avocations, ready to inspire troops across the council. The presentations included training guide dogs, Scottish drumming, and being an air traffic controller! Alumnae have volunteered to present to troops working on badges. And now the council's new

volunteer management platform is in operation, making this a more streamlined process.

Despite the pandemic, the Alumnae Association has been growing by leaps and bounds. Since its inception in September of 2017, the association has grown to 768 members, including the legacy Green Hat members. It is a diverse group. Most members reside in New Hampshire and Vermont, but a few are sprinkled across the country and globe. It is composed of mostly women – and a few men. It also welcomes alums from other councils who now live in this one. The common denominator is a connection to Girl Scouting through membership or volunteerism.

The Alumnae Advisory Board, leadership for the association, has grown to eight members with three committees. Various channels of communication will keep you informed: monthly e-newsletters, the printed Trailblazer, and a Facebook group. There are so many opportunities to stay connected – join your sisters now at girlscoutsgwm.org/alumnae.

Alum Amity Ziegler is part of vaccine effort

Amity Ziegler is changing the world for the better in several ways – she leads a troop of Girl Scout Juniors in Derry, New Hampshire, and is a chemist currently working as an Operational Excellence Lead for Pfizer, the first company to have a COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use. Prior to May of this year, she worked for 15 years as a chemist and led analytical chemistry laboratories.

Inspiring a love of STEM and the outdoors is important to this Girl Scout alum.

“One of my favorite parts of being a Girl Scout troop leader is exposing girls to different areas of STEM,” she said, noting that her love of math and science led her to a career in chemistry, but it wasn't until she was almost finished with college that she learned about engineering. “When I learned that there was something called chemical engineering, I realized that I would have loved to have become a chemical engineer and that I missed an opportunity. I believe that it's so important for girls



Amity Ziegler. (Courtesy photo)

to learn about all areas of STEM and to experience them first hand. When you can experience science and engineering, you learn that it doesn't need to be intimidating and that we, as girls and women, are capable of more than we sometimes believe.”

As a troop leader in her hometown of Derry, she has been guiding 14 Girl Scout Juniors who love to learn outdoor skills, helping senior citizens in our community, and going on field trips as a troop. Their favorite activity so far this year has been earning the horseback riding badge.

“Thanks to one of my co-leaders, Bethany Layne,” she said, “we try to make sure our troop is very active in our community. Our troop especially enjoys partnering with the Aurora Senior Living in Derry, where in previous years we built gingerbread houses, sang carols, and gave out warm socks during Reverse Trick-or-Treating. This year, since we're unable to visit our senior friends, we have made videos for the seniors at Aurora to enjoy. We

also used our Practice with Purpose badge work as an opportunity to give back. We were practicing jump rope and the girls decided that the number of jumps we were able to improve as a troop would be the number of sandwiches we'd made to donate to a local food kitchen. We ended up making 100 sandwiches to donate! It was such a fun meeting with the girls making and packaging 100 sandwiches.”

Ziegler is a three-year adult Girl Scout volunteer, and spent five years as a girl at Girl Scouts of Plymouth Bay Girl Scout Council in Massachusetts. Her favorite memory of that time was of camping with her troop.

Girl Scouting taught Ziegler a love of the outdoors, life skills, inclusion, and what it means to work as a team. She notes that the past year, given the pandemic, has tested us all.

“This has been a difficult year for so many,” she said. “In February 2020, we never would have thought we would have seen the emotional, mental, and physical accomplishments of the health care, front line, and essential workers that we have seen during the pandemic of the past year. I never would have expected that Pfizer would develop a vaccine that could be given to patients in under a year's time. What I have learned is that when it's especially important, people come together and exceed their own expectations for what they can accomplish. There are so many women at Pfizer who have been a part of bringing a breakthrough vaccine to the world. I have learned that we can think differently and be innovative. We can take risks. We can be leaders. We can reach for our goals and ‘go-get’ them. When we use these skills, we can accomplish amazing things.”



Ziegler helps her Girl Scouts learn to build a campfire. (Courtesy photo)

Gold Award Girl Scout Emily Galeva fights mental health stigma and pandemic stress

High school can be challenging in the best of times, but the pandemic has contributed to even more difficulties for students already at risk for mental health issues. Gold Award Girl Scout Emily Galeva has focused on making people aware of mental health issues – work that she continued

Galeva spent more than 80 hours on her Gold Award project, “Breaking the Stigma of Mental Health in High Schools,” addressing a wide variety of audiences. She took her message to high schools in New Hampshire, and represented New Hampshire students at multiple state events and programs, including the Youth Summit in Concord, 99 Faces at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, No Safe Vape on Facebook Live; the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO), and more. She contributed valuable points of view from an adolescent perspective to multiple New Hampshire and Vermont high school mental health cases and at other public programs and events.

In May, Galeva participated in the third of a series of webinars allowing high



Emily Galeva took part in the Youth Summit in Concord in April 2019, providing the perspective of a high school student to those interested in mental health issues. (Courtesy photo)

schoolers to talk about mental health issues they were experiencing during the pandemic. Participating with her were former New Hampshire Supreme Court Chief Justice John Broderick, now a senior director of Public Affairs at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, and New Hampshire high school student Aron Silvestre of Goffstown. In that webinar, Galeva said the three things she’s found most difficult are staying positive and motivated, getting used to being away from her friends, and finding things to do. The panel considered a variety of solutions, including trying a new activity or hobby, getting outdoors, and learning more about and from their parents.

At the Youth Summit, Galeva was invited to participate as a facilitator in several groups of more than 30 high school students on different topics and was interviewed by TV, radio and newspaper reporters.

She was also able to present her perspective on real-life mental health cases through the ECHO project.

“We did this online mental health awareness and help - kind of like a hotline,” she said. “Schools from all over the state, including North Conway where I used to live, presented individual cases of students who needed help.”

A different topic was presented each week, such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. As they presented real-life cases anonymously, people on the panel would suggest help.

Galeva currently serves as a girl representative on the Board of Directors for Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

She is continuing to take college classes at Raritan Valley Community College through its Bridge to College Program, and spent the summer visiting prospective colleges. She has already received acceptance letters from seven colleges, making the decision to choose one difficult. Travel is a high priority, too, once the pandemic fades.



Emily Galeva (Courtesy Photo)

Girls and families connect in the outdoors

Sometimes, all you need is a little Vitamin N – N for Nature. Girl Scouts know that being outdoors is one of the best ways to ensure the mental health of girls, along with getting them to try new things and be physically active. Keeping girls connected to each other and to Girl Scouting has been a priority through the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for summer camp last year and as we head into the next.

Girl Scouts have faced many adversities in the past, and we are determined to provide our program safely to girls despite the pandemic. We are planning for a return to the more traditional camp experience this summer, while incorporating all we've learned about virtual activities.

Outdoor winter programs like Sledding, Snow Forts and Songs, or Winterpalooza are still taking place, as is our winter camping series in February and the backpacking program planned for this spring. We offer winter naturalist programs for birding and vernal pools – and don't forget snowshoeing! Adult outdoor training opportunities like Basic Outdoor Living Skills and our Advanced Outdoor Living Skills/canoe trip took place this fall, as well as the Wilderness First Aid class. Now we are looking forward to the AOLS/winter camping training in February.

We have learned many lessons about how to keep girls involved and connected.

"COVID-19 required that girls and families disconnect from school, in-person activities, and even family members," said Karyn Martin, Assistant Director of



Girl Scout Cadette Troop 10857 went for a paddling adventure early this past fall down the Connecticut River. (Courtesy photo)

Facilities and Outdoor Program for the council. "GSGWM outdoor activities gave opportunities for families to connect with each other in the outdoors; for girls to reconnect with the outdoor spaces they love - summer camps - and reconnect in person or online with their summer camp counselors and camp friends. Every activity, online or in person, was designed to help girls and families reconnect in meaningful and powerful ways."

Along with a variety of virtual activities begun during the pandemic, we instituted our first Girl Scouts Get Outdoors More Challenge – a type of scavenger hunt asking girls of all ages to check activities off a list such as sleeping in a tent (whether indoors or outdoors), building a campfire (whether real or out of LEGOs or other items), or looking for certain items outside, while earning

points for challenges completed. This was so popular we did more challenges for fall and winter.

We also found that families enjoyed camping on our properties – a great way for girls to try out camp within the safety and familiarity of their families. This summer, we are hopeful that girls can come together in safe ways to once again enjoy the traditional summer camp experience.

The CDC states that activities held outdoors are safer than indoors, where people can maintain social distance and fresh air is available. Plus outdoor activities provide multiple physical and mental health benefits, said Martin. While winter presents some difficulties, Girl Scouts are leading the way by training adults and providing awesome outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Girl Scout Research Institute, which Martin contributed to, found that being outdoors is beneficial in the following ways:

- Exposure to green spaces restores people's attention and improves cognitive functioning.
- Spending time outdoors reduces people's cortisol, a stress-inducing

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WE'RE HIRING!

GSGSWM is currently hiring summer camp staff for all our summer camps!

For more information, visit girlscoutsgwm.org/camp.



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hormone, and lowers blood pressure.

- Learning new skills in nature increases people's self-confidence.
- Outdoor recreational experiences in early childhood strongly and positively influence people's environmental attitudes, values, and behaviors, with experiences like hiking and camping cultivating a sense of responsibility for nature.

"For those of us on site and delivering programs," said Martin, "we got to see 8-year-old Girl Scouts who had been campers last summer return with their families and lead them around camp, take the lead in family talent campfire nights, and take on a new role in their family. We saw families spending time together around a campfire, toasting hot dogs and marshmallows and sharing stories together. This summer let families and girls reconnect."

She found that the pandemic taught us to make sure that we create opportunities for every girl and every family.

Registration has also been streamlined and the process for applying for financial aid simplified.

With the advent of vaccines for the COVID-19 virus, hope is high that traditional summer camp as well as family camping will provide girls with the many benefits of life in the outdoors this summer, helping them gain new skills and confidence, maintaining mental health, and giving them a sense of sisterhood and belonging. Girl Scout camp is open to any girl in grades K-12, who wants to attend and who becomes a Girl Scout member.

For more information and to register for camp, visit girlscoutsgwm.org/camp.

Virtual Programs Donors

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is grateful to the people listed here, who have supported our effort to make virtual programming available to all girls across New Hampshire and Vermont. These offerings were also popular among Girl Scouts across the United States, as our council led the way in online programs - including virtual troop, badge, and Journey programs, and keeping girls engaged through social media like Facebook Live programs.

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Girl Scouts stay engaged through tough times

Winooski troops stay safe while improving their community

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread through our communities, Girl Scouts had to adjust to the need for keeping everyone safe. At first, many troops simply could not meet, then shifted to either meeting virtually or finding outdoor activities where they could maintain safe distance.

In Winooski, Vermont, Amy Lothrop's troops were prepared to stay safe and active while following pandemic restrictions. Her troops shifted to a focus on community service and outdoor activities for the fall. Many of the girls also worked toward their Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards, the highest honors a Girl Scout can earn.

One of their first efforts was Pinwheels for Peace. The girls placed 300 pinwheels at Rotary Park in Winooski, spinning wildly to catch the attention of passersby.

"We wanted to acknowledge International Day of Peace (September 21 each year) by installing pinwheels in Rotary Park as a way to connect with others seeking peace," said Lothrop. "It was also an impactful but easy community service project to execute during COVID-19's social distancing requirements. It brought us all together as a troop. As a multi-ethnic troop, we are always taking steps to build a more just and equitable world."

They continued their Girl Scout experience with community service projects. They went apple picking at Chapin Orchard and picked 300 pounds of apples, which they donated to Feeding Chittenden, the largest direct service emergency food provider in Vermont. They took on a 2-mile hike in the Casavant Natural Area and discussed land



Girl Scouts planted 300 pinwheels in Rotary Park in Winooski earlier this past fall to promote the peace and joy found in childhood as part of the Pinwheels for Peace project. (Courtesy photo)

stewardship and conservation even in a densely populated area, and practiced leaving no trace and tree identification. They also focused on civic engagement, specifically on the centennial of the 19th Amendment, and planned to have their World Thinking Day, which was postponed due to COVID-19.

"It may have been a little bit different standing 6 feet apart and wearing masks" said Lothrop, "but we found that it only looked different on the outside. Inside, we all still felt the sisterhood that has always defined our troop."

Girl Scouting was a definite positive in the lives of her girls.

"When we started our in-person but socially distanced meetings in September 2020, it was clear how much their mental health had been impacted over the course of six months" said Lothrop. "Usually confident girls were suddenly indecisive. Normally social girls were withdrawn. My troops have all six levels, Daisies to Ambassadors. It was heartbreaking to witness the toll. We kept going because Girl Scouts, at

its best, is an opportunity to connect to ourselves, each other, and our community. Each meeting fulfilled that goal. Watching our Senior Girl Scouts joyfully teach camp songs to the younger levels. Seeing all levels exploring the nature trails in search of a tree to identify. Helping them enthusiastically pick apples to feed others. Watching them eagerly learn about their citizenship responsibilities. Eight girls completed Silver and four finished their Bronze Award. I was amazed at their resiliency, compassion, enthusiasm and aptitude for learning. Ultimately, I saw glimpses of their previous selves and am glad Girl Scouts has been supporting their wellness."

By continuing to meet and serve their community throughout the pandemic, these troops were able to help make the world a better place, as well as be a positive impact on the mental health of the girls in their troops. By being engaged in positive, productive work and having regular social interaction with their peers through troop activities, Girl Scouts was a positive and consistent feature when so many things were changing.