

Girl Scouts are environmental stewards

Being an environmental advocate has been a core part of Girl Scout culture ever since founder Juliette Gordon Low began Girl Scouts in the early 20th century. In recent years this call to action has taken on even greater urgency as the threats facing our planet have increased. Whether it's climate change, climate justice, deforestation, or plastic pollution, Girl Scout troops across the country are fighting for political action and coming up with environmental solutions as part of their Gold, Silver, and Bronze Award projects and during their regular troop activities throughout the year. Girl Scouts of the USA encourages and supports local and national projects that focus on sustainability and environmental protection. With so many environmental and social issues becoming more pressing and frequent, Girl Scouts is dedicated to inspiring the next generation of changemakers.



Troop 59205 of Mont Vernon, NH, participated in a cleanup this spring. (Courtesy photo)

Low was a well-known lover of nature. Today, Girl Scouts honors her legacy by promoting respect and love of the great outdoors far and wide. Through Girl Scouting, girls see the Earth as their home. Whether they're learning about endangered wildlife or developing creative recycling projects, girls focus on the care, conservation, and stewardship of their environment. They make sure the beauty and wonder of our planet endures for future generations to enjoy.

The great outdoors has always been a foundation of the Girl Scouts' curriculum, and in recent years has helped many girls become champions of the environment. As one of the four key areas of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, we inspire girls to develop a lasting commitment to the world around them. Girl Scouts has

a long history of getting girls involved in outdoor activities. However, parental protectiveness, increased use of technology, and a host of structured activities competing for children's time have led to girls spending less and less time outside. The Girl Scout Research Institute has found there is cause for both celebration and reflection regarding girls and the outdoors.

Their survey shows that Girl Scouts helps to get girls outdoors. Ninety-seven percent of girls who completed the survey said they had done at least one outdoor activity in Girl Scouts during that year and nearly 40 percent had participated in an outdoor activity at least once a month in Girl Scouts. The activities girls did most frequently were playing outdoors, walking outdoors, field trips to outdoor places, camping, and volunteering for causes related to the environment.

Further findings were that Girl Scouts helps girls connect with and care for the environment. Compared to a national sample of girls, Girl Scouts reported much higher levels of environmental stewardship. They were, for instance, twice as



Silver Award Girl Scout Alia Williams constructed owl nesting boxes for her project to earn the highest award available to a Cadette. Tonya Williams, left, is leader for Girl Scout Troop 30356 in Lunenburg, VT, and her daughter, Alia, is at center. Alia showed other Girl Scouts how to construct the nesting box. (Courtesy photo)

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likely to say that they take actions to protect the environment. Much of this difference seems related to Girl Scouts' dedication to environmental service, which may provide girls with a sense of purpose and socialize them into an environmentalist mindset—one that promotes connection with, concern for, and conservation of the environment.

Our programming is girl-led and enables girls to address issues they are passionate about. Enjoying and taking care of our natural world is one of the cornerstones of the Girl Scout movement. Statements from the Girl Scout Leader's Guide as long ago as 1955 are ones any environmental education program or research ecologist would still support today: "The Girl Scout approach to nature is... through understanding of living things, appreciation of their beauty, and conservation of them as they live." Today's handbooks continue to support environmental conservation and encourage ecological understanding, including appreciation of natural environments and the interconnectedness of nature.

Introduced a few years ago, the Environmental Stewardship badge places a great emphasis on promoting environmental awareness. With several water conservation badges available to earn, Girl Scouts learn about local water resources, including wetlands and



Girl Scout Daisy Savannah of Penacook, NH, planted a tree for Earth Day at her local cemetery, part of her work on the Between Earth and Sky Journey. (Courtesy photo)

"Fortunately, nature is amazingly resilient: places we have destroyed, given time and help, can once again support life, and endangered species can be given a second chance. And there is a growing number of people, especially young people, who are aware of these problems and are fighting for the survival of our only home, Planet Earth. We must all join that fight before it is too late."

—Jane Goodall, environmentalist

groundwater, in addition to ecology, conservation and sustainability. The recently developed Eco Trekker merit badge teaches girls how to plan and take an outdoor hike while minimizing impact on the natural environment, while also learning the seven Leave No Trace principles that they will practice throughout their outdoor adventure.

The outdoor badges and experiences are progressive, which allows girls and troops to learn new skills, put the skills to use, and build on their knowledge year after year. From their first steps as Daisies on a woodland path to going survival camping as Ambassadors, girls will take the lead by planning their trips, practicing their leadership skills, and pushing themselves as they have unique and unforgettable adventures.

Juliette Gordon Low created a constructive and highly effective program for personal development among young women. Her wisdom has encouraged Girl Scouts across the movement to cultivate the proper outlook toward environmental matters. The Girl Scout Leader's Guide from 1955 asserts that "nature activities help a Scout realize both her debt and her responsibility to all living things."

Our hope is that all Girl Scouts can maintain this passion to protect our environment, while giving them the opportunity to swim in a clear lake, camp among the trees, hike up a mountain trail or just stargaze on a cloudless night, knowing she can make a difference for generations to come, allowing them the same incredible opportunities in nature.

Girl Scouts improve our world in exciting ways



Dear friends,

In 1912, Girl Scout members promised to be friends to animals. Juliette Gordon Low was well known for her care of creatures, so she insisted that every member, through the Girl Scout Law, take particular care of our animal friends and protect them from neglect or “hard usage.” Alongside this pledge for animals was the Girl Scout outdoor program, which introduced girls to hiking, camping, and environmental stewardship.

Over time, our Girl Scout Law changed, and by 1970, all members pledged to “use resources wisely” and “to protect and improve the world around [them].” Girl Scouts, like Dr. Silverberg, dedicated themselves to improving our environment, ensuring our natural resources were taken care of so they would be there for the future of our planet. Our current Girl Scout Law continues our dedication to using resources wisely but slightly changed the next phrase so that we will “make the world a better place.”

Camping and other outdoor programming ensures that Girl Scouts today continue their decades-long commitment to our planet, and the animals and plants that share our home. Troop and individual projects often focus on improving, or improving access, to our natural world through nesting boxes for birds and bats, hiking trails, cleanup efforts and Leave No Trace camping. I am always delighted to find the results of our girls’ work while enjoying trails and parks across our two states!

As girls look toward their future, it is exciting to know we are helping advance their career opportunities by introducing them to new skills while they embrace their passions. Construction projects, artistic creations, science projects and data collection on the land, water and air, all help girls as they make our world a better place.

Thank you for your support of the girls we serve, and to the world in which they live.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Tricia

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

New Girl Scout badges focus on the planet, life skills

Girl Scouts will be excited to see new and refreshed badges available for them to earn as they begin the new troop year this fall! Girl Scouts will explore topics important to them: mental wellness, protecting the planet, taking care of animals, and exploring the great outdoors.

These updates mean Girl Scouts are learning new skills you care about, too, like smart money management, exploring STEM careers early, and life skills that will make them a good global citizen. Plus, enjoying these activities is easier than ever. New Daisy handbooks include the updated Daisy Petal badge instructions for girls, as well as a volunteer guide. These are available at girlscoutshop.com.



Some of the new and refreshed badges, from left, are the Girl Scout Climate Challenge, Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors, refreshed Daisy Petals; refreshed Brownie Pets badge, and the 2022 Girl Scout Tree Promise badge.

Over the summer and into September, Girl Scouts of the USA has run a Climate Challenge and Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge, which culminated in the Girl Scouts Love State Parks activities.

As we head into the colder months, more badges will be offered in STEM and financial literacy. Plus, our Girl Scouts are upholding the GSUSA Tree Promise – a five-year initiative to plant five million trees.

Tara Pacht - leader, conservationist, mentor

If there were ever one person to embody what Girl Scouts is about and what it can achieve, it would be Tara Pacht. Pacht, 50, of Thetford, VT, is the current Board Chair and Council President, a position she hopes to continue in for one last term. She was a Girl Scout Brownie and Junior, led her daughter's troop, was a part of the council's property committee, was a national council delegate, and much more.

She's dedicated to making the world a better place through Girl Scouting and through her care of the planet. When Pacht isn't busy with Girl Scouts, you can find her at Long Wind Farm, an organic tomato farm in Thetford, where she is the office manager and assistant grower of soil-grown organic tomatoes.

"I love to share the work I do in organic farming with the alumnae, volunteers, and girls," she said. "Some of the ways I have included Girl Scouts in my job is hosting Journeys such as Sow What (learn about your food), Wonders of Water (learning how to protect the waters of our planet) and Get Moving (forms of energy and how to be energy efficient) to help show the girls that the Journeys they take are all around them and sometimes hiding in plain sight."

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic she shared her knowledge of organic tomato farming with girls on a Facebook Live event. At the Global Leadership Conference, she has given workshops on the "day in the life" of a tomato program so our young women who are starting to think about their future careers can learn what is needed in modern agriculture, which include jobs outside of "hands in the dirt" and how you can use outside-the-box approaches in farming.

"Just while talking with the last group of girls, I found I had done at least 21 different types of jobs at the farm to give examples of what is needed," she said.

Few may realize that it was Girl Scouting that helped her with a difficult childhood – one that she has described as bouncing in and out of poverty to abject poverty, with few creature comforts.

"It wasn't until I started reflecting, in even the last 10 years really, what Girl Scouts



Tara Pacht is at home among the organically grown tomatoes she cares for at Long Wind Farm in Thetford, VT. (Courtesy photo)

gave me," she said. "I could have been a statistic. That didn't happen, and I attribute it to Girl Scouts."

As a young camper at Camp Farnsworth, thanks to a Girl Scout campership she received, she was exposed to different foods and different people. It was the first time she'd seen food cooked outdoors, and now she is an expert at campfire cooking, especially with pie irons, as anyone who's attended Farnsworth Weekend can attest to.

"I certainly want all girls to realize they have a place at the table," she said. "I want the girls to have the experience I wish I could have continued on having."

Not only does she lead by example in her personal life, she makes sure that the council does the same, particularly in the areas of conservation and caring for the environment. Camp Farnsworth has long taught girls to compost, be aware of how their presence could attract wildlife due to food, and be careful to conserve water.

While on the property committee, Pacht

made sure that the lakefront was cared for and buildings taken care of. Sometimes that has meant removing a building or taking down trees, but it's all part of maintaining a safe and healthy environment.

For Pacht, it's not the buildings, it's the memories. Buildings come and go, but the mission remains the same. "Building codes change, girls' needs change. How are we translating that to being good stewards?" She looks forward to the possibility that solar and wind power could come to Girl Scout properties in the future.

Her husband, Jesse, is also dedicated to Girl Scouts, and often participates in her pie-iron demonstrations and helps with the camp properties. He, like Tara, has been recognized with the Torchbearer Award for his volunteer work. Both are lifetime members of Girl Scouts. Their daughter, Gabriella, has carried on the family dedication to Girl Scouts as well, as a lifetime member; Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award Girl Scout; trainer; troop helper; and camp counselor.

Dr. Judith Silverberg - a dedicated environmentalist

Being outdoors and caring for the environment has been the driving force for Dr. Judith Silverberg. This lifetime member of Girl Scouts has worked her entire career to care for our natural world, educate children and adults, and shape public policy about New Hampshire's natural resources and national conservation education strategies.

Silverberg, 69, from Bow, NH, officially retired after spending 28 years as the wildlife education programs supervisor for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department in 2012 and then in retirement served as the New Hampshire Project Learning Tree coordinator. She has worked in environmental education in Wisconsin, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. She operates her own educational consulting business, Environmental Education Strategies, LLC. Silverberg holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife ecology as well as a master's degree in environmental education from the University of Wisconsin, and a PhD from the University of New Hampshire in natural resources and human dimensions.

She's received a variety of awards for her work in environmental and science education, including the Howard I. Wagner Award for Excellence in Science Education from the New Hampshire Science Teachers Association and the John Pearce Memorial Award for accomplishments in environmental and conservation education from the Northeast Section of the Wildlife Society. She's currently working on a survey on the state of environmental education in New Hampshire.

It was not a simple or easy journey.

"It's the Girl Scout training that gave me some of my spine and backbone to stand up to some of the discrimination there was against women in that natural resources field," she said. "There were times I was told 'You don't belong here.' 'Why are you here?'"

When she was in ninth grade, Silverberg declared that she would be a forest ranger.

"When I told the guidance counselor about it, he told me I couldn't be that because I was a girl!" she said. "So that was the last time I went to see the guidance counselor!



Dr. Judith Silverberg. (Courtesy photo)

Literally! Because I said I can be anything I want to be. And I went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and I majored in wildlife ecology."

At that time, in the early '70s, she was one of only three women in her class – ironically, all of them named Judy. Unlike the men, who were put into an easier track, they were assigned to the natural science track, which required much harder classes like calculus, statistics, and organic chemistry, meant to scare them away.

"There were some pretty blatant statements that were made in some of the classes. But we won, because all three of us graduated with honors and were at the top of the class," she said.

One professor did support the young women – Joseph Hickey, the scientist who discovered that DDT was causing the decline in peregrine populations.

"He had all three of us young women as his students because he was the only professor in the department that would take women," she said. "And the reason for that is that he had a daughter. He was a fabulous mentor and advocate."

She's grateful times have changed.

"You look back, in a lot of different fields, it's a lot of women with Girl Scout back-

grounds that broke some of those barriers and really moved the needle on our role in the world," she said.

Silverberg was a Girl Scout starting at age seven as a Brownie, and continued through Seniors in high school. She worked for a Girl Scout summer camp in Wisconsin, but was first exposed to camp through 4-H, as her father worked as a county 4-H and agricultural agent and would take her with him. The first time she went to camp, she was three. It was on these outdoor adventures that she discovered a love for flower identification that turned into studies in botany and later to bird watching.

She was a Girl Scout troop leader in Bow, for girls from fourth grade through graduation, and is proud to note that seven of her nine Girl Scouts achieved Gold Award status. Her daughters have followed in her footsteps with both the outdoors and Girl Scouts.

Silverberg also served for six years on the Board of Directors for Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

As an advocate of the need to fight climate change, Silverberg said, "It's really tough to be watching the predictions of what I heard scientists say in 1993 to what we're seeing today."

She's not sure what it will take to get people to take climate change seriously.

"We may stop at 4 degrees centigrade change. Maybe we'll be able to stop it by then, but the world that we know, the world that we even know here in New England, will not be the same. It will not be the same world that I grew up in. Not fun to think about," she said. "I do think there is hope. We are seeing more young people that have climate as a priority."

One of her greatest pleasures, she said, is that she sees that even in New Hampshire, over half the wildlife biologists are female.

Silverberg urges Girl Scout alums to use their leadership skills, which will take you a long way in life.

"I think Scouting is all about learning who you are and being true to yourself," she said. "Those are the things that I think have guided me along the way."

Summer canoe trek inspires conservationist attitude

The unspoiled waters of Umbagog Lake drew a crew of Girl Scout canoe paddlers this summer for an outdoor experience that encouraged them to care for their environment, taught them confidence, and strengthened friendships.

Umbagog is one of the most pristine lakes in New Hampshire and is part of the Umbagog Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The Loon Preservation Society conducts an annual survey of the aquatic birds each year and conducts an annual census of this threatened species. The birds can also make some unusual sounds.

“They were very loud!” said Libby, a 15-year-old camper from Windham, NH.

The girls heard many at night, and noted that they can sound like a wolf or coyote.

“I thought they were coyotes,” said Addie, the youngest of the group at 13 during the trip, and who is from Bennington, NH. “They would do this weird, like, three-note call, I guess, and I was like, is that a loon?”

The crew began their experience with a canoeing refresher, as all had had some experience paddling, as well as learning how to pull both people and dropped items out of the water. They traveled in three canoes, packing everything they needed for their trip into the boats – tents, hammocks, clothes, food, and sundries.



Addie, now 14, shows her watercolor journal. (GSGWM photo)



Five Girl Scouts and two counselors took a four-night canoe trip to Umbagog Lake in northern New Hampshire near the Maine line in the first week of August. It was part of a two-week summer camp program at Camp Farnsworth. (Courtesy photo)

They arrived at a campsite in Errol, NH, where they spent their first night, then packed up their gear for overnights at several islands.

“I think my favorite part was one day we paddled from our remote site into Maine, and we found a little beach there,” said Bear, one of the counselors. “We were kind of looking at our little maps, and it took us a little bit to find it, but we figured it out and got to stay at the beach then paddled back.”

“We would drop off our stuff there, set up tents and hammocks, and then, usually like in the mid-afternoon we’d go on little day trips,” said Piia, 16, of New Mexico. “A couple of the days we went into Maine, one of the days – we had a map, so we were kind of going all around, especially in the southern part of the lake, and then we’d come back and have our backpacking dinner and sleep at the remote sites.”

The lake’s beauty drew them all in, as they saw a double rainbow, shooting stars, and lots of fish through the clear water. Addie kept a watercolor journal of her experience. Fifteen-year-old Sami of Concord, NH, said that by the time they were pretty far into the trip, they got to know each other well, solidifying friendships.

“I really enjoyed getting to watch them all

grow as campers,” said counselor Winnie. “And this has definitely been my most favorite part of camp all summer.”

The Girl Scouts all agreed the experience was one of building confidence and skills, and making friends. They gained a new appreciation for nature and keeping it safe for the future.

“If you ever go camping, pack out what you pack in,” said Piia. “But the lake was so trash-free – it was really gorgeous. Going camping other places, that’s not always the case.”

“Seeing that kind of beauty in nature, it makes you appreciate it more, want to save it more,” said Libby, “I feel like, it kind of impressed me the importance of conservation.”



One of Addie’s watercolor journal entries. (GSGWM photo)

Girl Scouts learn carpentry skills at summer camp

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is grateful for an \$8,000 package of tools donated by Stanley Black & Decker, which was used to teach Girl Scouts useful construction skills as they built new cabins at summer camp this year.

The tools are part of a package of \$25 million in grant funding that Stanley Black & Decker awarded through its “Empower Makers” Global Impact Challenge. Our council, serving girls throughout New Hampshire and Vermont, is one of 86 organizations that will help roughly 180,000 makers through this program, and one of just six Girl Scout councils to receive such an award.

“Stanley Black & Decker is immensely proud to support Girl Scouts as they work to skill and reskill the next generation of trade professionals,” said Stanley Black & Decker Vice President of Social Impact Diane Cantello. “Currently in the U.S., there are an estimated 650,000 open construction jobs and 10 million unfilled manufacturing jobs globally. Our purpose is to support ‘Those Who Make the World,’ and being able to fund educational programs and nonprofits



Girl Scouts who chose the two-week Cabin Crew summer camp experienced learned real-life construction skills as they built two new cabins at Camp Farnsworth, as well as having the usual camp adventures. (GSGWM photo)

that are revitalizing trade careers directly connects to our core mission. Thanks to this year’s Makers Grant Recipients, together we will be one step closer to closing the trade skills gap.”

Dr. Karyn L. Martin, Director, Program and Properties for Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, said the tools were put to good use with girls attending a two-week Cabin Crew session of summer camp at Camp Farnsworth in Thetford, Vermont, where they built two new cabins on the camp property. Camp Farnsworth offers a progression of building experiences for Girl Scouts as young as eight, who start with maker space; grow into “you can build it,” where in past summers they have rebuilt the main campfire ring benches and made seating for fire circles for the camp; and then move into woodshop programs or on to the Cabin Crew.

Girls who helped with the Cabin Crew project last summer were amazed to see how it could be completed during their two-week camp session, and were proud of the trade skills they learned.

“Of the 12 Girl Scouts who built one cabin last summer, each found an appreciation for a particular trade,” said Martin. “While some readily grasped carpentry concepts and skills, a few were very comfortable with roofing skills and working at height, some showed patience and skills in siding the buildings, and a few specialized in building the bunk beds. Not only did each girl find her skill, they also practiced working together, as trades do in professional settings, working to a timeline and around each other’s spaces.”

The Girl Scouts worked approximately three hours a day for two weeks with a master carpenter to frame and raise the walls, attach tongue-and-groove siding to match existing structures, frame windows and doorways, and shingle the roof with a female volunteer roofer. They were supervised by a female construction crew manager who has experience building housing in several countries. The cabins replace a platform tent, reducing the camp’s overall footprint on the land. They are fully screened and offer better ventilation for campers.



A Cabin Crew camper nails siding onto the new cabin at Camp Farnsworth. (Courtesy photo)

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Girl Scouts spurs outdoor adventures with challenges

For 110 years, Girl Scouts has encouraged all girls to get outside and strengthen their skills and connection with nature. Our national outdoor strategy goal is for Girl Scouts to provide every girl progressive outdoor experiences to build confident, capable outdoor leaders. This summer, Girl Scouts of the USA has provided three national outdoor patch programs for our members. We kicked off the summer with Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge, followed closely by our Girl Scout Climate Challenge, and rounding out the series with Girl Scouts Love State Parks.

The Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge gave girls an activity sheet with many options to explore – things

they could do while still indoors looking out a window to activities for the open trail. This challenge really took into consideration Girl Scouts from all around the world and what opportunities or resources they might have available to them. No objects could stand in a Girl Scouts way for her to earn this patch.

On July 11, we were introduced to the Girl Scout Climate Challenge. The challenge was designed to engage Girl Scouts and non-Girl Scouts of all ages in activities to get them outdoors in order to learn about climate science, connect them with their communities to understand how they're impacting climate change, and have them spread awareness of the issue to cre-

ate sustainable change. This challenge is made possible by Johnson & Johnson Foundation and will run through November 2022 for Girl Scouts to earn this patch.

The Girl Scout Loves the Outdoors Challenge wraps up with our Girl Scouts Loves State Parks Weekend, this year recognized officially on September 10 and 11. Girl Scouts were encouraged to get out and visit their local state parks through this partnership with the National Association of State Park Directors. It was a weekend dedicated to showcasing the beauty of state parks and the passion Girl Scouts have for exploring the outdoors.