

Girl Scouts take action to make the world a better place

Girl Scouts dream big! They want to make the world a better place and we help them become their best selves while taking action in their communities. Whether they are picking up litter in a park, serving a meal to veterans, donating toys, or changing laws, they develop valuable life skills, including the courage and confidence, to take on life's challenges.

At each level of Girl Scouts there are opportunities to lead, learn, and make an impact. As a Girl Scout progresses from Daisy to Ambassador, she earns petals, badges, pins, Journey awards, and our highest honors – the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards.

Where a community service project is short term, joins an existing effort to solve an issue, and works toward a goal set by others, a Take Action project or highest award is a long-term project that creates a unique initiative to address an issue's root cause, and is done with the community, rather than for it. Each Journey a Girl Scout earns at all levels includes completing a Take Action project.

Both Take Action projects and the work done for the highest awards are essential to Girl Scouting. Community service is important as well, but there's a difference. When Girl Scouts perform community service, they are responding to a one-off immediate need, such as picking up litter. With Take Action/service learning, they explore the root cause of a community need and try to address it in a sustainable way, such as finding a way to keep that litter from happening in the first place. Highest awards take this concept to the most meaningful levels. Bronze and Silver Awards use these service learning projects to reflect an understanding of issues in a community. For the Gold Award, Girl Scouts tackle issues that are dear to them and strive to make meaningful and lasting



Gold Award Girl Scout Kylie Tilton stands by an informational kiosk in Claremont, NH. She built the kiosk to inform the public of the lasting damage that is done by litter. It shows how long each item takes to decompose – ranging into the hundreds of years. (Courtesy photo)

change in their communities and beyond.

Virtually every Girl Scout across New Hampshire and Vermont has participated in community service. On Green Up Day in Vermont, Girl Scouts pick up litter and spruce up parks and trails for all to enjoy. Molly Nawrath, leader of Troop 51726 in Manchester, VT, made use of a Planet Pack backpack and tongs provided at last year's Farnsworth Weekend to help pick up litter. The troop had fun making a sculpture from the trash they found, winning a Green Up Day contest.

In Claremont, NH, Troop 30261 is always busy with community projects – donating cookies to area hometown heroes, helping the local animal shelter, cleaning up the Visitor Center green, working to keep alcohol out of young hands with a Sticker

Shock project, and more. Their Cadettes earned the Silver Award with an adaptive gardening project, and Ambassador Kylie Tilton achieved the Gold Award recently with a project to inform the public about the impact of litter on the community.

In Randolph, VT, Trailblazer Troop 63145 focuses on outdoor activities but they have strong support from American Legion veterans, who allow them to use their hall for meetings.

"We do a lot of community service as a troop," said leader Rachel Silverman. "We do a Veterans Day dinner. We serve meals to the veterans. And it's all organized by the American Legion."

The Legion helped the troop with femi-

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nine hygiene kits and gave them financial support as well in a mutual effort to provide service.

Troop Leader Mel Pepin is committed to making sure her Bedford, NH, Girl Scouts understand there is a need for community service – something that comes as a surprise to some of those who live in this community.

“Not everyone in Bedford is well-to-do,” she said, and related a story about starting a food donation project with her Girl Scouts. “They said ‘We have a food pantry? Why do we have a food pantry?’ I had to explain that there are a lot of families that just aren’t eating. And they looked at me and said, ‘I don’t even understand that concept.’ So I had to do a lot of education. The Bedford Food Pantry was started by a Bedford school nurse at the Memorial [Elementary School] because she was seeing food needs on a daily basis and she had kids coming in every single day because they didn’t have a snack and they

didn’t have a lunch. We live in a very privileged community. They don’t understand that we have a vast economic diversity.”

When Girl Scouts work to address the root causes of an issue, they make truly meaningful change for the better. Recently, Gold Award Girl Scouts Sarah Zachas of Windham, NH, and Milena Whitney of Bedford, NH, wanted to address the decline of pollinators. Each planted gardens that will enable pollinators to thrive and made the effort to educate the public of the issue. Nora Robertson of Essex Junction, VT, moved to Florida and became aware of the dangers of toxic “red tide” algae, and worked to teach the public there of the dangers and how to help fight the pollution causing the problem. These are real-world issues that our Gold Award Girl Scouts are addressing right now.

In the 2022-23 membership year, 18 of our members earned the Gold Award, 54 the Silver Award, and 89 the Bronze. Girl Scouts in New Hampshire and Vermont continue to help their communities and change the world for the better every day!

TO DONATE



We appreciate your gift to Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains. Please visit www.girlscoutsgwm.org/donate to make an impact or use the above QR code.

Questions? Call us at 888-474-9686 or email customercare@girlscoutsgwm.org.



Giving back to the community is important to the Girl Scouts of Trailblazer Troop 63145 in Randolph, VT. Here, they serve a meal to veterans at the American Legion in Randolph. (Courtesy photo)

Taking action means a better world for all



Dear friends,

Taking action to make the world a better place is in the DNA of every Girl Scout member. Our Promise and Law have long served as the cornerstones of our lives dedicating Girl Scouts to service in support of our environment, our country, and our families. Membership in the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) furthers our connections to being citizens and caretakers of our world.

tions to being citizens and caretakers of our world.

I have been fortunate to share stories of the amazing projects our Girl Scout members take on to improve our lives. This issue of The Trailblazer focuses on just a few of the hundreds of projects that troops across New Hampshire and Vermont complete. Many of those projects are completed anonymously while others get the community recognition they all deserve. A vast majority are funded by the Girl Scout Cookie program, others are self-funded, and a minority receive public support for their success.

Recently, we have established a new Take Action Grant Fund to provide seed money to our Girl Scouts and troops making a difference. I am delighted to share in the recent donations from

Karen and Eric Werner and the Alison Werner Barton Memorial Fund to start this initiative again as the previous funds from The Byrne Foundation had been used in their entirety. The Werners were recently joined by several additional donors during NH Gives, including board members Jeff Greenfield, Sheila Valley, Marie Harding, Peggy Piette, and Tara Pacht, as well as 22 other donors who all wish to provide Girl Scouts with the funds needed to succeed in taking action. If you would like to donate to our Take Action Grant Fund, please reach out! Your support will continue to ensure that every Girl Scout across Vermont and New Hampshire has the resources to support their Take Action projects!

Thank you for all you do to support Girl Scouting in making the world a better place!

Yours in Girl Scouting,

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

The importance of giving

Imagine a world where giving is a way of life, where everyone feels compelled to help those in need, and where kindness and compassion occur daily. This is the culture of giving that we all should strive to nurture, both as individuals and as a society. This is part of the mission that Girl Scouts are introduced to at a very young age: "To make the world a better place."

Giving is important because it allows us to change the world in a positive way, no matter how small the gesture. Whether we give our time, our money, or our resources, a simple act of generosity can create a ripple effect, inspiring others to do the same. Giving can help us develop a sense of purpose and meaning in our lives, contributing to our overall well-being and happiness. At its core, giving is about acts of kindness and the transformative impact of philanthropy. By instilling the value of kindness and generosity in our Girl Scouts, we help create a future generation that prioritizes giving and compassion.



Troop 51726 of Manchester, VT, decorated and reused cookie boxes and placed them at several local businesses to collect solar eclipse glasses to be sent to Eclipse Glasses USA who will distribute them to children in South America where the next eclipse will occur. Hundreds of glasses were collected, saving them from ending up in the landfill. (Courtesy photo)

A key aspect of a financial gift to Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is knowing how your donation will benefit

others. With many girls and families facing financial stresses, our council strives to remove financial barriers wherever we can, providing financial assistance as well as campership assistance. By making a gift, donors strengthen their connection to our council. The joy of giving to a local charity is unmatched, as donors can see firsthand the difference that their contributions can make.

When we give to a specific cause, we can make a lasting impact on issues we care about. We can contribute to positive change and create a more just and equitable world by supporting organizations and ideals that align with our values and passions. In addition to making a philanthropic impact, community service and volunteering are powerful ways to make a difference and build meaningful connections with others. Taking action and giving back to the community can be a fulfilling and enriching experience.

"The more you give, the more you get."
Juliette Gordon Low

Vandalism at camp turns into outpouring of care

While Girl Scouts are dedicated to giving back to the community, our council is grateful to the many volunteers and people who donated to us to repair Camp Kettleford after it was vandalized in March. This time, we were the appreciative recipients of help in a turnabout of action being taken.

It was early March when council CEO Patricia Mellor received a call saying that many buildings at the Bedford, NH, day camp had been covered in obscene and vulgar graffiti. Vandals had tagged cabin walls and roofs, a fence, and benches. It wasn't long before word spread and Mellor started hearing from alums, Girl Scout troops, and the surrounding community with offers of help.

"What we didn't expect, and what warms our hearts, is the outpouring of support we received from the Bedford community and wider area," said Mellor. "Offers to clean and paint as well as funding for supplies were abundant. Within a week, the Bedford Fire Department came out to power wash the buildings with their powerful truck and hoses. The Bedford Men's Club was ready to paint but freezing weather prevented that. Instead, they sanded down tables and removed the lodge railing in preparation for a stronger one. Home Depot, Integrated Realty Resources, and the Granite United Way arrived to sand graffiti off the buildings and to paint over the damage."

WMUR-TV covered the story, and an outpouring of offers of labor and supplies soon followed. By the following week, work had begun. Graffiti was removed just in time to present a welcoming face to the Girl Scouts of the Swift Water Paddlers competitive canoe team, which was about to start practice. Meantime, Mellor was busy coordinating all the offers of help.

Since those first weeks, volunteers have painted buildings, built new benches, painted picnic tables, and cleaned. Our caring community is what made all the work possible.

"We're especially grateful to Thomas Chamberland and B. Humble Contracting, LLC, who installed a whole new roof on one of our Adirondack cabins, and to



The Bedford Men's Club was one of the first groups to donate their time and muscle in freezing temperatures to sand graffiti and remove the lodge railing, as well as prep tables for a fresh coat of paint. (GSGWM photo)



Vandals spray painted vulgar images on the buildings at Camp Kettleford in early March, as well as on a roof, fence, and benches. (GSGWM photos)

Home Depot who provided roofing and painting supplies," said Mellor. "In addition, thanks to donations, we were able to purchase and install security cameras and solar powered sensor lights to prevent further vandalism in the future. With day camp now in full swing, the repairs and upgrades have been welcomed by the troops and summer campers using the property."

Many have commented on how bright and cheerful Kettleford looks, and how happy they are attending camp with its splashes of color and new upgrades. There is still more work to be done at Kettleford to complete the array of repairs which were

started, but camp is safe and secure for all attending. Additional volunteer days are planned for the fall once camp is out of session with many companies planning on coming back to help finish the work they began. Camp Kettleford is now a joyful place with buildings painted in bright Girl Scout colors.

"For once, we had to let others take action to make the world a better place," said Mellor. "It was devastating to realize how much damage was done to Camp Kettleford, but the generosity of our community – both from Girl Scouts and the wider community – has shown us just how caring people really are."



The staff of Home Goods did a lot of cleaning and painting. Various groups adopted buildings like this Adirondack, painting inside and out. They also painted picnic tables to match. (GSGWM photo)



The Home Depot volunteers came out to prep and paint the Kettleford lodge. (GWGWM photo)



An AmeriHealth volunteer tests out a newly built bench. (GSGWM photo)



Thomas Chamberland of B. Humble Contracting generously installed a new roof for one Adirondack. (GSGWM photo)



The lodge is now a cheerful Girl Scout green. In this photo, the railing is yet to be replaced and tables are awaiting a new coat of paint. (GSGWM photo)

Donors

We extend our sincere thanks to the following people and groups for their support after the damage to Camp Kettleford.

Volunteer groups:

AmeriHealth Caritas New Hampshire
B. Humble Contracting and Thomas Chamberland
Bank of New Hampshire
Bedford Men's Club
Eversource
Granite United Way
The Home Depot
Home Goods
Integrated Realty Resources
Property Innovation, L.L.C.

Financial donations:

Amherst Lions Club
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Bank of New Hampshire
Bedford Men's Club
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BeLocal Greater Manchester and Greet Bedford
Kelli Brown
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Eversource
Jessica Gifford
GSGWM Amherst Service Unit
Teresa and Tracy Hare
Karen Heaton
Tammie Hildreth
The Home Depot
Jone LaBombard and William Noyce
Robert Laney
Manchester Motorcycle Club
Merrimack River Valley South Facilitators
Metro Walls
Tara and Jesse Pacht
Heather and Vincent Rojo
Steven Sardella
Katelyn Shaffer
Shannon Shurtlett
Cheryl Stinson
Sunbelt Rental
Waste Management

Food donations:

Costco
Hannaford
Panera Bread
Yianni's Pizza

Gold, Silver, and Bronze – Girl Scout action at its best

When Girl Scouts want to make lasting change for the better, they go for the highest honors possible for their age group – the Bronze Award for Juniors in Grades 4 and 5, the Silver Award for Cadettes in Grades 6-8, and the Gold Award for Seniors and Ambassadors in grades 9-12.

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is proud of every Girl Scout who has reached the pinnacle of their experience by earning our highest awards. Nationally, fewer than 6 percent of high school-age Girl Scouts achieve Gold Award status. To do so, they must spend at least 80 hours on a project that makes meaningful and sustainable change in their community or the world. Nationally, nearly 3,200 Girl Scouts earned Gold in the 2022-23 membership year, devoting nearly 300,000 service hours, the latest year for which these figures are available. One hundred and ten of them were also presented with a \$10,000 scholarship.

Of our 492 Seniors and Ambassadors in the 2023-24 membership year, 18 have achieved Gold Award status, that's 3.6 percent overall.

Through the experience these Girl Scouts have in earning highest awards, they gain valuable life skills in leadership, time management, communication skills, and more. Gold Award Girl Scouts are also eligible to enter the military at a higher rank, win scholarships, and are seen as excellent prospects by colleges and universities.

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains encourages its members to earn the highest awards with monthly informative webinars and offers one-on-one meetups with any troops interested in learning more.

Ashley Garen facilitates the process, and says she helps Girl Scouts refine their ideas and help them as they work on it.

"Every meeting we have with a Girl Scout or Girl Scout volunteer, we encourage our Girl Scouts to produce their own solutions, additions, or changes to meet the standards of each highest award to encourage the girl-led aspect of our mission," she said. "... I am available to them any time they have questions, concerns, hiccups, etc."



GSGWM Gold Award Girl Scout Nora Robertson led an art class using recycled plastic in Venice, Florida, as part of her effort to raise awareness of red tide, an algae bloom that is caused by pollution. (Courtesy photo)

These awards are often cited by Girl Scouts as the reason they decided to continue through the entire Girl Scout Experience, motivating them to be a member through 12th grade.

Gold Award Girl Scout Nora Robertson, who worked to raise awareness of the dangers of red tide, said the idea of earning the Gold Award spurred her on since she was young.

When she was a Junior in Girl Scouts, she heard from an older Girl Scout who came in to share the story of her Gold Award.



Milena Whitney

Earning Gold was specifically the reason Milena Whitney, who did a pollinator project, stayed in Girl Scouts.

"I'd heard a lot about scholarship opportunities and just general merit stuff that colleges will offer you if you have a Gold Award," she said. "My neighbor - actually, she got a ton of money for doing her Gold Award. So, we were like, that's maybe a good idea, so (it's) definitely one of the reasons I stuck with it."

While working toward these honors results in a Girl Scout developing valuable life skills, many have expressed how fulfilling it is to accomplish this challenging goal.

Natalie Adams renovated a Vermont recycling center for her Gold Award. She encourages younger Girl Scouts to consider it.

"Your Silver Award, it's a group project," she said. "It's so much fun. I really enjoyed my work with two of the girls in my troop. We split up and did two different projects within our troop. The Silver Award is such a fun time. It's working with people. You get to do something that you see improves your community. And then the Gold Award - it's more difficult, it's harder, it's much more self-driven. But when you finally make it there, when you continue to push yourself and you make it to the end, it's so much more rewarding because you're like, look at this thing that I've done! Look at how much progress that I've made in my leadership skills and in my organization skills. And look at this good thing that I've done for a lot of people."

Trailblazer troop in Vermont also emphasizes service

Hiking, camping, snowshoeing, outdoor competency, and especially giving back to their community – it's all the focus for Girl Scout Troop 63514, a Trailblazer troop who loves being outdoors. Rachel and Aaron Silverman and Nicole LaMothe lead this group of Girl Scout go-getters in Randolph, VT, whose main focus is on the outdoors but includes service projects.

"We do a lot of community service as our troop," said Rachel Silverman. "I remember doing a ton of community service. Whether I liked it or not is another story, but I did a lot as a scout myself. And I always felt that we should give back to the community as well, so the American Legion Hall that we meet at, we do a lot for them."

This partnership has paid off as the veterans have learned a



Trailblazer Troop 63514 in Randolph, VT, is led by Rachel Silverman (left); her husband, Aaron Silverman; and Nicole LaMothe. (Courtesy photo)

lot about what Girl Scouts do and have helped them with their community service projects, like making first aid and feminine hygiene kits.

"We try to explain what we do when people ask us, especially the veterans," she said. "We do a Veterans Day dinner. We serve meals to the veterans. And it's all organized by the American Legion."

"They love the girls," said Aaron Silverman.

These Girl Scouts learn to be self sufficient and competent in the outdoors. Rachel Silverman described a tent-building activity at a local campground, where they had to figure out how to put their tent together, and each person could only ask five questions for help.

"The other thing I think we

try and do on a pretty frequent basis," Aaron said, "is strengthen relationships. You know, it's fairly easy for the girls to kind of go in a certain clique, and when we do some of these exercises, we like to break them apart, make them work together with not necessarily their friends, but their sister scouts."

All three find the experience of mentoring Girl Scouts fulfilling. For Aaron, it's also breaking the stigma that Girl Scouts is just cookies and crafts.

"We like the Girl Scout aspect of girls being strong and knowing they can do it," said LaMothe, "without having influence or feeling the competition of people that maybe they go to school with all the time. It's just the girl-only atmosphere just feels better and more supportive."

Amy Radder – making a difference in Keene, NH

Some of Amy Radder's happiest memories come from her years as a Brownie. She recalls going to the Bronx Zoo, learning etiquette, and going camping. To this day she is still friends with the girls from her Brownie troop, and she wanted her daughter to have the same experience.

Radder, 36, of Keene, NH, now leads a Brownie troop of her own. Troop 62168 has 10 members who are learning to give back to their community by collecting plastic to recycle into a bench that will be placed in a local playground. It takes 1,000 pounds of plastic to make a bench, which the troop will collect over the course of a year.

"My entire back porch is filled with plastic!" Radder said with a laugh.



Troop 62168 of Keene, NH, is collecting plastic to be recycled into playground benches. Leader Amy Radder likes showing her Girl Scouts how to make the world a better place. (Courtesy photo)

She is working with NexTrex, which recycles the kind of plastic your typical recycling center won't take – pallet wrap and stretch film, grocery bags, Ziploc bags, air pillows, bubble wrap, and more. Many businesses produce a lot of plastic waste and Radder said her Girl Scouts were shocked to see how much of this waste

had blown into local wetlands when they did a cleanup for their water conservation badge.

"We gathered a bunch of plastic – eight full garbage bags in 45 minutes," she said.

The businesses they approached to donate the plastic were excited to partner with

the Brownies, as they had no idea where they could bring it and just sent it to the landfill.

Giving back and seeing girls grow is important to Radder.

"I enjoy spending time with the girls," she said. She's made a point of incorporating reading into her troop meetings and having them read aloud. "It opens the door for kids to understand things about the world."

One book that told the story of a boy who had to carry water on his head, taking it from a well to his home seven miles away, made a big impression on the Brownies, especially when they tried carrying water.

"You could tell it opened their eyes," she said. "You could see a person's true story. It grows that empathy."

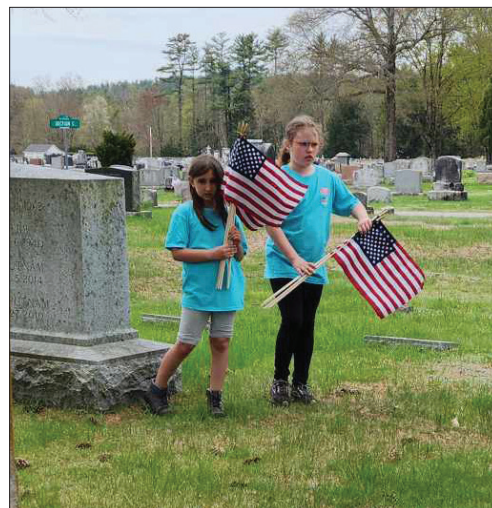
Girl Scouts Take Action



Troop 61845 in Essex Junction, VT, on Green Up Day.



Gold Award Girl Scout Melody Roe built a story walk in Merrimack, NH.



Claremont, NH, Girl Scouts mark veterans' gravestones with flags just ahead of Memorial Day.



Hooksett, NH, Troop 58754 took action to improve the picnic tables at a school and built a footbridge to an outdoor classroom, earning the Bronze Award in the process.



Troop 30228 of Waterbury, VT, made a food donation to the Waterbury food shelf.



Amherst, NH, Troop 22720 donated goods to senior citizens in need.



Concord, NH, Troop 20507 cooked a meal for David's House. They also regularly help with the city of Concord's trick-or-treat festivities and Midnight Merriment, among other service projects.



Troop 51726 is very active in its community, participating in Green Up Day, donating eclipse glasses, making Valentine's Day cards for nursing homes and hospitals. Here, they hosted a Trunk-or-Treat in Manchester, VT.

