

# The Trailblazer

A Newsletter for Girl Scout Alumnae and Supporters

girl scouts  
of the green and  
white mountains

Fall 2024

Vol. 21



Troop 64852 of Vergennes, VT, were joined by U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders when they marched in the town's Memorial Day parade earlier this year. (Courtesy photo)

## Passion becomes action through Girl Scouts

Civic engagement has been part of the foundation of Girl Scouting since its inception in 1912. Girl Scouts are encouraged to become involved citizens in their community, and to take an active role in community problem-solving. At Girl Scouts, we focus on giving girls the opportunity to become the leaders of tomorrow and equipping them with the resources to be involved in their communities today. That's why it's more important than ever to give girls the opportunity to be a positive force for change in the world and unleash their inner confidence to speak up on issues that matter most to them.

We encourage girls to stand up, speak up and make their voices heard. When she's out there cheering on her community and taking a stance, she's getting the chance to learn about her government and how to create change. By partnering with other young Girl Scout advocates, she increases the impact she can make on the world while also forming strong sisterhood

bonds that will support her.

Girl Scouts are encouraged at a very young age to give back and make an impact. Whether it's restocking a local food pantry as a new Daisy as part of her "Good Neighbor" badge, cleaning up a neighborhood playground as a Brownie towards her "Celebrating Community" badge or lobbying for change at a city council meeting as an Ambassador as part of her "Public Policy" badge, making the world a better place is part of our Girl Scout history. With new civics badges recently released for every age level, badges are intended to give girls an in-depth and age-appropriate understanding of how local, state, and federal government works, including voting, the Electoral College, and representation of women in government.

The Girl Scout Movement has a long history of advocacy and civil action. From the very beginning, Girl Scouts have used hard work and their passionate voices to

become involved. One critical way to drive change is to get out and vote. Now more than ever, voting is the best way to participate in the democratic process and make all of our voices heard, one of our most important civic duties. Thanks to the 19th Amendment of 1920, which allowed women the right to vote, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which guaranteed voting access to people of color, almost all American citizens enjoy this fundamental right as part of our freedoms.

We strengthen our democracy when civically engaged Girl Scouts become civically engaged adults. From the very beginning, civic engagement has been part of the Girl Scout legacy. We build girls of courage, confidence, and character who become engaged citizens and change the world. With such a strong history, it makes sense that 75 percent of women in Congress, all three female former U.S. Secretaries

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## Passion becomes action through Girl Scouts

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of State, and all three former Vermont and New Hampshire female governors are Girl Scout alums.

Today's youth will lead tomorrow's future, and Girl Scouts are ready to lead the way. Troop leaders are encouraged to provide resources for community action and civic participation. There are several ways to become strong civic advocates, including learning the history of the suffrage movement and the Voting Rights Act, becoming familiar with the names of local elected officials, and reviewing the Civics and Citizen badge requirements.

GSUSA has partnered with the League of Women Voters this year, encouraging Girl Scouts to Promote the Vote. You can learn more about that on the next page. Locally, Girl Scouts are learning about their town, state, and national civic duties by earning the Democracy badge, visiting government agencies, and performing color guard duties at town meetings.

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is excited to help foster a new generation of civic-minded leaders ready to make their voices heard, engage their communities, and contribute to the democratic process. The League of Women Voters has played a significant role in educating the public on political leaders, public policy and civic participation for over 100 years. With the upcoming election, both organizations look forward to assisting both Girl Scouts

and the overall public in learning about voter empowerment.

In 1912, Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low used her considerable influence to build a movement centered around girls being of service to their country. Two years before women in America even had the right to vote, Girl Scouts created the first Civics badge. Even then, Low knew that community service is a key value of Girl Scouting. Today, we continue Low's work by engaging in conversations to broaden the understanding of suffrage achievements while renewing our commitment to civic purpose and advocacy for girls.

When Girl Scouts engage in the voting process, they learn to take charge of their future. Their votes can influence policies on issues like education, health care, the environment, and social justice. By actively participating in civic life, Girl Scouts can break down barriers and create a society that aligns with their values.

Democracies thrive when citizens actively participate in governance. By encouraging young Girl Scouts to embrace voting and civic engagement, we nurture a generation that will uphold democratic principles and safeguard the future of democracy itself. Engaging in community service projects exposes Girl Scouts to real-world issues and the importance of addressing them. Through hands-on experiences, they can see the relevance of voting and civic participation in creating positive change.

## TO DONATE



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**Questions?** Call us at 888-474-9686 or email [customercare@girlscoutsgwm.org](mailto:customercare@girlscoutsgwm.org).



Troop 64636 of Gorham, NH, spent a day touring the New Hampshire State House in January as part of their work on the Junior/Cadette Democracy badges. (Courtesy photo)

## Girl Scouts advocate to make the world a better place



Dear friends,

I am a proud advocate of Girl Scouting, our mission, and the people we serve. I enjoy meeting with our elected representatives to update them on our work and to request support for legislation which would advance our movement.

I am prouder still of the work of our amazing young women when they take the microphone and lead. Whether advocating for legislation or encouraging adults to get involved, Girl Scouts epitomize what civic engagement looks like. In Vermont, Girl Scouts are responsible for the Constitutional Amendment which allows 17-year-olds (who will be 18 in the general election) to vote in the primary elections. In New Hampshire, Girl Scouts are responsible for ending child marriage and authorizing Girl Scout license plates. We know that Girl Scouts have advocated for recycling and composting, work tirelessly on behalf of animals and other citizens, and they take action to keep our communities clean and drug-free.

As we look towards our future, I am hopeful that the values of our Girl Scout Promise and Law will expand across our nation. Girl Scouts pledge to serve their country and to be honest and fair, courageous and kind, and importantly, to be responsible for what they say and do. We have a mission to make the world a better place, and the thousands of girls and volunteers across Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains take this seriously!

Thank you for supporting our members and their efforts to lead and improve our lives. Your mentoring and financial support provide the resources needed for our Girl Scouts to thrive.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Patricia K. Mellor  
Chief Executive Officer  
Gold Award Girl Scout

## We're partnering with the League of Women Voters

Voting is a fundamental civic duty, yet many face barriers, especially people of color, due to restrictive voting laws and protocols. There's a critical need for change, and Girl Scouts can lead the way!

Promote the Vote, which launched on August 16, is a national civic action designed to engage Girl Scouts in the democratic process.

GSUSA and the League of Women Voters



NH Senator Maggie Hassan speaks with Girl Scouts at a troop meeting in Nashua. (Courtesy photo)

have long histories of empowering girls, advocating for civil rights, and advancing policies that support girls and women. Our organizations are excited to work together nationally and locally to provide Girl Scouts with more opportunities to learn about and engage with civics, voting, and democracy.

That's what Promote the Vote is all about. Girl Scouts are asked to encourage potential voters to go to the ballot box. We show them how and when to register to vote, where to find key information, how to educate themselves on candidates and issues, how to make a voting plan, and more. Simple steps and easy-to-follow templates guide them through the process. Promote the Vote with Girl Scouts and help shape your tomorrow—today!

Girls Scouts can take action by setting specific, measurable goals for how they will participate in this election cycle by writing a letter to an elected official, talking to family members about their voting plan, helping someone register to vote, and sharing social media posts.

Research shows if they persuade one person to vote, that person will likely influence at least one friend or family member to vote, too! Those who promote voting online are asked to tag the post with @girlscouts. They can also tag @VOTE411 when posting to link to an easy way to register to vote, check registration, and see what's on a particular ballot.

Along with the Promote the Vote effort, Girl Scouts can boost their civic engagement by earning their Civics or Citizen badges. Our council also offers the Advocacy patch program, designed by Gold Award Girl Scout Cassandra Levesque. The patch allows Girl Scouts from Daisy to Ambassador to learn how to advocate for change in their communities, whether in large ways or small.





## A personal view from a Girl Scout on civics

Lily Gordon is a new alum and lifetime member of Girl Scouts who has made the most of her Girl Scout membership through Hinesburg, VT, Troop 30463. She shares her experience in discovering the value of civic engagement here:

When I was a Cadette, I attended a Town Meeting with my group. It was my first Town Meeting and first experience with the legislative process. It was really interesting to see members of our town debating and voting on issues that were so important to how our town functions.

That fall, I attended a Legislative Day at the Vermont State House. We took a tour of the State House, heard from a state representative, and participated in a mock campaign. It was a great experience.

As a Girl Scout Senior, I participated in the Girls Rock the Capitol program and shadowed a state representative, attending House, Senate, and committee meetings, watching amendments from the floor. It was really amazing!

I also earned my Government badge while I was an Ambassador, learning more about the different functions of the three branches of government.

This was all topped off by a trip to the national capital in Washington, D.C., this year as part of an older girls trip for our troop. It was fascinating having a tour of the Capitol and learning more of the history and functions of the legislative branch.

All of these amazing Girl Scout experiences have increased my knowledge of the legislative process and made me feel more prepared for the upcoming election.



Hinesburg Girl Scout Troop 30463 traveled to Washington, D.C., in March, gaining valuable life skills in the process. Lily Gordon is at far left. (Courtesy photo)



Lily Gordon at the podium at the Vermont State House. (Courtesy photo)



The troop at the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building. (Courtesy photo)



# Gold Award Girl Scout addresses dangers to the deaf

In a world where interactions with police can turn dangerous, if not deadly, being able to communicate quickly and clearly

that a person in distress is deaf or hard of hearing can save lives and ease the burden on first responders. Morgan Summerton has earned the highest honor possible in Girl Scouting, the Gold Award, by addressing this



**Morgan Summerton**

issue with her project, Education for First Responders about Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Drivers.

Summerton, 18, of Sunapee, NH, is herself part of the community of people with hearing issues and uses hearing aids. She has mentored a younger girl with hearing loss and made an enormous difference in that girl's life as both her mentor and a model for how to handle hearing aids.

She comes from a family of first responders and developed a strong sense of responsibility toward others at an early age. She is CPR and first-aid certified, along with being an honors student and three-sport athlete.

"I chose this project because, as I reached 16 and started doing driver's ed," she said, "I definitely noticed there's a giant com-

munication gap between deaf and hard-of-hearing drivers and first responders. A lot of my family are first responders and I saw it from their side. And they're like, sometimes you can't tell if it's a medical issue or if it's that they're deaf or hard of hearing, or even under the influence."

Summerton said she felt stressed thinking that if she were pulled over and reached for pen and paper that it would be perceived as reaching for something threatening to police.

She began researching and found a visor card that could be helpful in traffic stops but would not be much use in a car crash,



**Prototype of sticker that could go on a license plate**

especially since first responders may be unaware of its existence. She at first thought a decal on a license plate might be the way to go, but some in the deaf community saw it as a way they could be targeted. She shifted to working on legislation that would allow for medical information to be listed on a driver's license, with the driver's consent, as well as educating first responders, while still working on the license decal idea. She put together a slide show to teach responders how to handle someone with hearing loss in an emergency. Her tips include not shining

a flashlight in someone's eyes, preventing them from lip reading, and to realize that the speech of some people with hearing loss can sound slurred, as if drunk.

Summerton worked with state Rep. Hope Damon on her legislation.

"The legislative process is not efficient, especially since the deadline for filing bills for this year had passed when Morgan first approached me," Damon said. "It is clear that while Morgan respects the process, she has the needed passion and diligence to continue this very worthwhile effort as long as necessary to succeed. I am completely confident that this is her nature – she does not give up! Her willingness to translate her own challenges with congenital hearing defect into service for the community is heart-warming. I particularly appreciate her recognition that passing legislation to provide the communications decal is not alone sufficient – her planned campaign to educate first responders is essential."

The legislation, Summerton said, would still allow a decal on a license plate but would be the size of a registration sticker (about a half inch) as opposed to the larger decal that would take much more space and had slashes through it. Drivers would be able to choose whether they want the decal on their license plate. She plans to follow through on the legislation even as she attends college this year.

## Child marriage outlawed in New Hampshire

When Cassandra Levesque was a Girl Scout Ambassador in 2018, she took on the battle of raising the legal age for marriage - at the time, 13 for girls and 14 for boys in New Hampshire. She earned the Gold Award for her work, which resulted in the age being changed to 16 for both.

That wasn't enough for this civic-minded Girl Scout, who continued her efforts to increase the age to 18, becoming a state representative for her town of Barrington while attending Southern New Hampshire University.

Her goal was achieved this summer when Gov. Chris Sununu signed into law legis-



**Cassandra Levesque**

lation raising the legal age to 18. "There are so many problems when it comes to child marriage," Cassandra told The Concord Monitor. "It opens up a door to human trafficking. It allows rapists to marry their victims. It allows for girls to basically not get to become the full potential that they can be."

Levesque has now set her eyes on rais-

ing the legal marriage age in other states. Dozens currently allow those 16 and 17 years old to marry.

"Marriage is more than a love story; it's a legal contract," Debra Altschiller told the Monitor. She was also the prime sponsor of the bill signed by Sununu. "If you're not legally able to get out of contract, you shouldn't be able to get into one."

"I became a Gold Award Girl Scout for my work to change laws and protect girls against child marriage in my state," said Levesque, "an issue that's really personal to me, since both my grandmother and great-grandmother were child brides."

## Visiting State House, town officials brings government operations to life

Girl Scout Troop 60180 meets year-round, providing the full Girl Scout Experience to its 22 members in Grades 1-7. One of its eight adult volunteers is leader Sheena Corbett, who works at the New Hampshire State House as an accounting coordinator. She makes sure her Girl Scouts learn how government works and that they can be involved in civic activity.

Corbett knew that anyone could apply for a resolution to be presented to legislators which would recognize the work her Girl Scouts did in the service of their community. They had earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award as Juniors setting up a fun run to show their town of Loudon that the pandemic was over as well as the benefits of getting outdoors. The troop set up online registration, made flyers on healthy eating and mental health, then put on a full-day event.

Last June, they were honored by the legislature through the resolution Corbett submitted.

"The Senate only meets January through June, so obviously they earned (the award) last fall," she said. "So they were now Cadettes instead of Juniors. But we were able to say last fall the girls did these projects and earned the Bronze Award, the highest you can earn as a Junior. We would like to recognize them in a public setting. So it was really great. They brought them in. They got to be introduced to the entire Senate."

Though her girls did not expect to have to speak in front of the politicians, when invited they stepped right up to the microphone.

"They didn't say a lot," Corbett said, "but they said their thank yous and I was so proud of them."

Afterward, many senators chatted with the girls, who were able to answer their questions about their project.

"They spoke so well," she said. "And I think I was like, there's no way, if they weren't in Girl Scouts, in all honesty, that they would have done so well at speaking like this, because we have them speak in front of people, and even just our troop, which is 20 girls all the time, and they



**Two of Sheena Corbett's Girl Scouts, Aubrey Pickering and Dahlia Corbett, stand with state Senator Howard Pearl after their recognition for earning the Bronze Award while they were Juniors. (Courtesy photo)**

speak in front of parents all the time. And I don't think they would have been able to get up so easily if they weren't somewhat used to it at this point."

Their visit to the State House isn't their only civic engagement. Corbett said they like to partner with Loudon's town moderator, opening voting at town meetings and leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Working on their Democracy badge last year, the leaders made the effort to bring government operations to life with a visit to their town office and meeting with officials there.

"We reached out to them ahead of time, and we said we'd like to go around and have our Scouts talk to each department and see what it is you do for our town. Like, why is it important to have these positions, and the town was so excited because I think a lot of times people, you

know – who takes an interest in the town clerk's position?"

So each department set up activities for the girls to do. The town clerk made up checkbooks for the Girl Scouts and had them "pay" tax bills for actual properties in town, had them fill in time sheets, "paid" their car registrations, and even gave them town badges with their photos on them.

"And then they took it a step further, and they made them sheets with all their names on it for voting, and they taught us about voting and doing the ballots. So our girls left that meeting having a really good understanding."

Corbett said they like to show the troop all of the things they really can do and accomplish, and to see women in positions of power.

"It's just so great for them to see," she said.





## Thank you to our camp donors

The following supporters provided funding for our 2024 campership assistance and girl assistance between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024.

These generous contributions played a critical role in providing opportunities for girls in both New Hampshire and Vermont to move beyond their comfort zones, seek new experiences and build positive attitudes about themselves and

the world around them. The value of an outdoor experience in a girl's life is beyond measure and we are grateful for their support. Donors who made a gift of \$100 or more to campership or girl assistance are listed.

We make every effort to acknowledge our donors appropriately. If we have made an error, please accept our apologies and contact Customer Care.

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## Summer Camp 2024

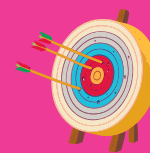


740  
campers

338 overnight campers  
402 day campers

44%

of campers received aid  
through campership,  
program credits, and  
cookie rewards



\$127,000  
in assistance awarded





# Young or old, Girl Scouts get involved in civics



Brownie and Daisy Troop 61345 of Concord, NH, worked on their Democracy and Community badges this fall. In October, they visited the State House to learn about the executive and legislative branches of government and to the state Supreme Court to learn about the judicial branch of government. Attorney Amy Manzelli taught the girls about the equal protection clause, the 14th Amendment, and the girls got to deliberate and read the verdicts from several historic cases while sitting in the justices' chairs. The girls also learned about advocacy from Concord City Council member Stacey Brown, who took them on a tour of the area around the Concord State House. The girls did advocacy yoga and heard stories of advocacy related to the buildings, trees, and statues along the route.



Troop 51726 of Manchester, VT, led the Pledge of Allegiance at their annual Town Meeting.



Gold Award Girl Scout Anya Nicoll testified in support of changing burial laws at the State House in Concord, NH.