

The Trailblazer

A Newsletter for Girl Scout Alumnae and Supporters

girl scouts
of the green and
white mountains

Fall 2025

Vol. 24

Volunteer power

*Girl Scouts of all ages
make a difference
in the world*

Nothing makes the world a better place more than giving of oneself to others. Volunteering is at the heart of Girl Scouting and the many people who give their time and talent to our Girl Scouts are clearly having a beneficial impact.

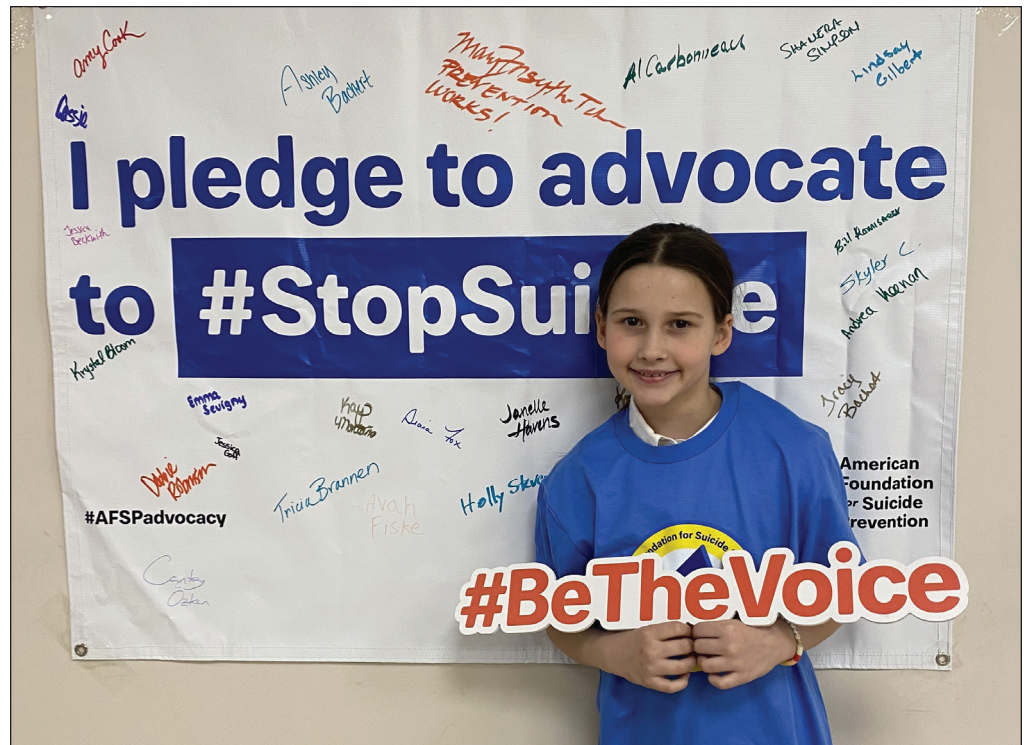
According to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau and AmeriCorps, over 75.7 million people in the U.S. formally volunteered by helping others through organizations like food banks and other nonprofits between September 2022 and September 2023.

Corporate volunteering is also on the rise. Donorbox reports that 71 percent of U.S. consumers want socially responsible companies and 82 percent of businesses say their employees want to participate in corporate-sponsored volunteer events with their peers.

More than just a “helpers’ high,” science shows that volunteering is linked to many benefits, according to the Girl Scout Research Institute’s 2020 study. “These include a sense of mattering, of purpose, and of full engagement with life—knowing that one’s activities are aligned with one’s deeply held values and true self.”

“The Benefits of Being a Girl Scout” study also showed that volunteering provides opportunities to boost social well-being through social contribution, social acceptance (trust in others), and social connectedness.

Through volunteering, the majority of troop leaders have reported to GSUSA



Avah Fiske, 11, of Loudon, NH, is a powerful voice in the movement to prevent suicide, having lost her older brother, Ryan, in 2020. She recently earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award for her advocacy work. (Courtesy photo)

that they feel they make a difference in girls’ lives, have gained a sense of purpose in volunteering, have made friends, and become more involved in their communities. Twenty percent say they have gained career or job opportunities through their Girl Scout volunteering.

For some, volunteering is part of a healing process, as Avah Fiske and her family demonstrate. Avah lost her brother to suicide when she was 6 years old, and now, at age 11, she has dedicated her life to advocating for suicide prevention.

Her mother, Emily, and her Girl Scout troop leader, Sheena Corbett in Loudon, NH, characterize her as an overachiever - “Someone who grabs the bull by the horns and holds on tight,” said Emily.

Avah actively volunteers her time by writing and voicing public service announcements, walking for Out of the Dark, speaking at community events, and and she and her mother advocated for gun safety laws in Vermont, as that is where her brother died.



Katelyn Hudson

Katelyn Hudson is an adult volunteer for Girl Scouts who was recognized just this month as a Rising Star by Vermont Business Magazine. She has given of her time and talent to the Board of Directors for Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, been a youth board member, a member of the council’s long range planning committee, and is a current delegate to the Girl Scouts of the USA National Council and a member of the Gold Award Committee, helping Girl Scouts achieve their goal of creating a project that truly changes the world for the better.

As an architectural designer and college professor, she encourages students and females in a male-dominated profession to keep learning and growing.

“For me, volunteering, especially with the

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Volunteer power

Continued from Page 1

Girl Scouts, is about giving back to an organization that gave me a place where I could explore my potential, supported and encouraged me while I pursued my interests," she said. "I definitely feel without Girl Scouts, I would not be where I am today. Earning my higher awards in Girl Scouting gave me the confidence in myself to go on to earn two doctorates. With all that, I want to give girls the same opportunities and support to find out what they want in the world."



Cara Benjamin

in their early 20s.

She was named the council's Volunteer of the Month for stepping up not only as a troop leader but also contributing as a volunteer support coordinator in her second year as an adult volunteer.

"I didn't have this when I was kid," she said. "I want to make sure that these girls have it."



Tabatha Moriarty

learn and care about their community.

"I was so proud to watch the girls grow through their Bronze Award project," she said. "What I love most is seeing their faces light up when people show interest in what they created. They've learned to lean on each other, push through challenges, and see that their work really makes a difference. Watching their pride as they realized they were creating something lasting for our town has been so special."

Moriarty's troop was recognized along with three other Girl Scout volunteers in October

As an adult, Cara Benjamin of Lyndonville, VT, knew she wanted girls in the Northeast Kingdom to have opportunities that can be harder to find in that rural part of the state, and began volunteering as a troop leader with Rebecca Lee - both

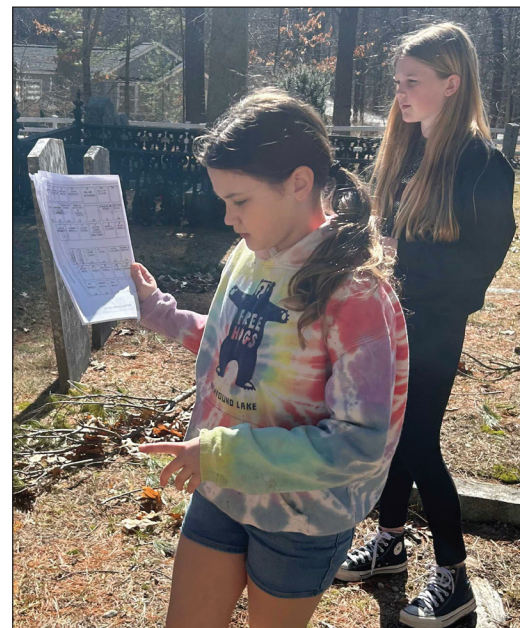
by Volunteer NH's Spirit of NH Awards. Also honored were Gold Award Girl Scout Katherine Thorner of Manchester, NH; Christine Haswell of Derry, NH; and Corinne George of Lee, NH.

George said volunteering for Girl Scouts has been one of the most rewarding journeys she has ever been on.

"I truly feel privileged to watch young girls grow and discover their strengths, their voices, and their dreams, as I have discovered more of my own!" she said. "It has been full of laughter, learning, and magic, watching these girls become confident young women. It has created memories that will last a lifetime."

Haswell has dedicated her life to volunteering, having given more than 70 years to Girl Scouts as a troop leader, outdoor and first aid trainer, and as a volunteer for her local elementary school.

Thorner earned the Girl Scout Gold Award by volunteering her time and effort to creating the Central Crochet Club, a high school club that does good by teaching students to crochet to make hats, scarves, mittens, and blankets to donate to those in need while also giving students a place to de-stress and pay attention to their mental health.



Girl Scouts Hanna and Magnolia of Troop 60162 in Amherst, NH, work on mapping the graves of Revolutionary War heroes, providing a resource for those in town. They also volunteered to clean the headstones in the cemetery. (Courtesy photo)

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.

Volunteering – making a difference in society



Dear friends,

Earlier this year, I attended a presentation by social scientist Rebecca Davis, the Co-Producer and Co-Director of the film *Join or Die*. The documentary, based upon the work of Robert Putnam and his book *Bowling Alone*, chronicles the rise and fall of service organizations across our country. It showcases the ties between volunteering, community service, and civic engagement. According to the book and the

film, there are clear positive connections between joining organizations and the health of society.

Girl Scouting was founded on principals of service, engagement and opportunities. By teaching girls' skills and how to care for themselves and others, Girl Scouting has elevated generations of women into leadership positions. Members know how to work together, solve problems, and develop solutions. It is no wonder that Girl Scout alums make up the majority of female members of Congress, local governments, small businesses, and every US female Secretary of State.

I know that Girl Scouting would not exist without volunteers. Volunteers provide opportunities for our girls, they mentor and support them through good times and bad, and they teach our

children about the value of community service and civic engagement. In short, our volunteers play an integral role in our Mission and in ensuring the success of our society now and into the future.

I hope that we do not lose our ability to join organizations and support each other, whether in Girl Scouting or in a myriad of other groups. As we focus on volunteerism, we celebrate those who have joined together for a cause and who make a difference every day. Whether you volunteer one hour or one thousand, every second is important, makes a difference, and is greatly appreciated.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

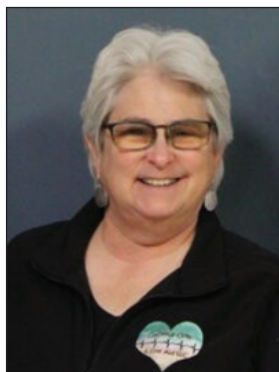
Patricia K. Mellor
Chief Executive Officer
Gold Award Girl Scout

Gail Klanchesser - providing life-saving education for Girl Scouts

The skills taught by Coastal CPR and First Aid are literally life savers. Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, the council serving Girl Scouts across New Hampshire and Vermont, has partnered with Gail Klanchesser, the owner of Coastal CPR and First Aid, for almost 20 years, offering Girl Scouts Child and Babysitting classes, First Aid badge workshops, CPR training, and other safety workshops, as well as providing training for adults. She has trained hundreds of Girl Scouts and Girl Scout volunteers over the years.

The babysitting workshop offered to Girl Scout Cadettes in Grades 6-8 teaches CPR, first aid, and safety in the home, along with information on child development.

"This is the age range where kids start thinking they might want to get a job or do something," she said. "They're not old enough to really get a job, and a lot of parents will ask me: Is my child old enough to take a babysitting class? Is my child old enough to take a CPR class? And I



Gail Klanchesser
class."

The Girl Scout workshop teaches what children of different ages are able to do, the level of care they need, and gets students thinking about the responsibilities of babysitting.

Coastal CPR and First Aid offers a variety of learning opportunities that range from community classes to in-home personal instruction. They are credentialed to offer programs through The American Heart

tell them it depends on your child. Every child hits that developmental milestone at a different age. If your kid is old enough to be left home alone, then they're probably old enough to take a

Association, The American Red Cross, The Health and Safety Institute, The Emergency Care and Safety Institute, and Safe Sitter.

Klanchesser is the owner and founder, with a background as a Firefighter/EMT-I, and has been an instructor for over 25 years. She's a lifetime member of Girl Scouts, a former Girl Scout troop leader, was a community team member for the Seacoast area service unit for the council, and held positions as treasurer, Fall Product coordinator, volunteer support coordinator, trainer, and camporee organizer. She received the council's Honor Pin in 2017.

Klanchesser recently suffered a serious health setback that has put her future plans on hold, but her staff is continuing to offer classes.

Girl Scouts are fortunate to be able to learn from Gail Klanchesser and Coastal CPR and First Aid and the council is proud of this partnership.

Alum Profile

Laura Brusseau – living a life of giving to others

Getting her start helping others through Girl Scouts, where she earned the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards, Laura Brusseau has continued a life of mentoring youth, helping those in need, and providing ways for others to volunteer and help.

“Girl Scouting taught me so much – leadership skills and new things, because all the merit badges are different, so it definitely makes you get outside your comfort zone to try different things,” she said. “One of my goals in Girl Scouting was to earn every badge!”



Laura Brusseau

Brusseau certainly has achieved many goals. She earned her bachelor’s degree in social science education and master’s degree in education, then taught for 20 years. She transitioned into the nonprofit world with positions like the director of development and operations at Catholic Charities NH and is currently engagement manager at The Mayhew Program, which helps at-risk boys in New Hampshire to believe in themselves and find their best.

Mayhew is the only program in the state of New Hampshire that works with at-risk boys year-round, providing those 10-18 years old residential summer camp and mentoring. They have boosted the high school graduation rate for these boys and many have gone on to college after a difficult start in life.

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She’s also the co-founder of Lakes Region Dancing with the Stars and the Spirit of Hope and Kindness Awards, and founder of the annual Lakes Region Socks Drive. She co-founded the Faith Hope and Love Foundation in 2006 to help youth dealing with food insecurity and homelessness, which ended with the pandemic. She has served on the boards of numerous nonprofits, is the volunteer coordinator for Hands Across the Table in Laconia and is on the Spirit of NH awards committee for Volunteer NH.

“I am passionate about empowering youth and have served as a mentor for the Circle Program and a coach for Girls on the Run,” she said.



Laura Brusseau is a Gold Award Girl Scout who has hiked all 48 4,000-foot peaks in New Hampshire and is the engagement manager at The Mayhew Program. (Courtesy photo)

What inspires her to do all this?

“I come from a family that always gave back,” she said. “My great-grandfather founded the local fire station in town. Both sets of grandparents were involved in church and the fire station and my dad was the fire chief in town. My parents were always the chaperones on trips, and, helped out with Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, coached us, so it kind of was ingrained in me. That’s just how I was raised, so I didn’t know any different.”

Her first nonprofit startup was the Faith Hope and Love Foundation in Laconia.

“I started teaching in 2004, and I definitely learned more from my students that year than they probably learned from me,” she said. “A lot of these kids were taking care of their parents, and they were worried about their parents at home because some had a substance misuse disorder.

I had some students that were living in cars and at the local Salvation Army. I had girls who had very low self-esteem and, just witnessing these amazing children in front of me, and being like, oh my gosh ... there’s got to be something to give back and help these kids.”

Realizing that wasn’t enough, she called a friend to start the foundation.

“We ended up giving out three or four college scholarships every year. We gave out free prom attire, for girls and boys, and then we also gave out emergency grants, for ... families for heat, electricity, food, and then also for enrichment, helping them pay for field trips, helping them play, pay for a band instrument, for example.”

She later began the Spirit of Hope and Kindness Awards, understanding that there needed to be recognition of students beyond the straight-A scholar or star athlete.

“I think there’s more to recognizing people, especially for their kindness and their kind heart,” she said. “Area schools would nominate a kindergarten and preschooler – that was one division – elementary school, middle school, high school, and then, we would honor four people from every category. We’d have a big ceremony, everybody would get some type of grant starting at \$250, but they couldn’t keep the money. They had to create a kindness project with it.”

She believes everyone has a passion to follow.

“Tap into that passion and make a difference,” she said. “Whether you’re extremely passionate about mountain biking, then there’s the opportunity to volunteer for trails, helmet safety, fixing bikes for people. I think that every single person, has an avenue, they just need to find something they’re passionate about, because you don’t want to just volunteer for the hours.”

Giving back just feels good.

“The person giving back,” she said, “I think they get more out of it. I’ve learned so much about different, individuals and their hardships, but also it makes you feel good, to give back.”

Alum Profile

Elizabeth Putnam – a world-changing conservationist

Every Girl Scout is encouraged to take action to make the world a better place. Elizabeth Titus Putnam took that to heart, creating The Student Conservation Association in 1957. It is the largest provider of hands-on conservation programs for youth and young adults, with national impact protecting America's public lands.

Putnam, 92, of Shaftsbury, VT, is quoted on the SCA website: "I was raised to believe that we are all responsible for taking care of this earth and that we must always give something back. The SCA started so we can help our country by protecting this land for future generations. I believe we all can make a positive difference in our lives."

The SCA was modeled after the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps as her senior thesis at Vassar College. She gained the support of the National Parks Service and began with volunteers at Grand Teton and Olympic National Parks. Today the SCA offers a wide range of opportunities for volunteers who protect and restore national parks, marine sanctuaries, cultural landmarks, and community green spaces.

Putnam says that when the Student Conservation Association was founded in 1957, she didn't think of it as starting an organization.

"I thought that the Student Conservation Association had the same ethic of service as the Girl Scouts, just in a new way," she said. "I wanted young people to serve the planet itself, to care for national parks and public lands that belong to all of us."

High schoolers may take part in the National Conservation Crews, where they build trails and work on restoration projects in national, state or local parks. Participants live on-site in tents, cook their own meals, and get to explore local outdoor recreation opportunities on non-workdays.

In Vermont, SCA interns help preserve the Green Mountain National Forest by performing educational outreach to park visitors, environmental stewardship, invasive plant removal, trail maintenance and recreation site maintenance.

Since 1994, the SCA New Hampshire Con-



Elizabeth Putnam, 92, founded The Student Conservation Association in 1957, which organizes conservation programs around the U.S. She was also a Girl Scout and troop leader. (Courtesy photo)

servation Corps has provided 1.4 million hours of service on public lands and to the people of New Hampshire through a partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and AmeriCorps.

Both the SCA and Girl Scouts share the same values, she said: "teamwork, responsibility, and pride in a job well done."

"Both paths, Girl Scouts and the SCA, teach that when you give your time and energy to something greater than yourself, you grow as a person," she said. "You become part of something lasting."

Doing this work has been fulfilling to Putnam, seeing young people find their purpose through service to the land.

"Watching them discover their own strength while repairing a trail or planting trees, it's remarkable," she said. "Some of them arrive shy and unsure; they leave confident, capable, and committed to protecting our planet."

It hasn't always been easy for her.

"The hardest part has been sustaining the work—keeping the organization strong through shifting economies and environ-

mental crises," she said. "Nature needs constant care, and that takes ongoing support and teamwork."

Putnam was a Girl Scout troop leader for her daughter, Phebe.

"Those afternoons, planning hikes, learning knots, organizing service projects, were some of the happiest times of my life," she said. "But even before that, I had been a Girl Scout myself. I still remember standing in my uniform with the other girls, singing carols to soldiers recovering from the second World War. There was a recovery hospital near Sands Point in Long Island, where convalescing servicemen were sent to heal before returning home. We would go there near Christmas and sing to the men gathered together as they recovered. The men waved, some with bandaged hands, some smiling faintly. I'll never forget it."

"That moment, standing with those girls, using our voices to lift someone else's spirit, planted something deep in me. I learned that even the smallest acts of kindness count. Service to others became more than a troop activity; it became a way of life."

Putnam said service to others strengthens communities and builds confidence in those who serve. It teaches empathy, discipline, and leadership. When you show up to help and are part of a team, whether comforting a wounded soldier by singing carols or restoring a damaged trail, you remind people that care still exists in the world and together we can make a huge difference.

"For the person serving, it changes everything. You learn to listen, to solve problems, to persevere, to work in a team with others. You realize that you can make a difference, and that discovery stays with you for life."

Putnam hopes the SCA continues to open doors for more young people.

"I want the next generation to know that caring for the Earth isn't just a job, it's a responsibility and a privilege. And I hope they keep singing, in their own way, like those Girl Scouts, lifting hearts and healing what's broken through simple acts of service to others."



Honored for their years of volunteer service this fall at Farnsworth Weekend, the council's annual alum gathering, were: in front - Margaret McGarry (25 years), Christine Cox (30 years), and Robin McGuire (55 years). Behind, from left, are CEO Patricia Mellor, Alexandria Surabian (5 years), Erica Woodward (5 years), Sarah Winter (5 years), Kari Fontaine (10 years), Laurie Himes (10 years), Patricia Decker (15 years), Joanne Grobecker (20 years), Elizabeth King (20 years), Valery Weston (20 years), and Peggy Piette, chair of the council's board of directors. (GSGWM photo)

Volunteers give hours or entire lives to Girl Scouts

Some of our volunteers have given a lifetime of service to Girl Scouts, while others give as they are able by improving our camp properties, teaching skills to children at our Expo and other events, guiding our council on boards and committees, as well as being Girl Scout troop leaders and helpers.

All are greatly valued and appreciated. They are the heart and soul of Girl Scouts, making it possible for girls to learn, grow, and thrive.

Robin McGuire of Lempster, NH, is a lifetime member who received her 55-year membership pin in September at a volunteer recognition ceremony during our annual Farnsworth Weekend gathering. She credits Girl Scouts with teaching her how to deal with all kinds of situations and instilling confidence in herself.

"Service is very very dear to my heart," she said in a 2024 interview. "If you want to make a difference in the world, which is the only reason we're here, then Girl Scouts is a place where you can really make a difference."

Christine Haswell of Derry, NH, is another longtime volunteer, recently recognized with a Spirit of NH Award through Volunteer NH.

"I have volunteered between one hour a week to five full days a week during the past 55 years," said Haswell. "But my Girl Scout volunteering, as troop leader from 1970 to 2024 was so rewarding. Being a trainer (facilitator in current terms) has also been something I've never been tempted to give up. Every adventure has been exciting and an opportunity to learn something new."

Corporate employees often donate their time for a few hours or days, as did volunteers from Saint Michael's College in Colchester, VT, who helped with building and painting new benches for Camp Twin Hills. In New Hampshire, the Granite United Way regularly connects us with local businesses for volunteer support during Days of Caring.

At The Expo, our annual showcase of Girl Scout and family-oriented businesses and groups, people have volunteered to demonstrate robots, teach archery and fishing skills, and more.

Whether donating your time for a single event or troop meeting, helping to choose a Gold Award Girl Scout for a scholarship, helping to secure funding, or painting a cabin, Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is grateful for all the people



Kathleen Kluxen and Kaila Rowen of Progressive Insurance gave their time and labor to paint the Kearsarge Adirondack at Camp Kettleford on October 1. Rowen is a supervisor and Kluxen is an administrator. Both were Girl Scouts as children and were happy to give back as adults. (GSGWM photo)

who help to make our organization one we can all be proud of.

Thank you for supporting Girl Assistance

Support of Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains' Girl Assistance Fund allows us to ensure every girl in New Hampshire and Vermont who would like to be a Girl Scout is able to, regardless of their family's economic circumstances. With support from these donors, we have been able to expand outreach to financially at-risk girls with dramatic results. For girls with financial need, the benefits of Girl Scout participation are particularly striking. Girl Scouting provides opportunities for these girls to explore and experience new activities which they might not have access to otherwise.

We have seen requests for financial assistance rise dramatically in the last few years and we are so grateful to these donors who made a restricted gift to Girl Assistance and helped girls with membership dues, uniforms, supplies, and program travel costs. These gifts help to



make this an unforgettable experience as these Girl Scouts gain invaluable confidence and leadership skills and form friendships to last a lifetime.

To make a gift to Girl Assistance, scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/fundagirl.

Thanks to:

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Girl Scouts volunteer to make the world a better place



A Brownie from Plymouth, NH, Troop 62526 visited the animals at the NH Humane Society in Laconia, where they volunteered to read books to the animals. (Courtesy photo)



Cadette Isabel of Williston, VT, took action to improve the air quality in her mother's office in Washington, D.C. by researching and adding appropriate plants. The grant helped her finish her third Journey, allowing her to earn the Summit Award. (Courtesy photo)



Juniors Selena and Gianna of Raymond, NH, Troop 10427 took to the streets of Manchester last December and had the opportunity to spend some time with the unhoused population and hand out blessing bags containing a blanket, hat, gloves, scarves, water, and a few snacks. (Courtesy photo)



Barre, VT, troops donated money from a bottle drive and Girl Scout Cookies to Veterans Place in Northfield. (Courtesy photo)

Our Girl Scout volunteers share the many service projects they take on with us every day. You can see more of them in our Troop Spotlight at www.girlscoutsgwm.org.