Celebrating 100 years of the Gold Award
Celebrating 100 years of

When you earn the Gold Award, you are part of an elite group. Since a highest award was introduced 100 years ago in 1916, only one million girls – approximately two percent of all Girl Scout alumnae – have earned the Gold Award or its equivalent.

When a girl answers the call to “go gold”, she isn’t just completing another service project or earning another pin. She’s making a meaningful, lasting change in her community. The Girl Scout Gold Award acknowledges the power behind each recipient’s dedication to not only empowering and bettering herself but also to making the world a better place for others.

Earning Girl Scout’s highest award can take up to two years to complete, and the average age of a Gold Award recipient is 17. Before a girl ever takes action on her idea, she must spend time: carefully researching issues to determine a project with a sustainable impact; creating a detailed plan to address a root cause of an issue; presenting the plan for approval to a committee of Gold Award advisors; and recruiting a team of volunteers to help make her plan happen.

Then the work of the actual project begins and takes at least 80 –100 service hours to complete. Once a project is done, girls are encouraged to tell the story of their projects so others know how Girl Scout’s leadership is making their community a better place.

The Gold Award is so much more than the pinnacle of the Girl Scout experience. Recipients tend to do well in life, well beyond their years in Girl Scouting! They rate their general success in life significantly higher and report higher success in reaching their goals within many areas.
Girls who earn the Gold Award distinguish themselves in the college-admissions process as being able to take on and manage a large project. They are also eligible for Gold Award scholarships from the Council and can even be recognized by Girl Scouts of the USA as a National Young Woman of Distinction. And few know that Gold Award recipients also enter the military at one rank higher than their counterparts.

A Gold Award recipient is seen as a role model and distinguished leader, a master at time management skills and someone who has actively sought to make the world a better place. This year, in GSSJC, 151 girls earned the Gold Award. You’ll meet several of these leaders in this year’s annual report.

Gold Award history
The Golden Eagle of Merit, the highest award in Girl Scouting from 1916 to 1919, marked the beginning of a long tradition of recognizing girls who make a difference in their communities with a prestigious award. The names have changed, but the meaning stays the same:

1916 – 1919: Golden Eagle of Merit
1919 – 1939: Golden Eaglet
1938 – 1940: First Class
1940 – 1963: Curved Bar
1963 – 1980: First Class
1980 – present: Gold Award
Leadership in action

Service is a hallmark of Girl Scouting and is woven into the experience of Girl Scouts across all ages, encouraging them to give back to the community, building citizenship and responsibility, and giving them the courage to step into leadership roles. And the Girl Scout Gold Award is the pinnacle.

Our mission is to help girls develop to their fullest potential in an all-girl environment. We help them relate to others with increasing understanding, skill and respect. We help them develop values to guide their actions and provide the foundation for sound decision-making, and we help them contribute to the improvement of society.

During the Gold Award centennial, we were especially proud to see the culmination of this effort in the faces of girls who already earned the award, but also in those who are starting their Gold Award journey or are nearly to the finish line.

You will meet some of those girls in this annual report and they are the best reminder of why Girl Scouting is relevant. Together we can ensure that all girls have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and go for the gold!

Thank you for your support and for believing in our girls.

GSSJC CEO Mary Vitek, center, oversees the hand off of GSSJC presidency from Mary Ryder (2014-2016), left, to Jean Janssen (2016-2018) at the Annual Meeting.
2016 highlights from around the Council

Our Membership
Making the world a better place starts with supporting and encouraging the girls and young women who will one day lead. This year, we helped 58,086 girls across southeast Texas thrive at home, at school and in their communities thanks to more than 16,262 volunteers who gave their time and talents to make the world a better place. Of these, 35,698 girls joined troops where they met regularly with other girls to learn the Girl Scout values, master skills to earn badges and explore their community. The remainder experienced Girl Scouting through our staff-led community outreach programs, which seek to provide underserved girls with the same experience as those in volunteer-led troops.

Financial Literacy & Girl Scout Cookies
While 90 percent of girls say it’s important to learn how to manage money, only 12 percent feel “very confident” making financial decisions. That’s where Girl Scout Cookies come in. Every box sold translates into valuable life lessons for a girl that will last far beyond her Girl Scouting years. When girls participate in the Cookie Program, they’re not only having fun and earning money to fund their troop supplies and activities, they’re sparking the entrepreneur within and learning critical life skills. This year, 25,225 mini-entrepreneurs gained five key skills through the Cookie Program: Goal Setting, Decision Making, Money Management, People Skills and Business Ethics.

The Great Outdoors
Many people associate Girl Scouts with the great outdoors- and rightly so! Last year, Girl Scouts embarked on nearly 51,097 excursions to our 10 camp properties to disconnect from the outside world, run and play, and take in our natural landscape. Approximately 1,890 girls attended summer (sleep-away) camp at one of our three American Camp Association-accredited programs. Here they overcame jitters, grew their confidence, made new friends and had a blast. Whether a girl’s favorite memory was roasting marshmallows, canoeing or nature hikes under the moonlight- she is better because of it.

Giving & Financial Support
Every dollar donated to our Council translates into helping girls navigate the challenges of daily life to achieve the best version of themselves possible. The cost to join Girl Scouts is only $15 a year, but the actual cost of making Girl Scouting a reality in our Council is $292 per girl. This is why donor support and engagement is critical to our mission. Thanks to financial support by individuals, families, foundations and businesses, we raised more than $2.94 million to ensure Girl Scouting is available to all girls, regardless of their ability to pay.
Making the world a better place

In the Girl Scout Law, girls pledge to make the world a better place. Lindsey Donaldson took that pledge one step further with her Gold Award. As a nature lover and avid member of the Council’s backpacking group, she visited Sam Houston National Forest and noticed a problem she could fix.

“I became inspired to do this project from my experiences as a Girl Scout backpacker and I noticed that the trails weren’t adequate enough to facilitate hiking,” Lindsey says. “Now, everyone who ever walks the hiking trails of the Sam Houston National Forest will be affected by my work.”

With the assistance of more than 20 volunteers, Lindsey built a bridge in the forest as well as restored trails by building water bars to prevent future erosion. Through earning her Gold Award, Lindsey learned project management, including how to motivate a team to complete tasks.

“I learned to place my volunteers in tasks that they personally enjoyed. I noticed if they liked what they were doing, they would be more effective and motivated to complete the assignment.”

For Lindsey, making the world a better place is nothing new. She also earned the Bronze and Silver Awards, building treasured trinkets for MD Anderson patients and organizing events for Park Manor Nursing Home. Each Girl Scout high award encourages girls to make a lasting, sustainable change in their community.
Gold Award turns into family legacy

Dr. Helene Sheena joined Girl Scouts as a shy second grader with no idea she was paving a way for her future daughters. Growing up in Tallahassee, Fl., Helene was challenged to push herself to earn both the Girl Scout Silver and Gold Awards in a single year. With the support of her troop, she rose to the occasion by creating a unique program to educate students about the dangers of drugs and alcohol use long before programs like DARE existed.

“I remember the obstacles that we faced as we battled local PTO’s and school administrators to present our program in assemblies at local elementary, middle and high schools,” Helene says.

Today Helene is one of few recipients of the First Class Award and the Girl Scout Gold Award due to the timing of her project overlapping with a name change of Girl Scouting’s most prestigious honor. Helene and her troop were among some of the first girls in the state of Florida to be presented with their awards by First Lady Adelle Graham at the governor’s mansion. She is also a Silver Award recipient.

Hard work is something Helene has since instilled in her daughters, Michelle, Brittney and Erin. Michelle and Brittney earned the Gold Award in 2011 and 2014, respectively, and are both lifetime members like their mother. Erin is currently spending her time raising money for homeless veterans while she decides on a Gold Award project idea.
Thea Fabio understands that earning the Girl Scout Gold Award is more than a recognition. The Houston attorney believes it also paves the way for girls to find their passion and choose a career. That’s why she decided to serve as a member of Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council’s Gold Award Advisory Committee, helping girls achieve the highest award in Girl Scouting.

Thea’s Girl Scout journey began when she was in elementary school. When her father fell ill and ultimately passed away, she was forced to leave her troop to help her mother with her three younger siblings.

Throughout the years, however, Thea never forgot her Girl Scout experience. When her oldest daughter, Alessandra Merrill, joined Troop #2489 in 1991 Thea volunteered as the assistant troop leader, determined to see Alessandra through the Girl Scout program. She also successfully guided her two younger daughters through the program. Alessandra would go on to earn the Gold Award.

“I have always been a supporter of girls’ education, and I felt it was important for girls to pursue a leadership project, which, of course, the Gold Award allows them to do,” said Thea.

Thea’s passion for the Gold Award led to her being on the GSSJC Gold Award Advisory Committee where she has helped hundreds of girls achieve Girl Scouting’s highest honor. She meets with other committee members twice a month to review Gold Award applications and does everything from hosting girl and adult Gold Award orientations to helping girls choose a project idea and see it through.
Sometimes your passion turns into your Gold Award project. That was the case for Ashka Dighe. She has been riding horses since she was a little girl, so it was fitting she would use her skills as a rider to help those in need to earn the Gold Award.

Ashka worked with Special Cheers, an occupational therapy center located in northwest Houston that treats children and young adults with physical and mental challenges through functional and horse therapy. She started by developing a simple training manual for volunteers to teach basic horsemanship skills. Her goal in developing the manual was to help volunteers become more effective in their work.

“I’ve been riding since I was a little girl, and I love horses,” Ashka says. “Working at a hippotherapy center allowed me to share my passion for horses by training other volunteers in horsemanship as well as ensuring that the horses were well taken care of.”

In addition to the manual, Ashka created a horse chart and schedule that considered the weight of each horse and its general health and temperament so that patients would be paired with the most suitable horse. To complete her project, Ashka hosted a special horse show where volunteers and patients celebrated the new skills they learned during the summer. Twenty-two special needs children and 24 volunteers benefited from her Gold Award.

Earning the Gold Award was important to Ashka not only because she was able to help Special Cheers but because she was able to demonstrate to herself and her community that girls can make a difference no matter where they are.
Bringing the 6th Ward community together

Francesca Farris believes art can bring many different people together for a common interest – something she proved by earning her Gold Award. To earn Girl Scouting’s highest honor, Francesca built a labyrinth and prayer garden in an empty lot adjacent to Multicultural Education and Counseling through Art (MECA), a nonprofit organization located in Houston’s historic 6th Ward that promotes healthy social and intellectual development of inner-city youth through arts education.

Francesca worked with 15 students and volunteers to design and construct the vibrant labyrinth. Members of the ward’s art community also donated several hand-created art pieces to Francesca to use.

While the project was completed in her community, Francesca’s inspiration came from across the Atlantic Ocean. “I took part in a religious tolerance program called Sacred Sites Quest and helped build a labyrinth in Freedman’s Town in Houston’s 4th Ward and on a UNESCO site in Lyon, France,” she says. “I used my project to spread awareness about this ancient archetype.”

It took several months for Francesca and MECA to finalize the design, which compliments the existing architecture and surroundings of MECA’s campus, and then to collect supplies. The installation of the labyrinth took place in July 2015.

For Francesca, earning the Gold Award was an important way to showcase her passion for labyrinths and served as the pinnacle of her Girl Scout experience.
Laura Malcotti-Sanchez knows first-hand how hard it can be to adjust to a new country as an immigrant. The Gold Award recipient moved to the United States from Venezuela with her family when she was just seven years old. When it came time to come up with a Gold Award project, Laura knew exactly who she wanted to serve in her community.

She worked with Casa Juan Diego, a shelter in Houston that serves immigrants, refugees and the poor, to renovate rooms at their facilities.

“Casa Juan Diego helps new immigrants immerse themselves and become productive members of American society, which is something I consider very important for Houston and this country,” Laura says.

Prior to beginning her renovations, Laura led multiple workshops to teach her volunteers skills they would need to complete the project including: how to use a sewing machine; how to repair and renovate walls; and how to paint a mural.

Laura and her volunteers were able to renovate four resident rooms and complete a mural in one of the shelter’s playrooms. They were also able to sew and install eight curtains.

Through this project, my volunteers and I were able to make Casa Juan Diego more comfortable for the residents. This project has also made me want to explore the possibility of taking on similar projects while in college that will benefit the Houston community.
Ja’Nae Hardy was disappointed in her peers after witnessing a fellow student suffer a seizure at school. When no one knew how to react to provide assistance to the student, Ja’Nae decided to come up with a solution herself. She created and implemented Seizure Action Team Partners (SAT Partners), a student response program that helps provide a safe environment for those experiencing seizures, to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award.

“With so many students and only one nurse, epileptic students may be left in their peers’ hands temporarily,” Ja’Nae says. SAT Partners would not only help the student experiencing the seizure but provide a gap plan in the event the school’s nurse was assisting another student or coming from another location within the school.

With support from the local chapter of the Epilepsy Foundation, her school’s nurse and the school’s chapter of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), Ja’Nae set up education and training sessions to teach students how to respond if one of their peers was having a seizure. The first group of students to take the training were members of HOSA.

To maintain the program, the school nurse and HOSA teacher agreed to host SAT Partner training sessions each school year with the materials that Ja’Nae provided them, including an overview of SAT Partners, epilepsy information, training opportunities and resources for students with epilepsy. Ja’Nae also provided first aid training tools, video training materials and several student program packets to be used by the training facilitator. Ja’Nae hopes the program will be expanded to other schools in Cy-Fair ISD.
Thank you 2015-2016 GSSJC donors!

Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council (GSSJC) expresses its deepest appreciation to the donors listed on the following pages for their generous contributions in support of Girl Scout programs between September 1, 2015 and August 31, 2016. More information on opportunities to support GSSJC is available by contacting Beth Shea at bshea@sjgs.org or 713-292-0321.

Great care has been taken to ensure the proper recognition of our donors. If an error or omission does occur, we sincerely apologize and hope you will bring it to our attention. Please address all corrections to Suzanne Boak at 713-292-0273 or sboak@sjgs.org. Thank you for your continued support.

Leadership for a Lifetime

Your gift to this annual fund provides quality services to 58,086 girls in 26 counties, assists 16,262 Girl Scout volunteers, supplies innovative and relevant program opportunities for all girls, and ensures that the best possible training, resources and support are available.

Numbers in ( ) represent years supporting GSSJC, according to our records.

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For more than a century, Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council has inspired and enriched the lives of girls in our community. Preserving and building upon positive outcomes for future generations of girls is the mission of the Juliette Gordon Low Society, whose members have included GSSJC in their estate plans. We are proud to recognize those who have already made commitments to our legacy society and invite others to join them as we build a sound future for GSSJC. For more information on creating a legacy for the benefit of GSSJC, contact Diane Pavey at 713-292-0277 or dpavey@sjgs.org.
The Emerald Circle
The Emerald Circle awards merit scholarships to graduating seniors who have earned the highest award in Girl Scouting, the Gold Award. Funds are derived from membership dues and donors, as well as The Emerald Circle Gold Award Merit Scholarship Endowment Fund. Since 1996, The Emerald Circle has granted 328 scholarships totaling $468,500. For information on how to join or to give to the scholarship fund, contact Beth Shea at 713-292-0321 or bshea@sjgs.org.

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The Promise Society consists of individual members who have donated $1,000 or more for at least five consecutive years.

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**2015-2016 Financials**

**Fiscal 2016 Operating Revenues**

Product Sales is the largest source of revenue for GSSJC, totaling $10,495,000 in net revenue. Product Sales includes the Girl Scout Cookie Sale and the Fall Product Sale. In addition to being the premier financial literacy program for girls, the Cookie Sale generated gross revenue of $17,309,000. Costs included cost of cookies sold of $4,827,000 and bonuses for troops of $2,673,000. The Fall Product Sale is a friends and family sale that provides funding for troops around the beginning of the school year. This sale generated gross revenues of $1,844,000, cost of sales of $708,000, and troop bonuses of $451,000.

Non- Capital Contributions and Capital Contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations totaled $1,540,000 and $672,000 respectively. Allocations from United Way agencies totaled $1,408,000.

**Endowment Net Asset Composition**

Monies contributed to the Endowment funds are intended to ensure the future of Girl Scouting for girls over the next century. By making gifts to the Endowment fund with direct cash gifts or through various charitable vehicles including wills and charitable trust, you are ensuring the legacy of Girl Scouts in San Jacinto Council.

- **2016:** $5.7 M
- **2015:** $5.4 M
- **2014:** $5.4 M
- **2013:** $4.7 M
- **2012:** $4.5 M
- **2011:** $3.9 M
- **2010:** $3.7 M
Fiscal 2016 Operating Expenses

Eighty-five percent of total expenses are used for program directly benefiting members of GSSJC. Management & General costs as a percentage of total expenses are 9% and fundraising expenses are at 6% of total expenses. In 2016, approximately $2.2 million was spent on capital improvements to our camps and service centers.

Net Assets as of August 31, 2016

Net assets for GSSJC reflect a large investment in land, buildings, and equipment. Also, our fiscal year begins on September 1 and ends on August 31. Due to the timing of our operations, we raise funds in one fiscal year to be expended in the next. The Girl Scout Cookie Sale is the largest source of revenue. This sale concludes in May and the funds raised are gradually depleted from then until the following April. With the fiscal year end of August 31, our general operations net assets reflects our position at the end of our largest fundraising effort. These net assets are used for our operations in the next fiscal year.
2015-2016 Financials

It costs $292 per girl to make Girl Scouting a reality at GSSJC

$146 Provides Council-wide programs and activities at all levels that enhance troop participation and allow girls the opportunity to build new skills. It also provides the opportunity for girls to participate in activities beyond the traditional troop setting.

$52 Develops and imparts the very best training, materials and curriculum for adult volunteers, ensuring the needs of each Girl Scout are met.

$41 Maintains, updates and expands the use of all 10 camp properties, eight service centers, GSSJC headquarters and the Program Place for Girls.

$41 Supports membership development, including recruitment and registration of girls and volunteers, staff support to volunteers and financial assistance available to all members.

$12 Enhances the visibility and affirms the successes of Girl Scouting as the premier organization for girls through press releases, media coverage, The Golden Link, online Resources site and www.gssjc.org.
President of the Council and Chair of the Board
Jean T. Janssen

Vice Chair
Delores J. Hinkle

Vice Chair
Marguerite Young-Chapman

Secretary
Betsy Kamin

Treasurer
Bette Branch Lehmberg, JD, CPA

Mission Statement: Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

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