



Connections

**News for Girl Scouts of
San Jacinto Council supporters**
Spring 2023

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Gold Award Spotlight on Naina Merchant!

Naina noticed the college application disadvantages of first generation students. Their parents have not gone to school under the American school system, may have language barriers, and difficulties getting assistance for college preparation. Naina saw family members, friends and classmates struggle with choosing courses, when to take the SAT/ACT, which colleges to apply to, the importance of GPA and many more worries of a high schooler.

Naina addressed this issue by starting a radio show series, along with the host of Chai Time Radio Show (99.5 FM). She interviewed high school counselors, college admission committees, principals, teachers, and alumni. In addition, guest speakers were bi-lingual, and listeners had the ability to call in and ask questions. Shows were held on holidays which allowed teens to tune in, ask their questions and get the information they need.

"I know I reached my goal by the number of views and listeners we had. The first show had 468 listeners and 1.8k views on Facebook and the second show had 722 listeners and 2.2k views on Facebook. My Gold Award is sustained beyond my involvement by Chai Time Radio. The recordings of each show are posted on YouTube and on Spotify podcast," said Naina.

Naina is one of many Girl Scouts who are making the world a better place because of supporters like you. Thank you!



The Women's Leadership Network



WLN is designed to bring together strong, connected women and men who are passionate about supporting future female leaders through the best female leadership program available – today's Girl Scouts. WLN will offer its members opportunities to expand their own personal and professional networks through exclusive events, as well as the opportunity to mentor future leaders. Membership in WLN starts with a personal gift of \$1,000.

For more information, contact Diane Likeness at 713-292-0346 or dlikeness@sjgs.org. We look forward to seeing you at our exclusive WLN events, as we network, mentor our future leaders, support the Girl Scout leadership pipeline and more!

Upcoming Donor Events:

March 27, Lessons in Networking Mentoring
Program Place for Girls
6 – 8 p.m.

April 12, Care Package Social
Program Place for Girls
6 – 8 p.m.

May 5, WLN Camp Day
Camp Agnes Arnold
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

June 13, Summer Social
SheSpace
6 – 8 p.m.

Send a Girl to Camp!

GSSJC remains committed to providing fun, mission driven outdoor experiences for all girls in our community. Summer overnight camp provides a supportive environment where girls spend time together and experience the outdoors. They also learn about important ecological and environmental issues with hands-on activities, like learning to canoe, riding horses, and growing their leadership and people skills. We are thrilled to share that this summer we'll again be offering resident (sleepaway) camp sessions at Camp Agnes Arnold, Misty Meadows Ranch, and Casa Mare. Girls need a sense of normalcy and a safe place to make friends, have fun, experience the magic of camp, and tackle new challenges.

Help us give every girl access to the joy and developmental benefits that resident camp provides by donating to our Campership program. Camperships allow girls to attend summer resident camp regardless of their family's financial situation. Many times this is the only way girls can experience the magic of camp.

Please consider donating today. The benefits of this investment extend far beyond the one-week resident camp experience. For more information, please contact Ruth Delaunay at rdelaunay@sjgs.org or visit gssjc.org/donate.



Thank You, Donors!

Great care has been exercised to ensure the proper recognition of our donors. If an error or omission does occur, we apologize and hope you will bring it to our attention. Contact Ruth Delaunay at rdelaunay@sjgs.org. Contributions made Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2022.

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GSSJC's Sailing Program Helps Girls Overcome Fear and Gain Confidence

Girl Scout Sarah Shank had no idea how much she liked sailing until she attended an Introduction to Sailing weekend with her troop to learn about the Mariner program. After just one exhilarating ride on a sailboat piloted by an older girl Mariner, Sarah was hooked on sailing. She joined the sailing program soon after and recently finished her sixth and final year in the program.

The Mariner program is one of Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council's oldest special interest groups. The program started about 50 years ago to provide individual girls who enjoy challenging outdoor adventures an opportunity to specialize in an activity outside of traditional Girl Scout activities. Mariners meet at GSSJC's Casa Mare in Seabrook during the spring and summer. The girls receive instruction from trained adult volunteers and older Mariners, and mid-program Mariners who serve as on-the-water coaches.

Girls must have a swim card and take basic training for two weekends before joining the program. Girls learn everything from turning the boat upright if it tips over to how to do man overboard recovery. Many girls who join the program have never been on a sailboat. However, by the end of the training, they will have learned how to sail a 14-foot sailboat. Robert Rice, a Mariner volunteer and avid sailor, says sailing isn't easy, but it's within every girl's reach. They don't have to be athletic or a good student to be a successful sailor. "It's an opportunity to try challenging things in an environment where failure has a soft landing," he said.

Once they have completed the basic sailing class, girls are members of the Mariner program. They can come to camp for Sail for Fun Mariner weekends, take more advanced sailing classes, and help non-sailors experience the fun during Intro to Sailing weekend. The girls start sailing on small Sunfish boats and eventually learn to sail bigger boats.

Sarah recalls her first time on a sailboat with an older Mariner. She was scared she might fall off the boat – and she did. "The older Mariner was really nice. She said, 'Don't worry about it.' When I got out of the water, I thought, 'That was so much fun!'" Sarah said. "I was surprised I liked sailing so much!" Besides learning how to sail, Sarah has learned a lot about leadership. Her fellow Mariners elected her as a vice commodore on the program's leadership team during her Ambassador year. The program helped her develop self-confidence and apply herself more in Junior ROTC in high school, which led to her becoming Flight Commander and Drum and Bugle Commander, she said.

The friendships she has developed while in the program are just as important. Sarah has gained a close-knit group of friends who share her love of sailing. Some have since graduated, but the girls stay in contact. If not for Mariners, Sarah says she would have never met her friends. Sarah says sailing is relaxing and peaceful. "Being out in the middle of the bay, I feel super free from all the stress of high school," Sarah said. "It's just a break from daily life and a lot of fun hanging out with friends." But she says what brings her the most joy is seeing the younger girls enjoying it as much as she does.

Robert says it is important for younger girls to see older girls take command of the boat, so they can get excited about the program and become part of the Mariner family. "Mariners is a community that is tight-knit," he said. "Friendships are vibrant, powerful, and long-lasting."

Some girls in the program go on to attend maritime programs in college or enlist in the Coast Guard. Sarah plans to study Maritime Transportation Operations at the Maine Marine Maritime Academy. Support programs like Mariners by donating at www.gssjc.org/donate.



Congratulations, SPURS/STARS Hunt Seat Competition Team

Five GSSJC girls qualified for the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) Regional competition on Feb. 12. They hope to advance at the Zone 7 Finals in San Antonio and move onto Nationals in Tryon, North Carolina.

Horse trainers Sarah Triplett and Reanna Shular are proud of how these young ladies represent our council's unique equitation programs.



GSSJC's Celebration of the Century was an EPIC event.

More than 2,200 people attended the December event. Troops arrived full of energy and ready to get the party started. Girls had a blast petting goats, making s'mores, creating SWAPs, dancing to music, and watching the opening parade and closing fireworks. There was plenty of fun for everyone to enjoy as the council celebrated its 100th birthday.

We want to thank the Girl Planning Board and centennial committee for making this event possible.

Special thanks to the following sponsors:



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girl scouts of san jacinto

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Volunteer Honored for Sailing Program

Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council and family and friends of late Girl Scout member Betty Sawchak honored the Mariners co-founder and longtime volunteer in January during a reception at Casa Mare hosted by fellow volunteer Kathy Tamer. Sawchak's daughters received a plaque commemorating her legacy as a robust supporter and a dedicated volunteer who enjoyed helping build girl leaders through the Mariners program.

Sawchak and Tamer co-founded Mariners about 50 years ago, making the program one of GSSJC's oldest special interest groups. The program provides individual girls who enjoy challenging outdoor/water adventures with an opportunity to learn how to sail and, eventually, teach other girls how to sail.



Some of the first Girl Scouts (now adults) to participate in Mariners and their family members attended the reception. They shared fond memories of Sawchak and stories of how she and the program impacted their lives positively. They recalled how she encouraged them to excel and supported them along the way. Some of these women now give back as Mariner volunteers!

As Juliette Gordon Low said, "The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are it's makers." We are sincerely grateful for Sawchak's service and her legacy which lives on through the Mariners program.



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