

Karlene Hoefener: Girl Scout Gold Award Advisor Extraordinaire

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GLEN CARBON – Since 1916, Girl Scouts have been making meaningful, sustainable change in their communities and around the world through their Girl Scout Gold Award projects. The Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout can earn, acknowledges the power behind each recipient's dedication to not only empowering herself, but also to making the world a better place for others. As the Girl Scout Gold

Award celebrates 100 years of girls changing the world, Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) is highlighting some of our shining stars who exemplify the greatness of this award.

22...2008...19...100...These numbers may sound random to most people, but for Girl Scout Volunteer Karlene Hoefener from O'Fallon they each have a significant meaning.

22 – Karlene Hoefener has been a Girl Scout Volunteer for 22 years, most of those years in her current hometown of O'Fallon, IL. In that time, she has held many volunteer positions such as Assistant Cook at camp weekends, Day Camp Director, Service Unit Cookie Chair and Troop Leader, just to name a few. Karlene is obviously passionate about the entire Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and her dedication to improving the lives of girls is something to be commended.

2008 – This is the year that marked the beginning of Karlene's adventure as a Girl Scout Gold Award Advisor. Mentoring girls through their Girl Scout Gold Award journey takes dedication. To earn the award, a Girl Scout Senior or Girl Scout Ambassador must design and carry out a project that fulfills a need within her community, creates change and is sustainable. The project must be completed with a suggested minimum of 80 hours of work. Only about 5 percent of eligible girls earn the prestigious Gold Award, and their advisor plays a key role. Karlene states, "As a Girl Scout Leader our role is to always be there for the girls to encourage them, support them, guide them and listen to them. Being a Girl Scout Gold Award Advisor is just that!"

19 – Karlene has mentored 19 girls through their entire Girl Scout Gold Award project. That number continues to grow as she has another Girl Scout who is actively working on her Gold Award project and 5 additional girls that are researching projects to begin earning their award. Projects that Karlene has advised included working with special needs students, helping Alzheimer's patients, making recordings to assist the blind, anti-bullying campaigns in local grade schools and many, many more. "For me, the best part of being a Girl Scout Gold Award Advisor is seeing the excitement in the girl's eyes when she does something she did not think she could do. That is why I stay in Girl Scouting – to see girls' excitement when they achieve goals no matter how big or small."

100 – As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout Gold Award, Karlene encourages other adults to consider making a difference in a girl's life by mentoring her through her Girl Scout Gold Award project. Also, she'd like to encourage all Girl Scouts to consider earning their Gold Award. Karlene adds, "The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award you can earn as a Girl Scout – what better way to end your Girl Scout experience than to say you did it all!"

Today, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. is the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. Its sole focus is to meet the needs of all girls (ages 5-17) from diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Today's Girl Scouts not only enjoy camping and crafts, but they also explore math and science and learn about diversity, good citizenship, leadership and teamwork. Girl Scouting is the place where girls experience the fun, friendship and power of girls together.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is a not-for-profit organization supported by various United Ways throughout the region. Girl Scouts is a Proud Partner of United Way. For more information, please call Tricia Higgins at 618.242.5079.