



Girl Scout Gold Award Centennial: Mary Anne Hopper

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Mary Anne Hopper: Girl Scout Gold Award Trainer since 2000

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.

Girl Scout Gold Award recipients make great impacts on their communities. A girl puts in a tremendous amount of work to make her project successful, thus earning her Girl Scout Gold Award. But how does a girl get started on her journey? That's where a group of select Girl Scout volunteers come in – volunteers like Mary Anne Hopper.

Mary Anne Hopper from Waterloo, IL first became a Girl Scout volunteer in 1993. While registering her youngest daughter for Girl Scouts, she learned there was a need for more troop leaders in her area. With the help of another parent as a co-leader, Mary Anne started her Girl Scout volunteer experience as a troop leader for her daughter Amy's troop.

In 1996, Mary Anne's oldest daughter, Michelle, earned her Girl Scout Gold Award. Soon after, daughter Amy was approaching the age when many Girl Scouts start thinking about the Gold Award themselves. As Amy's troop leader and parent, Mary Anne wanted to know as much as she could about the award. Mary Anne was herself a Girl Scout for 8 years but never knew about the Girl Scout Gold Award (then known as First Class). She wanted to make sure Amy and other Girl Scouts knew about the award and had the necessary resources to achieve it. In 2000, Mary Anne became a Girl Scout Gold Award Trainer and Gold Award Committee member – positions she still holds today.

Mary Anne is a very busy individual; she is a full time paraprofessional at Waterloo High School and also works as an usher for the St. Louis Cardinals during baseball season. In addition, Mary Anne also volunteers at her church as well as the Cub Scout Day Camp and Camp Vandeventer. People like her usually get asked why they do so much or if they ever think about "cutting back" on their commitments. When Mary Anne is asked this regarding her Girl Scout volunteering, she replies, "If there had not been volunteers for my daughters' troops, they would have missed out on a lot of new experiences. I have something to share with the girls as well as the adults with whom I interact, and it is important to me that I share it."

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scout Gold Award, Mary Anne encourages other adults to consider becoming a Girl Scout Gold Award volunteer. She

states, “You get to watch girls grow into young women who can do anything they choose to do. If you help a girl with her Gold Award project, you may be that one resource that helps her project go from good to great!”

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award a girl can earn in Girl Scouting. To earn this 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, and only about 5 percent of eligible girls earn the prestigious Gold Award.

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.