

Girl Scout Gold Award Centennial Feature Nicolle and Danielle Patton: Golden Sisters

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Glen Carbon, Illinois – 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) will highlight some of our shining stars who exemplify the greatness of this award.

Most people who have been a part of Girl Scouting for several years feel as though their troop and leaders are like a family. That’s definitely the case with Nicolle and Danielle – literally. The Patton sisters, both from Mt. Vernon, have been involved with Girl Scouting ever since they were old enough to join the organization. And, each of them earned the prestigious Girl Scout Gold Award. They attribute a lot of who they are today to Girl Scouts and their journey for Gold.

When the sisters were in the process of earning their Gold Awards, they each took on projects that would benefit the youth of their community. Nicolle partnered with Hope In Christ shelter. She educated people on the issue of homelessness in their community, made major improvements to the shelter facility and provided Christmas boxes to the children at the shelter. “Nicolle has influenced me for as long as I can remember. Every little sister wants to be like her older sister, and I was no exception,” states Danielle. “When I saw her work hard for her Gold Award, I told myself that one day I would be standing on that stage receiving recognition for all of my hard work. She made me want to strive to be a better person and set my goals higher,” Danielle added.

For her Girl Scout Gold Award project, Danielle partnered with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). She wanted to give the youth that were served by this organization some of the luxuries many others think of as staples. She made sure each child had a box that contained supplies to have an age appropriate birthday party; a bag with many essentials, books and toys; and a life book that provided words of encouragement and inspiration to the children who received them.

Having achieved the Gold Award herself, Nicolle was there to support her sister along the way. “Danielle has always told me she looked up to me. I wanted to set an example for her; I wanted her to strive to be the best that she could be because she’s an amazing young lady,” said Nicolle. “Above all, I reminded her of the impact she was making as she continued to work on her project. She was changing people’s lives for the better. The long hours of work she put into the project couldn’t compare to the impact she was having on those deserving people. I am extremely proud of what she accomplished.”

Nicolle and Danielle encourage young girls to get involved in Girl Scouting and for older girls to go for their Gold Award. “Girl Scouts has impacted my life so much over the years,” said Nicolle. “Not only has it helped me come out of my shell, but it also taught me some important life lessons along the way. It taught me that I could be a leader – that I had the drive and the skills all along. To this day, I use those same skills in my work and my schooling,” Nicolle added.

“Earning my Gold Award taught me skills that I’ll use in the future; it gave me a sense of adulthood,” Danielle said. She also encourages other girls to strive for this top award. “Do it! Believe in yourself and push yourself to do better each day,” she added.

Nicolle is in her final year at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville where she will graduate with a degree in Mass Communications, minoring in Theatre and Dance. She plans to pursue a career in the television industry after graduation. Danielle is a senior at Mt. Vernon Township High School. Upon graduation, she intends to pursue a degree in Communications.

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.