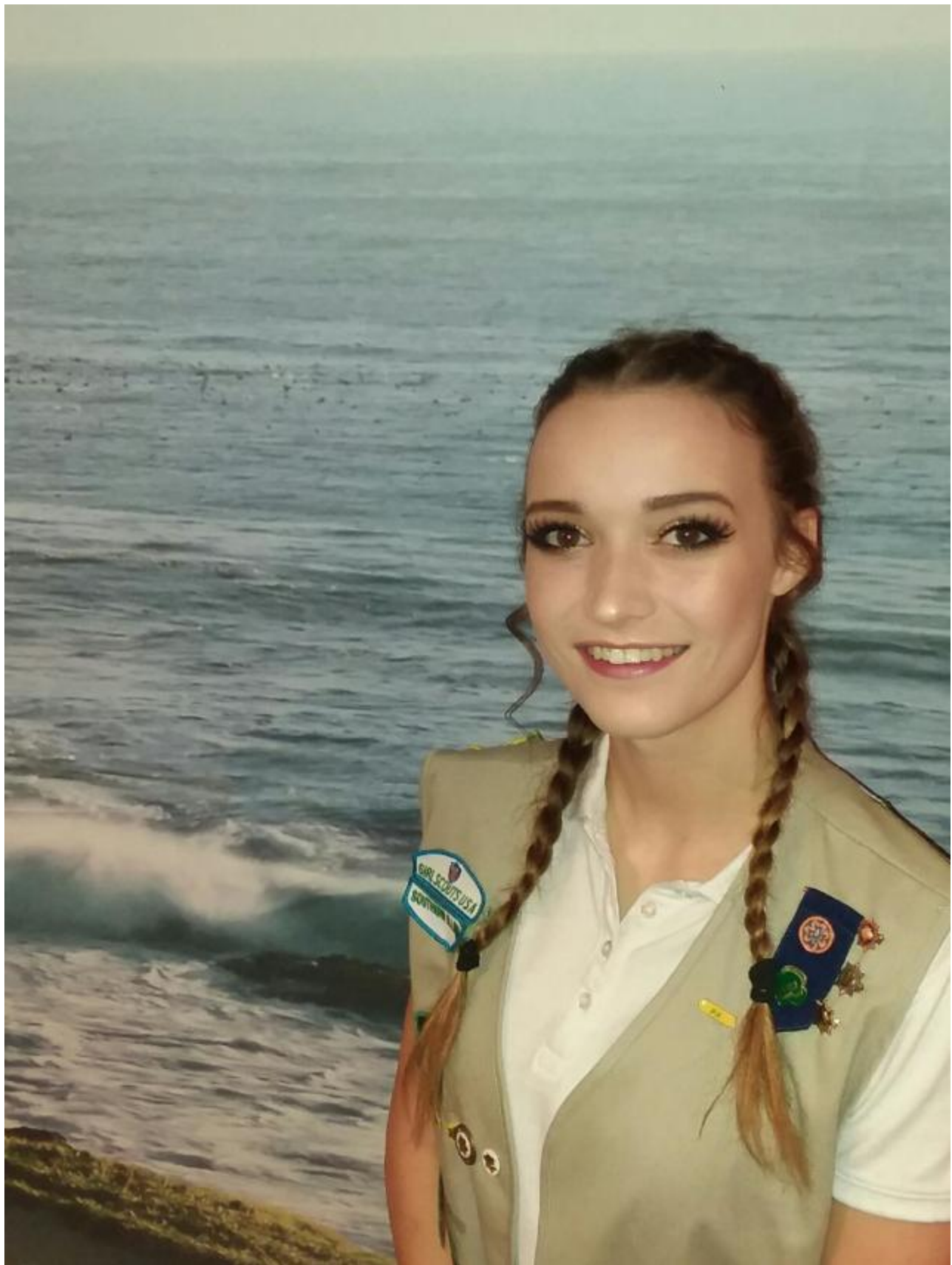


# **Edwardsville's Makenzie Keiser captures Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor**

by Erin Johnson

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GLEN CARBON – Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) is pleased to announce that Makenzie Keiser from Edwardsville has earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can earn. For her Girl Scout Gold Award project, Makenzie helped teach area children how to grow vegetable gardens.

“If you give children a vegetable for a day, you feed them for a day,” she said. “If you teach children how to grow vegetables, they will always have food. Also, children who grow vegetables are more likely to eat them.”

Makenzie collaborated with the YMCA Early Childhood Development Center in Edwardsville to carry out her project. First, she worked with their staff to design and develop three raised gardens at the facility’s children’s playground. Next, she taught students about the importance of vegetables and how they are cultivated – letting students pick which seeds they wanted to grow.

She then taught students how to start growing seeds in their classroom while she built the outdoor planters. When the time came, she helped the children transplant the vegetables into the new garden beds and taught them how to weed and water. When the plants were ready, Makenzie assisted with the harvest and had the kids taste their produce. Overall, the gardens generated greater knowledge and excitement about vegetables for the young participants.

“Some of the kids even went home and asked their parents if they could start their own gardens,” she shared.

Makenzie explained that she too was able to grow by completing her Girl Scout Gold Award project – including by developing more confidence, self-insight and communication skills.

“I learned that I am a hands-on learner and I can come up with great ideas to support the community,” she said. “My Girl Scout Gold Award project helped boost my self-confidence.”

Makenzie is the daughter of Mike and Laura Keiser. She is a graduating junior at Edwardsville High School and has been a Girl Scout for 12 years. Her future plans include enlisting in the Army and attending Southern Illinois University Edwardsville to pursue a degree in Medical Science.

The Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can earn, recognizes a Girl Scout's commitment to excellence as she develops skills and values to meet present and future challenges in her life. To earn the Girl Scout Gold Award, a Girl Scout Senior or Girl Scout Ambassador must design and carry out a project that fulfills a need within a

girl's community, creates change, and is sustainable. The project must be completed with a suggested minimum of 80 hours of work. Only about five percent of eligible girls earn the prestigious Gold Award.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) is a high-capacity Girl Scout council serving approximately 11,300 girls and engaging 4,550 adult volunteers in 40½ counties in Southern Illinois. GSSI Mission: Girl Scouts [www.gsofsi.org](http://www.gsofsi.org) builds girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

The Girl Scouts organization is the world's largest leadership development organization for girls. In partnership with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all their lives – such as strong values, social conscience, and conviction about their own potential and self-worth. Today's Girl Scouts not only enjoy camping and crafts; 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.

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