



Girl Scout CEO Villie M. Appoo receives Distinguished Alumni honors from Washington University's G.W. Brown School of Social Work

April 19 2013 9:35 AM

Glen Carbon, Illinois – Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois Chief Executive Officer Villie M. Appoo received a Distinguished Alumni award from Washington University's G. W. Brown School of Social Work at a ceremony last night at Steinberg Auditorium.



Born in Mumbai, India, Villie joined Girl Guides in first grade and was active for 11 years. Girl Guides taught her perseverance and confidence. Her Girl Guide troop participated in many community service projects including volunteering with the Society for the Education of the Crippled. This early exposure to service sparked Villie's interest in social service.

“When I came to the United States from India 37 years ago I did not know anyone in this country and chose Brown School of Social Work from a list of the top 10 schools of social work in the US,” said Appoo. “I have never regretted that decision and during my 36 year career, I have come to appreciate that social work is a dynamic and evolving discipline. I have been lucky to have had experiences that ranged from addressing the root causes of poverty through the Settlement House approach of community organization and social action at Grace Hill to a more holistic approach at Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois where we enable and empower 14000 girls between the ages of 5 to 17 years to participate in unique experiences that help them develop their full potential and promote social change through Girl Scouting,” Appoo added.

At Grace Hill in St. Louis, Villie helped increase access to affordable health care for the underserved through innovative community health programs. Her major accomplishment was procuring federal funding for the Health Care for the Homeless program for St. Louis. Through her efforts, Grace Hill was one of the first in the country to implement primary care, mobile dental services and respite for the homeless.

In 2009, Villie came full circle from her days as a Girl Guide, accepting the Chief Executive Officer position for Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois. Since that time, Villie successfully guided the merger of two councils, balanced the budget and ensured that Girl Scouting provided a premier Girl Scout Leadership Experience for 14,000 girls and 4,800 adult volunteers.

“At GSSI, we are taking Girl Scouting where it’s never been before – detention centers, public housing, East St. Louis schools and to community service projects in some of the poorest rural communities in southern Illinois. Many girls are being exposed to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs for the first time and discovering they have potential in areas that they never would have explored before,” Appoo said. “Through Girl Scouting, we also are helping our girls address current social issues such as bullying in schools and turning them into exciting Girl Scout Gold, Silver and Bronze service award projects. What makes Girl Scouting unique is that we give girls what they need in ways they want,” Appoo said.

Villie believes that as a social worker, she is trained to be an agent of change and to make a difference in the world...no matter how small. “As a Girl Scout, I hope to live up to our motto – to make the world a better place,” Appoo added.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is a high-capacity Girl Scout council serving approximately 14,000 girls and 5,000 adult volunteers in 40 ½ counties in southern Illinois.

The mission of Girl Scouting states: ***Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.*** Girl Scouts is the world's pre-eminent organization dedicated solely to girls - all girls - where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnership with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all their lives - like strong values, social conscience, and conviction about their own potential and self-worth.

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 Jay Strobel at 618.692.0692.