



Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois Present United We Lead Gala on August 17, 2019

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Glen Carbon, Illinois: More than 230 area community leaders and members of the Girl Scout movement joined to celebrate female leadership at Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois' inaugural *United We Lead Gala* on August 17, 2019, at The Regency Conference Center in O'Fallon, Illinois. The *United We Lead Gala* raised awareness

about the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and Girl Scouts' legacy of helping develop powerful female community leaders since its founding in 1912. It also raised approximately \$142,588 to help support Girl Scouts' mission of building courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place and to keep the movement's momentum going strong in Southern Illinois.

A total of 17 college scholarships were established during the Gala—including two \$1,000 scholarships in honor of Jackie Joyner-Kersey, internationally known and locally grown US Olympian, and two \$1,000 scholarships in honor of Dr. Sandra Magus, a former NASA astronaut from Belleville who was among the last crew members on board the Space Shuttle Mission. Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois honors the women's accomplishments through these inaugural scholarships, in addition to scholarships also funded at the gala.

The emcee of the event was Laura Hettinger, Emmy Award-winning reporter at KMOV and native of Flora, Illinois, while a special opening flag ceremony was conducted by area Girl Scouts in cooperation with the O'Fallon Police Department. Guests enjoyed musical performances by eclectic harpist Terri Langerak, and critically acclaimed vocalist Kim Massie, as well as a chef-cooked four-course meal.

The gala's keynote speaker was Judge Sarah D. Smith, who is a longtime military service member and Circuit Judge for the Third Judicial Circuit serving Madison and Bond Counties. She explained that her experiences - which include becoming a Platoon Leader at age 17 and earning the Bronze Star for her service in Afghanistan - taught her that courage is one of the most vital traits that girls and young women can develop to achieve their goals. She shared that while girls are often praised from an early age for following rules and being collected and compliant, Girl Scout programming encourages girls to take smart risks and take on challenges.

"Being brave is built," she said. "You learn courage by being courageous. In Girl Scouts, girls have the chance to practice micro acts of courage to do things they'd never thought they'd try or succeed at."

Victoria Shore from Marion was the Gala's Girl Speaker, detailing memories from the nine years she has been a Girl Scout so far – including serving as a Girl Scout Delegate at the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York City. She shared that Girl Scouts has ignited her passion to use her strength, skills, and advantages to empower others and advocate for people in need around the globe.

"Always be your best G.I.R.L.," she encouraged the crowd, referring to Girl Scouts' belief that girls have the capacity to be "Go-getters, Innovators, Risk-takers, and Leaders"

Along with establishing college scholarships during the United We Lead Gala, attendees also funded multiple opportunities for Girl Scouts during a live “Fund-A-Need” auction. Experiences that were sponsored included summer camperships, and financial assistance so that EVERY girl who wants to become a Girl Scout has the means to do so.

“We are so grateful for the generosity of the community,” said GSofSI CEO Loretta Graham. “We’re proud of Girl Scouts’ iconic position in American history as a place where girls are encouraged in their growth into powerful women making a difference in the world. Local legends Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Dr. Sandra Magnus were Girl Scouts. The CEO of YouTube, Susan Wojcicki, and St. Louis native and entrepreneur Karlie Kloss were Girl Scouts. Venus Williams, Melinda Gates, Tyra Banks, Katie Couric and so many other exceptional women in every field have built their own courage, confidence, and character as Girl Scouts. We appreciate all of the support so we can continue to help provide the best leadership development experiences for girls here in Southern Illinois so that they can thrive in the ways that are meaningful to them.”

Event sponsors included: Nine Networks; Ameren Illinois; Mathis, Marifian & Richter, LTD.; St. Louis Public Radio; The Korte Company; 88.7 The Sound WSIE; Phillips 66 – Wood River Refinery; Boeing; Terra Properties; Wood River Printing; Hidden Lake Winery; Edward Jones; SLAM! Agency; and M2.

There is still an opportunity to contribute to Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois’ scholarship fund or to establish a scholarship in your own name or the name of your business. Please contact Linda Yates at 800.345.6858 or lyates@gssofsi.org to learn more.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSofSI) is a high-capacity Girl Scout council serving approximately 10,007 girls and engaging 3,686 adult volunteers in 40 and ½ counties in Southern Illinois. GSofSI Mission: ***Girl Scouts 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.