



Girl Scout Week 2020: March 12 Celebrates 108 Years of Service, Founder Juliette Gordon Low and the Power of the Uniform

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**Amaze(mint) and
adventure in every box.**



 **Think outside the cookie box.**

Girl Scouts celebrate Girl Scout Week from Sunday, March 8 through Saturday, March 14. Girl Scouts honor 108 years of service and honors a 2.5 MILLION STRONG movement focusing on building female leaders. Girl Scouts was founded on March 12, 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low (1860–1927). In Southern Illinois, Girl Scouts will share the importance of their mission through this year's theme, "The Power of the Uniform" and through sharing their story with local, regional, and federal officials and the communities Girl Scouts serve throughout 40 and ½ counties in order to proclaim Girl Scout Week 2020 and to remind citizens of the progress of the movement and how it has elevated the lives of millions upon millions of girls and women into positions of leadership.

Girl Scouts today reflects the arc of Juliette Gordon Low's remarkable life through the successes of millions of girls and adults. They celebrate her legacy during Girl Scout Week and also the powerful mission that is more relevant now than ever.

An ardent believer in the potential of all girls and the importance of fostering their individual growth, character, and self-sufficiency, Juliette is credited with establishing and nurturing a global movement that has changed the world. A meeting in 1912 with Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Boy Scouts, inspired Juliette to establish Girl Scouts that same year. Telephoning a cousin from her home, she announced, "I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all of America, and all the world, and we're going to start it tonight!"

From that first gathering of a small troop of 18 culturally and ethnically diverse girls, Juliette broke the conventions of the time—reaching across class, cultural, and ethnic boundaries to ensure all girls had a place to grow and develop their leadership skills. Using her innate talent for fundraising and public relations, combined with her vast network of friends and supporters, she led Girl Scouts with passion and determination—ensuring it was, and always would be, an experience that was “girl led.”

According to America’s Library, Low was so dedicated she sold a strand of rare matched pearls for \$8,000 to pay for operations in the beginning of the movement. Today, Low's birthplace in Savannah, Georgia is open to the public as a museum and contains information about the early Girl Scouts.

Juliette Gordon Low died January 17, 1927, at her home in Savannah, Georgia, after a long and private struggle with breast cancer. Today, the vision of Juliette Gordon Low lives on through Girl Scouts across the nation and the globe. She is remembered and honored by generations of people whose lives have been transformed by Girl Scouts, the premier leadership development organization for girls around the world.

Her portrait hangs in Washington DC’s Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and in 2012 Juliette Gordon Low was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States, for her “remarkable vision,” and “her dedication to empowering girls everywhere.”

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois CEO Loretta Graham celebrates the theme of “The Power of the Uniform” with this essay and highlights an important tradition started by Juliette Gordon Low.

The Power of the Uniform: More than Just Getting Dressed

It’s not that I expect to look like a model on the cover of a magazine! After all, my shirt collar rolls up and the pockets in my pants gap just like yours. Besides wearing green and blue doesn’t do anything for my complexion. But when I take my Girl Scout uniform out of the closet and clutch it across my waist in front of the mirror,

something incredible happens. In the mirror of my mind, I catch sight of another uniform, my “first one.” It was cotton and green with a little bit of white.

In those days I never asked “Why a uniform?” Now I find myself asking, “Is it really that great to just look like everyone else?”

Yes, the uniform helps us all look the same as we serve. Still, when Girl Scouts wear their uniforms, something transformative happens; something magical. This uniform is really saying we belong. We belong to an organization that believes in the Girl Scout Promise and Law and lives the mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character every day.

We stand a little taller in our uniforms because we represent everything that people know and love about the Girl Scouts. When you wear your Girl Scout uniform, people call upon you to do important jobs, such as being a leader on a project or in a group. The uniform tells them they can count on you to help people at all times by offering to pitch-in and lend a hand—even when you don’t feel like you have one second to spare. This is the magic of the uniform. It symbolizes the leader you are inside. When community members see you in uniform they give approving looks that leave you glowing because their eyes and smiles and nods of appreciation say they understand you embody the values and beliefs set forth in the Girl Scout Promise and Law. They know you are a part of the greatest organization in the world committed to developing girl leaders who make the world a better place.

So as I put on my adult Girl Scout uniform, I realize the reasons why all Girl Scouts are called to wear their uniforms often and with pride. A Girl Scout uniform announces, in one quick moment, where a girl or woman belongs on a number of important levels. The uniform says, “I am respectful and responsible.” It says, “I believe in God and love my country.” It says, “You can trust me.” The people we pass on the street can’t recite the Promise and Law, but they know Girl Scouts set a positive tone for girls today! The uniform will remind some of their own Girl Scout service and the empowering memories of all they learned through Girl Scouting. The uniform continues to impact millions today with its representation of all we are in this vital movement: past, present, and future.

For adults, putting on the Girl Scout uniform says, “I put on a commitment to build tomorrow’s incredible female leaders.” For girls, putting on the Girl Scout uniform says, “I am putting my best self forward to make the world a better place.” NOW, LET’S GET DRESSED!

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSofSI) is a high-capacity Girl Scout council serving approximately 9,338 girls and engaging 3,587 adult volunteers while providing financial assistance to 2,722 members 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. **Join Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois today! Adult Volunteers and Girls K-12 welcome. Call 800-345-6858 or email customercare@gsfsi.org.** GSofSI is a not-for-profit organization supported by various United Ways throughout the region. Girl Scouts is a Proud Partner of United Way.

Please visit the GSofSI website www.gsfsi.org and follow us on Facebook