



Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois Receives USDA Challenge and Change Grant

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Glen Carbon, Illinois – Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) has received another grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in collaboration with Girl Scouts of the USA, to implement *Challenge and Change* projects in three southern Illinois communities. The three communities where girls will plan and implement a project are Pontoon Beach, Roxana and Anna.

Challenge and Change: Challenge Yourself, Change the World strengthens rural communities. Through these projects, girls become change-makers as they envision and start long-term community service projects in their very own communities. Girls begin with an initial day long training where they learn leadership, problem solving and entrepreneurial skills through a comprehensive curriculum. Led by trained facilitators, the girls discover what effective leadership looks like, connect with local experts and take action by digging into issues affecting their communities. After the training, girls recruit a community action team – including an adult who serves as their community champion – to turn their good idea into a sustainable, long-term project.

GSSI has selected three *Challenge and Change* projects. The projects are:



Pontoon Beach- Girls in SU 102 are excited to work with leaders to create a community park or garden in the Pontoon Beach area. They have met with the mayor and have secured a plot of land and are meeting with community members to determine needs and resources.

Roxana- Girls in SU 101 are creating a Heritage Garden in Roxana which will highlight different plants and natural features of So IL. They will be partnering with the Parks and Recreation to offer learning experiences for schools to bring students as well as encouraging participation from community members of all ages.

Anna-Homework Pals is a continued project which offers a tutoring program to Elementary students in Anna IL. This past school year, the tutoring program has moved locations from the local library to the Elementary school which now houses a new library funded by this grant. Starting in July, a summer reading program is being implemented so that students can continue their learning throughout the summer as well.

“We are pleased to be working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Girl Scouts of the USA to help our Girl Scouts plan, develop and implement these Challenge & Change projects in their communities,” said Micah Bolandis, Director of Mission Delivery for GSSI. “Thanks to our partnership and funding with USDA and GSUSA our girls are improving their communities and making the world a better place for everyone.”

Challenge and Change aligns with the Girl Scout Leadership Development Program, where girls discover their full potential, connect with others in an increasingly diverse world and take action to solve problems and improve their communities. The *Challenge and Change* curriculum draws on extensive research in youth development, leadership and social entrepreneurship.

The Girl Scout Mission is: ***Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.*** 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 working together.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois serves 14,000 girls and 4,500 adult volunteers in more than 40 counties in southern Illinois. Girl Scouting has inspired more than 50 million girls and women since its founding in 1912. Girl Scouting is focused on providing a premier Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls in the 21st century, while ensuring the traditions and values that have been core to Girl Scouting since its beginning remain strong and relevant.

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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