



From India to Illinois

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Girls around the world have the same hopes, dreams and goals

All around the world, girls have many of the same hopes, dreams and goals. They desire to make life-long friends, learn new things, become strong and confident and make a difference in their communities. They dream of days filled with laughter and fun, of adventures they will go on, of having successful futures and taking a stand on issues that matter most to them.

From India to Illinois, these are things girls and their families tell us they want in Girl Scouting. This was what I wanted as a young girl growing up in Mumbai, India as a member of the Girl Guides. And, this is what I perceive that our Girl Scouts and their families in southern Illinois want today.

As Chief Executive Officer for Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois for the past five years, it has been my goal, and that of the Board of Directors and our dedicated staff to give our Girl Scouts what they say they want and need. How does a girl accomplish her goal of learning about robotics? Or defy gender stereotypes and become a firefighter, leading a team of heroes? Or set in motion her dream of becoming a leader when opportunity seems like only a buzzword to her?

How? It's simple...Girl Scouts.

Growing up in India, my experience with the Girl Guides was instrumental in my decision to pursue a career in social work. It was the Girl Guides that started me on my journey and led me to where I am today...leading 4,500 adult volunteers to provide a premier Girl Scout Leadership Experience for our 14,000 girls in southern Illinois. One of my most memorable experiences as a Girl Guide was working with the Society for the Education of the Crippled which ran a school for physically challenged children.

We took these children camping one year -- which was a fantastic experience for both them and us. Many of these children had never been away from home, and had never gone out of town on a train. Taking care of them 24/7 was a great responsibility as well as a very enriching experience. Today, I see this same compassion and love for helping others in our girls and volunteers right here in southern Illinois. Our girls love to help others and make the world a better place by sewing blankets for sick children in local hospitals, sending care packages to our service members overseas or visiting with senior citizens at local nursing homes.

Girl Scouts is making the world a better place while making lasting impressions in the lives of both its volunteers and girl members. Demonstrating this, a recent Girl Scouts Research Institute study shows that 94 percent of Girl Scout volunteers and 97 percent of girl members believe Girl Scouts provides them with new, fun, and exciting experiences. And, Girl Scout research also shows that when parents were asked to describe the benefits of Girl Scouting using one word, the top responses were: friendships, confidence, fun, community and leadership.

At Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois, we are committed to serving more girls and providing them the tools, resources and experiences that will help them achieve their hopes, dreams and goals. But, we can't do it without YOU! We need more volunteers to help us mentor a Girl Scout robotics team, to teach a girl how to paddle a canoe at camp or give her words of encouragement so she can gain the courage, confidence and character to make the world a better place for her family, for her community and for her country.

From India to Illinois, dedicated volunteers, parents, donors and supporters are working together to ensure girls have experiences and opportunities to make the world a better place for all of us. For more information on how you can be involved with the Girl Scout movement and help more girls on their journey, visit the Girl Scout website at www.gssofsi.org or check out all of the great things our girls and volunteers are doing on our Facebook page.

Together we can ensure that Girl Scouting is a place where all girls from India to Illinois can achieve their hopes, dreams and goals.

Villie M. Appoo
Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois
Chief Executive Officer

