

Alyssa Heimerman: Girl Scout Gold Award recipient to Air Force Officer

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GLEN CARBON – Since 1916, Girl Scouts have been making meaningful, sustainable change in their communities and around the world through their Girl Scout Gold Award projects. The Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout can earn, acknowledges the power behind each recipient's dedication to not only empowering herself, but also to making the world a better place for others. As the Girl Scout Gold Award celebrates 100 years of girls changing the world, Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) will highlight some of our shining stars who exemplify the greatness of this award.



Alyssa Heimerman, originally from Belleville, earned her Girl Scout Gold Award in 2009. Alyssa believed more environmental-based learning opportunities should be provided to youth in grades K-12. For her Girl Scout Gold Award project, she teamed up with the YMCA. The organization provided Alyssa with a trailer on their grounds for her to renovate into an Environmental Education Center. Alyssa worked to renovate the interior of the trailer, build a deck outside, create nature trails around the area and develop a K-12 curriculum.

The Girl Scout Gold Award recognizes a Girl Scout's commitment to excellence as she develops skills and values to meet present and future challenges in her life. To earn the Girl Scout Gold Award, a Girl Scout Senior or Girl Scout Ambassador must design and carry out a project that fulfills a need within a girl's community, creates change, and is sustainable. The project must be completed with a suggested minimum of 80 hours of work. Only about 5 percent of eligible girls earn the prestigious Gold Award. "Find something you are passionate about, something that you want to make better, something that motivates you...and don't give up," are words of encouragement Alyssa offers to Girl Scouts who want earn the highest award in Girl Scouting.

Completing a Girl Scout Gold Award project benefits the community by filling a need, but the project also benefits the girl by helping her gain skills she can take into adulthood. Alyssa, now a 1st Lieutenant with the United States Air Force, says her Girl Scout Gold Award project helped prepare her to enter the military. "My Gold Award project prepared me to become a military officer and leader by teaching and reinforcing so many characteristics – communication, responsibility, short-term and long-term planning and time management," said Alyssa.

"I attribute a lot of who I am today to the Girl Scout organization," said Alyssa. "Girl Scouts teaches so many characteristics to help young ladies become women with confidence and open-mindedness to take on all the world has to offer. Organizations and corporations today need not only leaders, but also team players, and Girl Scouts is the ideal organization for girls to perfect those skills," Alyssa added.

Alyssa Heimerman is an Aircraft Maintenance Officer stationed at Travis Air Force Base in California. She is currently serving as the Operations and Training Flight Commander, 821 Contingency Response Support Squadron.

Today, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. is the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. Its sole focus is to meet the needs of all girls (ages 5-17) from diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. 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 Tricia Higgins at 618-242-5079.