

# Making a Positive Impact on Our Community



## All Ages Activity Guide



Community service has always been an integral part of Girl Scouting. Service projects can be a vehicle for nearly every critical aspect of the Girl Scout program: girl planning, contemporary issues, and encouraging girls to be active members of their communities. Demonstrating through service projects that no work is menial or insignificant can have a big impact on girls and on the broader community. Furthermore, rethinking our assumptions about community service can amplify its benefits. Traditionally, community service has been equated with charity work, the "privileged" helping the "needy". This model assumes major differences between those who perform service and those who receive service, reinforcing stereotypes and notions of superiority and inferiority. It allows people to give service without challenging their ideas about the community in which they are working. A new model of community service, emphasizing girl leadership, critical issues and reflection, addresses some of these issues.

## **GIRL LEADERSHIP**

Young people, and girls in particular, are invaluable resources to their communities. They can and do provide leadership on many of the most pressing issues before us. This perspective is our best approach to community service in the context of Girl Scouting. We can see ourselves as strengthening our communities and involving community members, taking full advantage of what each segment of the community has to offer.

Ask girls not whom they want to help, but what they want to change. Helping implies a difference in status between the helper and the helped, but everyone can participate in change. Assisting the girls in taking charge of the issues they identify then becomes the key task of the adults around them.

## **CRITICAL ISSUES**

This process naturally leads girls to tackle the critical issues facing their communities. Girls can learn about issues like homelessness, violence against women, poverty, literacy, and inter-generational cooperation through a lens that shows them that they can make a difference. Service projects addressing critical issues like these ensure that the Girl Scout program is contemporary and enables girls to not just serve the community but change the world!

## **REFLECTION**

Reflection is a process whereby we ask thoughtful questions of ourselves and one another about how and why we do what we do. This is perhaps the key step to guarantee that service results in learning and further development of leadership skills. Gathering girls together during and after performing a service project to discuss the experience can be done formally or informally. What went well? What would you do differently? What did you learn, both about yourself and about the issue? As Marion Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund said, "Service is the rent we pay for living. It is the very purpose of life."

## SERVICE PROJECTS



*"I don't know what your destiny will be, but the one thing I know; the only ones among you who will really be happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."*

*- Albert Schweitzer*

### **What can one person do?**

There are approximately 1,431,800 children in Massachusetts between the ages of 5 and 17. If each person did something small to help, imagine the impact that could be made on the state!

Service is the core of Girl Scouting. By providing service we contribute to society and become active participants in the community. There is much to gain from providing service. There is pride in accomplishing a goal, pride in helping the community, increased self esteem, and personal values clarification. Besides, helping is contagious!

### **Where do you begin?**

Ask yourself - What do you want accomplish? How will you make a difference? What needs to be done? What skills do you have to offer? Would you like learn new skills?

Look at the following list of skill areas. Check all that apply to you.

companionship/visiting  
arts/crafts  
influencing  
educating  
telephoning

computers  
organizing  
tutoring  
recreation  
listening

construction/maintenance  
corresponding/writing  
meal preparation/serving  
speaking  
research/data collecting

Next, look at the following list of social issues. Check the areas that interest you.

animals  
environment  
homelessness/shelters  
safety

children  
crime  
hunger  
health

elderly  
public education  
literacy  
special needs

violence  
disabilities  
loneliness  
racism

recycling  
abuse  
cultural heritage  
civil rights

community beautification  
unemployment  
discrimination

Identify problems that exist in your community. Read the paper, search the internet, and talk to people. What are other organizations doing to address these issues or problems?

Brainstorm some ideas of how you can best use your skill in each area of interest. Be creative - think big at first! You can focus/scale down your efforts later.

Once you've come up with a list of ideas, narrow it down by considering these questions. Which actions will: make the most difference, help the most people, will succeed, fit into your schedule, and interest you most? Will you need transportation? Will it cost anything? Are there people who can help you?

## Research

Once you've come up with an idea, you may need to do a little more research to make sure your service is needed or wanted. If you are working with an agency, talk to them about what you propose. Do they have a need? Does it fit into their schedule? If not, let them know what your skills are. Perhaps they have another need for your specific talents.

For a community wide project, it may be necessary to survey members of the community. Let them know what the problem is that you've identified and how you propose to resolve it. Ask them direct questions about how they feel about or see the issue. Leave room for their comments, suggestions, or involvement.

You also need to research local laws and restrictions, what permissions may be needed, safety concerns, dietary/health limitations, physical limitations, and Girl Scout policies.

## Make an Action Plan

Will you work alone or as part of a team? Identify people who can help you.

Set a realistic goal. Create a time-line. Ask what, who, when, where.

Break a large project down into smaller tasks.

What needs to be done? Who will do it? When does it need to be completed?

Where will it happen?

## Advertise your Project

If your project requires outside participation, i.e. you are organizing a Household Hazardous Waste pick up site for community use, you need to get the word out to the community.

Create fliers to hang around town (always ask permission before you hang them up). Send a press release to local and community newspapers. Radio and television stations dedicate small amounts of time for PSA's (Public Service Announcements) to announce community events. When releasing information to the media, always include: Name of Group, Address, Contact Person and a Phone number. For a PSA, tell them who your target audience is, when you would like it on and when it should end. Write a brief text.

## Money

Your primary focus should be on your service and the project, not on raising money. However, some service projects may require financial support. Money-earning activities should be a valuable program activity for girls. You may use money from your troop funds, if your troop agrees. You can ask your service unit or other troops to help. You may hold two money earning activities, in addition to the cookie sale, with permission from the council. Appropriate ways to earn money beyond selling cookies and participating in the Fall Product Sale are, making and selling small items hand-crafted by the troop, or providing a service like babysitting or car washing. Some troops have bottle and can drives to raise money. Remember, according to Safety-Wise, Leader's Digest, and the Book of Basic Documents, Girl Scouts cannot collect money for, or in the name of, any other organization or individual. Girl Scouts may support other organizations or individuals only through service projects. Adults may however, ask for goods and services on behalf of the troop. Girl members may not engage in any direct solicitation for money or goods.

If you ask for community support in the name of Girl Scouts, then whatever support you have requested must be used for Girl Scout program. Adult members in their Girl Scout capacities may not solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting. Adults may engage in combined fund-raising efforts authorized by the Girl Scout Council and in which the local council is a beneficiary.

An example of a service project requiring community support would be a troop asking the community to donate food and bedding for an animal shelter. The troop may not name the shelter in the request. You can say that you are collecting for a local animal shelter. Goods should be received by the troop leaders on the troops' behalf. Girls can then present them to the shelter.

## Evaluate

Did you complete your task? Were there any roadblocks? Did you need to re-think or change your goals along the way? What worked, what didn't? What did you learn? Would you do it again? Would you do anything differently? Did you have fun? Be sure to thank people who helped you. Then celebrate and share your success with others.

## Safety-Wise

Always consult Safety-Wise before beginning any project. There are very clear and specific guidelines that need to be followed for your safety and the safety of others. When in doubt, contact your local service center or the program department for clarification.

## Resources

Brownie Handbook, Junior Handbook, Cadette Handbook, A Resource Book for Senior Girl Scouts.

*The Kid's Guide to Service Projects*, Lewis, Barbara A., Free Spirit Publishing, 1995

*The Kid's Guide to Social Action*, Lewis, Barbara A., Free Spirit Publishing, 1991

*Simple Things You Can Do to Make a Difference in Greater Boston*, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, 1996

## Program Tie-Ins

### For Brownies:

*It's Your World - Change It!*

*It's Your Planet – Love It!*

Caring and Sharing Try-It

Citizen Near and Far Try-It

People of the World Try-It

Earth is Our Home Try-It

Eco-Explorer. Try-It

### For Juniors:

*It's Your World - Change It!*

*It's Your Planet – Love It!*

Across Generations Badge

Caring for Children Badge

My Community Badge

Communication Badge

Global Awareness Badge

World Neighbors Badge

Creative Solutions Badge

Earth Connections Badge

## **For Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors**

*It's Your World- Change It!*

*It's Your Planet- Love It!*

Interest Projects - All Interest Projects have a service project component.

Community Service Bar for Cadettes and Seniors and Ambassadors