

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

29 Local Girls Earn Prestigious Girl Scout Gold Award, Recognized at Virtual Event



**Cicero, N.Y.** (March 10, 2021) — [Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways](#) is proud to announce that 29 girls from across its council territory earned the prestigious Girl Scout Gold Award—the highest achievement in Girl Scouting—during the 2019-20 member year. Since 1916, the Gold Award has stood for excellence and leadership. For the last century, millions of Girl Scouts have positively impacted their communities and the world with creative, impactful and sustainable Take Action projects.

The council typically honors each “class” in-person during late fall. Due to the pandemic, the celebration was moved to early 2021 and reimagined as a virtual recognition. It was held the evening of Saturday, February 27 with attending recipients and their families, council staff and board members. Keynote speaker was Girl Scout alum Alexandra Jacobs Wilke, a village trustee in Potsdam, N.Y., and director of public relations at SUNY Potsdam.

“Gold Award Girl Scouts change the world by tackling issues they’re passionate about while learning essential skills that prepare them for all aspects of life. They problem-solve, inspire, advocate, educate and make a difference. The benefits in their communities and beyond are of lasting, positive change brought about by their efforts. We applaud the commitment and dedication required to earn this award and are proud of our ‘Class of 2020’ Gold Award Girl Scouts. We know they each will continue to make the world a better place well into the future,” says GSNYPENN CEO Julie Dale.

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the mark of the truly remarkable. The standards required to earn it are demanding but the rewards are many. The award recognizes Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors (grades 9-12) who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through sustainable and measurable take action projects. The Gold Award is the culmination of a girl’s demonstration of self-discipline, leadership

ability, time management, creativity, initiative and a significant mastery of skills. Gold Award Girl Scouts are dreamers and doers who take “make the world a better place” to the next level.

Each girl must dedicate a minimum of 80 hours to planning and implementing her project, which must benefit the community and have a lasting impact. The Gold Award acknowledges the power behind each Girl Scout’s dedication to not only empowering and bettering herself but also making the world a better place for others. Girls who earn the award tackle issues that are dear to them and drive lasting change in their communities and beyond. The Gold Award is a key that can open doors to scholarships, preferred admission tracks for college and career opportunities.

Three of the council’s “Class of 2020” Gold Award Girl Scouts were selected for special scholarships toward advancing their education at an institution of higher ed. The girls were chosen by the award committee because their projects demonstrated the highest levels of leadership, sustainability, measurability and national/global links. Thanks to generous donors, the council presented a total of \$12,000 in memory of three special Girl Scout sisters lost in 2019 who helped build girls of courage, confidence and character and who each made the world a better place.

- The **Marie Hepworth Scholarship** (\$5,000) was presented to Adeline Whitmore of Barton, NY (Tioga County) for her project Nichols Veterans Memorial Park.

Ms. Hepworth dedicated her life to supporting girl development through her 20-plus years serving as executive director of GSNYPENN legacy council Indian Hills and various volunteer activities in her community of Johnson City.

- The **Kelly Perkins Scholarship** (\$4,000) was presented to Elizabeth Serafin of Oneonta, NY (Otsego County) for her project Together We Grow, Fox Community Garden.

Ms. Perkins, a lifelong Girl Scout and GSNYPENN summer camp staff member, impacted the lives of campers and younger Girl Scouts in her community of Newark Valley.

- The **Kerrie Black Scholarship** (\$3,000) was presented to Dorothy (Dora) Donacik of Vestal, NY (Broome County) for her project Promoting Creative Thinking at Vestal.

Ms. Black, a lifelong Girl Scout, was a GSNYPENN Regional Support Manager for Broome and Delaware counties who served her volunteers with excellence and was always willing to lend a hand to her colleagues.

## **Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways “Class of 2020” Gold Award Girl Scouts**

Cassandra Blewett

Binghamton, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Memory Stimulation Wall Hang Up*

Cassandra addressed the needs of individuals with dementia at Good Shepherd Fairview Nursing Home in Binghamton. She created a memory stimulation wall hang-up, which helps patients practice activities of daily living. Cassandra’s favorite memory of Girl Scouts is the four-hour hike her troop took at Camp Amahami. She will graduate from Chenango Valley High School this year and plans to attend SUNY Broome majoring in Liberal Art this fall.

Keileen Brown

Elmira, NY (Chemung County)

*Take Action Project: Broadway Elementary School Courtyard Renovation*

Keileen addressed the needs of a local school whose outdoor courtyard space was so rundown it was no longer usable. She renovated the entire courtyard, planted flowers and labeled each type so that teachers could use this in future science class learning. One of Keileen’s favorite Girl Scout memories is camping with her troop at Misty Hollow. Keileen is a graduate of Elmira High School. She currently attends Corning Community College where she studies early childhood education and aspires to become an elementary school teacher.

Trissety Denton

Broadalbin, NY, formerly of Dolgeville, NY (Herkimer County)

*Take Action Project: Giving Mental Health a Face*

Trissety addressed the stigma attached to mental illness by creating a video in which she shared how mental illness affected her throughout her high school experience. She hopes to inspire more youth to get comfortable starting these conversations and talking about their struggles. The video was shared on Facebook, YouTube and with several local schools for health classes. Trissety’s favorite Girl Scout experience was her Service Unit’s trip to Washington, D.C., where they viewed all of the monuments and the U.S. Constitution. She is a graduate of Galway High School.

Catherine Deskur

Vestal, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Robotics: Road to STEM*

Catherine addressed the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields by promoting her local robotics team, hosting STEM career info sessions and creating a website with links to free STEM resources. Her favorite Girl Scout memories are attending the 100th Anniversary in Washington, D.C., and competing in Rainbow World Jamborees. Catherine is a graduate of Vestal High School. She currently attends Harvard University and the New England Conservatory through their dual degree program, studying computer science and double bass performance.

Dorothy (Dora) Donacik

Vestal, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Promoting Creative Thinking at Vestal*

Dora's project was to promote and support current and future volunteers for Odyssey of the Mind in order to attract enough adults to coach kids wanting to participate. She accomplished this by compiling a bank of resources to be used by parents and teachers across the state and also hosted several workshops to help students in her school district learn creative and teamwork skills. Her favorite Girl Scout memory is the last camping trip she took with her troop before most of them graduated high school. Dora is a graduate of Vestal High School and currently attends Cornell University's College of Arts and Sciences.

Genevieve Egan

Horseheads, NY (Chemung County)

*Take Action Project: Tanglewood Nature Center Informational Sign and Virtual Community Celebration*

Genevieve's project addressed the need for people to be more active outside while learning about nature and the environment. She designed and installed a large informational sign at Tanglewood Nature Center and Museum to show visitors all of the areas they can explore. She also filmed a video showcasing fun outdoor activities to bring in new visitors. The video was posted on social media by Tanglewood and Girl Scouts. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is working on the Girl Scout Silver Award with a friend from her troop. Genevieve is a graduate of Horseheads High School and currently attends SUNY Oswego where she studies graphic design.

LeahBeth Guerard

Brasher Falls, NY (St. Lawrence County)

*Take Action Project: Tutoring for Teens and Tweens*

LeahBeth's project addressed the issue of the lack of understanding of Common Core curriculum for many students at St. Lawrence Middle School. She ran her program in several different locations, had teachers and students help with tutoring, and also had parents ask her to develop resources to help them better understand their children's curriculum. LeahBeth is currently a junior at Saint Lawrence High School.

Devon Guzy

Cooperstown, NY (Otsego County)

*Take Action Project: Fire Hydrant Clean Up*

Devon worked with the Village of Cooperstown and her local fire, water and sewage departments to educate the town on the importance of proper maintenance of fire hydrants. She organized a group of community members and painted and scraped 140 hydrants around the town. Her favorite Girl Scout memory is camping with her troop at the Comstock Adventure Center. Devon is currently a junior at Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School.

Austin Gleason-Hendrickson

Elmira, NY (Chemung County)

*Take Action Project: Project D.B.*

Austin addressed the lack of basic personal care items and something to carry them in (other than a garbage bag) for children entering the foster care system. She made 100 foster care entry duffel bags with basic personal care items and a few comfort items to make their transition easier. She also worked with her church to ensure Project D.B. will continue. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is attending Hershey Park Camporee. Austin is a graduate of Notre Dame High School and currently attends SUNY Oneonta where she studies biology with a track for occupational therapy.

Jennifer Jacoby

Owego, NY (Tioga County)

*Take Action Project: Saving the Black Tern*

Jenny's goal was to raise awareness about how water pollution is detrimentally affecting the black tern bird population in the Southern Tier. She conducted water testing and, based on those results, created and placed birdhouses in her local park where the water was healthier to attract birds. She also shared newsletters, both online and in brochure boxes, to encourage others to take action. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is visiting Nichols Schoolhouse Apartments, where her troop delivered Christmas care baskets to elderly residents and sang carols. Jenny is a graduate of Owego Free Academy and currently attends Binghamton University where she studies philosophy, politics and law in addition to Spanish language and literature.

Jaclyn Jorolemon

Farmington, NY (Ontario County)

*Take Action Project: Raised Garden Beds for Healthy Snacking for Senior Citizens*

Jaclyn addressed the issue that senior citizens residing in a facility have less access to grow and snack on fresh fruits and vegetables by building raised garden beds at a local senior facility. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is bonding with the girls in her troop throughout the years and taking camping trips with them. Jaclyn is a junior at Canandaigua Academy and plans to attend college when she graduates in 2022.

Makenzie Kellogg

Burdett, NY (Schuyler County)

*Take Action Project: Girls Power Up*

Makenzie's project addressed the need for girls to train differently than boys when playing sports to prevent and treat injuries. She provided information for girls and invited experts to take part in workshops she hosted on the topic. She also provided records of her program to all local coaches. Her favorite Girl Scout memory is spending time with her troop and leaders on Mondays, and all of the laughter and happy tears they shared over the years. Makenzie is a graduate of Watkins Glen High School and currently works at Cayuga Medical Center.

Laura Krebs

Freeville, NY (Tompkins County)

*Take Action Project: Second Chance Closet*

Laura addressed the need for sustainable access to clothing in her community by creating a free clothing closet. She did so by partnering with Freeville United Methodist Church to create the closet within their building. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is attending Rocking Horse Ranch and learning how to ride horses with her fellow Girl Scouts. Laura is a graduate of Dryden High School and currently attends Rochester Institute of Technology.

Tyler Lindner

Norwich, NY (Chenango County)

*Take Action Project: God is on the Move*

Tyler's project sought to bring families closer to God, in addition to getting them to spend quality time together outside in nature. Her favorite memory is spending a week at her grandmother's house every summer to attend Girl Scout day camp when she was a younger Girl Scout. Tyler is a graduate of Norwich High School and currently attends SUNY Albany where she studies political science.

Megan Litzenberger

Romulus, NY (Seneca County)

*Take Action Project: Drama Prop Room*

Megan led her team to develop a functional prop room for her school's drama department. She created a binder for younger students to better understand each role in a production and left plans to be able to implement a shadowing program when allowed. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is sleepovers at the zoo "with" the polar bears. Megan is a graduate of Romulus Central School and currently attends Wells College where she studies mathematics.

Rebecca Mantione

Baldwinsville, NY (Onondaga County)

*Take Action Project: Water Bottle Holders*

Rebecca addressed the issue of hydration for people with disabilities by making water bottle holders to attach to their wheelchairs for easy access and to provide them with more freedom to drink more frequently. She gifted water bottles and pamphlets explaining the benefits of hydration to Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital in Syracuse. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is visiting New York City with her troop where they learned the history of immigration at Ellis Island, took in a Broadway show and felt patriotism visiting the Statue of Liberty. She is currently a senior at C.W. Baker High School.

Hannah McCloskey

Liverpool, NY (Onondaga County)

*Take Action Project: Red Cross Club*

Hannah started a Red Cross Club at her high school to encourage young people to get involved with the work of the humanitarian organization. The club co-sponsored a blood drive and shared the value of volunteering with students. Unfortunately, Hannah's plan to bring a Stop the Bleed training was curtailed due to the spring 2020 shutdown of her school due to the pandemic. Hannah continues to volunteer with the Red Cross and is a blood and platelet donor. Her favorite Girl Scout memory is a troop trip to New York City where they visited Top of the Rock, SONY Wonder Tech Lab, Times Square (they added their wishes to confetti dropped on New Year's Eve) and lots of walking, shopping and eating. Hannah graduated from Liverpool High School in June 2020 and was one of only 11 students with four years of perfect attendance. She is currently in nursing school and works in a hospital as a patient care technician.

Rachel Pflueger

Auburn, NY (Cayuga County)

*Take Action Project: Lean-To Restoration at Y-Owasco and Mental Wellness*

Rachel's project addressed camp counselors' mental health by providing instruction from experts at orientation, sharing resources for healthy coping, and repairing the lakeside lean-to's at Camp Y-Owasco as a safe, quiet place for counselors to recharge. Some of her favorite Girl Scout memories include community service, waterfront activities, Service Unit encampments and finding her Girl Scout mom. Rachel is a graduate of Moravia High School and currently attends Cayuga Community College where she studies criminal justice and plans to transfer to Buffalo State.

Kendra Potenziano

Binghamton, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Empower Club*

Kendra addressed the concept of self-confidence and empowerment in teens by creating a club at Chenango Valley High School called Empower Club. The club offers self-esteem building activities and community projects. Students come together to show compassion for others while strengthening their confidence. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is camping in the cabins at Camp Amahami. She loved hiking, swimming, canoeing, climbing the fire tower and making s'mores with her friends there. Kendra will graduate from Chenango Valley High School in June and is excited to further her education studying animal sciences.

Sydney Prescott

Farmington, NY (Ontario County)

*Take Action Project: Environmental Expo*

Sydney took action to increase awareness about the environment—specifically sustainability, conservation and recycling. She coordinated two community events based on environmental education. At the second event, The Environmental Expo, Sydney lined up nearly 30 environmental experts to present information and more than 150 community members attended. At the expo, she enjoyed seeing the younger Girl Scouts in attendance and handed out fun patches to girls who told her what they learned from the event. She said it was wonderful to see young girls be so engaged in learning about how to protect the environment. Sydney is currently a senior at Victor Senior High School and plans to attend college in the fall.

Giavanna Reed

Campbell, NY (Steuben County)

*Take Action Project: Recycling in My School*

Giavanna addressed recycling through various media platforms, informative posters, a website with facts about recycling and the implementation of a recycling system at her local school. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is baking cookies to donate to community and school events. Giavanna is a



graduate of Greater Southern Tier STEM Academy and currently attends SUNY ESF College of Environmental Science and Forestry where she studies environmental science.

Elizabeth Rice

Binghamton, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Catherine's Cupboard Co-op Garden Enhancement*

Elizabeth addressed the issue of food insecurity in her local community. Her project consisted of building raised beds, adding fencing, a rainwater collection system and informing the local community about food insecurity. One of Elizabeth's favorite Girl Scout memories is traveling with her troop to New York City. Elizabeth currently attends SUNY Broome and hopes to become an elementary special education teacher.

Samantha Scott

Binghamton, NY (Broome County)

*Take Action Project: Girls Lacrosse Clinic*

Samantha tackled the lack of off-season opportunities for young girls who want to play girls lacrosse. Working with her team, she ran a clinic, filmed and posted basic lacrosse skills, and has assured there will be an annual girls lacrosse clinic. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is a campout in January at Amahami with her troop where they went on a three-hour hike they thought would never end! Samantha will graduate from Chenango Valley High School this year. She will attend Wilkes University in the fall where she will study criminology and play women's lacrosse.

Elizabeth Serafin

Oneonta, NY (Otsego County)

*Take Action Project: Together We Grow, Fox Community Garden*

Elizabeth addressed the lack of accessible green space to plant and grow nutritional foods in her town by building a community garden. The garden is located in the center of town within walkable distance of a bus stop and is free to any community member who fills out an application. Elizabeth's favorite Girl Scout memory is traveling to Europe and touring France, England and Ireland with her troop. Elizabeth is a graduate of Oneonta High School and currently attends SUNY Cortland where she studies biochemistry.

Hannah Stack

Dolgeville, NY (Herkimer County)

*Take Action Project: Exit Road Enhancement*

Hannah addressed a safety issue at the intersection to the entrance of her school. The brush was overgrown, and the stop sign obscured. By cleaning up the landscaping and making the sign more visible, safety improved and curb appeal increased. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is the trip her troop took to Washington, D.C. She is a graduate of Dolgeville Central School and currently attends Utica College where she studies biology and chemistry.

Sabrina Westmiller

Auburn, NY (Cayuga County)

*Take Action Project: Identify and Record Cemetery Headstones and Monuments*

Sabrina's project addressed the importance of cleaning headstones and making a presentation on how to preserve the history of our ancestors for others to follow. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is attending lock-ins where they went "back in time" to the days of Juliette Gordon Low, competed in relay races from 1912 and ended with a pajama fashion show. Sabrina is a graduate of Dana L. West High School.

Adeline Whitmore

Barton, NY (Tioga County)

*Take Action Project: The Nichols Veterans Memorial Park*

Adeline's project was to create a place in her hometown where veterans could be honored for their service and sacrifice. The community became very involved and supportive in making her project happen. The park consists of a large rock, plaque, flagpole, sidewalks, benches, lighting and landscaping. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is attending Camp Amahami and cross-country skiing around the pond. Adeline is a graduate of Tioga Central High School and currently attends St. Lawrence University where she studies biology on a pre-med track.

Allyson Wieser

Williamson, NY (Wayne County)

*Take Action Project: Designing and Installing a Sensory Integration Pathway for Williamson Elementary School*

Allyson addressed the issue of elementary school children being restless in class by installing a sensory pathway in her local elementary school. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is going on an encampment and hiking up a dried-out river to find a waterfall. Allyson is a graduate of Williamson High School and currently attends Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences where she studies public health on a pre-law track.

Sydney Woods

Baldwinsville, NY (Onondaga County)

*Take Action Project: A Salute to Fallen Veterans*

Sydney's project shared the stories of the many veterans buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Syracuse and ensured that all veterans were properly identified within the cemetery's database. Sydney also began the cemetery's annual tradition of placing wreaths on veterans' graves at Christmas in partnership with Wreaths Across America. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is "flocking" her troop leader's house whenever she went on vacation. Sydney is a graduate of Charles W. Baker High School and currently attends the University at Buffalo where she studies biological sciences.

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**Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, Inc.**

Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. We believe in the power of every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)<sup>™</sup> to change the world. Our extraordinary journey began more than 100 years ago with the original G.I.R.L., Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low. Today we continue the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. GSNYPENN is chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA to administer the Girl Scout program in 24 counties of New York and two in Pennsylvania. We offer every girl a chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success. Girl Scouts serves girls in grades K-12. Annual membership is \$25. Financial assistance is available. To register a girl online, visit [gsnypenn.org/join](https://gsnypenn.org/join). To become an adult volunteer, learn more at [gsnypenn.org/volunteer](https://gsnypenn.org/volunteer).