girl scouts of southeastern michigan

Volunteer Recognition Information Packet

Ways to Say Thank You! (Troop, Service Unit, or Community Level)

Recognize Adult Volunteer Contributions
People volunteer for countless reasons, but underneath it all, most volunteers are motivated by the quality of their performance. When volunteers know their time and energy are appreciated and that they are valued by Girl Scouts, they commit themselves to the organization. Volunteers also want to know that their service is helping the greater good—that together we made a difference in girls' lives and, through our mission, made a difference in the world. Therefore, volunteer recognition is one of the most powerful tools for retaining the invaluable women and men who volunteer for Girl Scouts..

The key to successfully recognizing volunteers is:

- Do it well
- Do it often
- Make it meaningful

An attitude of appreciation can be created by:

1. Being aware of the extra effort put forth by an individual
2. Taking the time to mention a person's service or to thank her/him for a job well done
3. Helping people to attain a higher level of achievement
4. Developing a climate wherein work is sincerely noted at all levels

When and how the recipient is recognized can make the expression of gratitude memorable. Recognitions might be made on special Girl Scout holidays, at Service Unit or Community meetings, at a special recognition event, immediately following the service rendered, at local recognition events, etc.

Informal Recognitions (Given by a troop, group, service unit, or community)
Some ways to say "Thank You" informally at the service unit/community level, or by committees or task groups could include:

- A framed photograph of the Girl Scouts who participated in a particular project or event (can be a blown-up snapshot)
- A thank-you statement published in a Girl Scout publication, web site, newsletter, or community paper
- Flowers presented at a meeting
- Birthday or holiday greetings made by the girls
- A special citation read at a meeting
- Fun awards such as breath mints (you take my breath away), note cards (for noteworthy achievements), or batteries (you've added energy to our group)

Check the internet for more ideas!

GSSEM Nomination Process for GSUSA's Adult Volunteer National Awards

Nominating a Girl Scout volunteer for a Volunteer National Award is a simple but meaningful way to express your appreciation.

1. **Write the required letters of endorsement (Thanks Badge and Thanks Badge II only).** The letter of recommendation demonstrates how the nominee has made an impact throughout Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's service area. The content of these letters should be objective and supported by facts and data.
2. **Submit your nomination materials on or before December 11, 2026.** Submit your completed Online Nomination Form and letters of endorsement at www.gssem.org/volawards.

GSSEM Timeline for GSUSA's Adult Volunteer National Awards

June-December 11, 2026	**Nomination Process Opens:** Any registered Girl Scout may nominate a registered adult volunteer for a Volunteer National Award.
December 11, 2026	**Nomination Materials Due:** Submit your completed nomination form and letters of endorsement online at www.gssem.org/volawards.
Upon Receipt	Nominators will receive confirmation of nomination receipt within one business day. If you do NOT receive nomination confirmation, you must contact the Volunteer Experience department at volunteerexp@gssem.org. The Volunteer Experience team reviews the nomination materials for accuracy, legibility, and completeness. We'll reach out to you if additional information is needed.
December 2026	**Review of Nominations** • Nomination review is based solely on award criteria and provided information. • Nominations may be: 1) approved, 2) approved with a change of award category, or 3) not approved.
Post-Review	**Within five business days of staff review, nominators are contacted 1) if their submissions weren't approved or 2) if their nominee's award category must change.** Feedback will also be given if a stronger nomination is needed. Nominators may use the feedback to modify and resubmit their nominations—as long as they do so within 5 business days of December deadline.
February 2027	**GSSEM Board Approval:** Approved nominations are sent to the Board of Directors for final approval.
Post-Board Review	**Nominators are contacted regarding Award approval.** Nominators are asked to inform their nominee(s) that they'll be receiving an award and to look out for an invitation to GSSEM's Volunteer Service and Leadership Recognition Program.
February 2027	Honorees receive formal invitation to the GSSEM's Volunteer Service and Leadership Recognition Program.
April 29, 2027	Awards presented at the Volunteer Service and Leadership Recognition Program.

Adult Award: Cookie Champ Award

Description
The Cookie Champ Award acknowledges Troop Product Program Managers' and Troop Leaders' exemplary service in support of the Girl Scout Cookie Program. Strong candidates for this award have had a measurable impact on the Girl Scout Cookie Program and helped their troop reach or surpass goals set in place by their troop, while preserving the girl-led, entrepreneurial spirit of the Cookie Program.

Criteria
- Be a currently registered member in good standing.
- Have no debt owed to GSSEM.
- Complete Cookie Rookie training

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted, and should include information about the troop's goals, the troop's per-girl average, and how the candidate inspired Girl Scouts to reach those goals.

This award is a good fit for: A trained Troop Product Program manager of a troop that achieved its overall sales goal.

Example of Candidate
Sandra Fakename managed product programs on behalf of multi-level Troop 12345. Through Sandra's partnership with Troop Leaders, Troop 12345 held a cookie kickoff meeting to discuss the Cookie Program with families, earned cookie badges, and scheduled 10 cookie booths throughout the season. She help Girl Scouts in the troop to create their cookie booth in a girl-led way. One Girl Scout in Troop 12345 was a council top seller. Through Sandra's efforts, the troop achieved a Per-Girl Average of 487.

Adult Award: Rising Star Award

Description
The rising star is given to exceptional first year Troop Leaders/Co-Leaders who have actively promoted the Girl Scout Program.

Criteria
- Be a currently registered member in good standing.
- Have no debt owed to GSSEM.
- Have served in the Troop Leader/Co-Leader role for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 18 months.
- Have completed all onboarding tasks within 60 days of their assigned troop's start date.
- Achieved girl retention rate of at least 75% in at least one assigned troop.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted, including a biography that indicates how the nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: A first year troop leader who has earned several badges with their troop, attended at least one event, and had a successful spring renewal period.

Example of Candidate
Shelly Fakename is a Troop Leader of Brownie Troop 24680. Since becoming a leader, Shelly has guided her troop to earning the Pets, Home Scientist, Bugs, and Dancer badges, along with the Safety Award and World Thinking Day Award. Her favorite troop activity this year was visiting an animal shelter with the troop.

Adult Award: Volunteer of Excellence

Description



The Volunteer of Excellence award recognizes those volunteers who have contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with girls to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through use of the national program portfolio or who have contributed outstanding service in support of the council's mission delivery to girl and adult members.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout.
- The candidate has successfully completed at least one calendar year of service and all requirements for the position.
- The candidate has performed beyond expectations for the position to deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to girls using the national program portfolio, or
- The candidate's performance has been beyond the expectations of the position and has supported council's mission-delivery goals in one or more of the following functional areas: Membership Development/Community Cultivation, Volunteer Experience and Support, Program, Leadership and Governance, Fund Development, and Council Support Service (such as IT, Customer Service, Merchandising, MarComm).
- The candidate actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Nomination

A nomination form is completed and submitted, including a biography that indicates how the nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: Troop Leaders who work with their school to host a recruitment event. A former troop parent who stepped up to lead when the troop would not have been able to continue, a troop volunteer who hosted a bring-a-friend troop meeting and recruited 5 more Girl Scouts.

Example of Candidate

- A college student volunteer who was recruited by IT to help with data entry saw a posting on the council's Facebook page encouraging recognition of volunteers on Leader's Day. She saw the opportunity to use the council's website to make this type of volunteer recognition easy and relevant for everyone to use.

  In coordination with council staff, she helped launch a recognition page on the website that leverages tools like e-cards and online voting campaigns, highlights real volunteer success stories, and provides valuable information on ways to thank all volunteers throughout the year.

  As a result, 4,700 personal thank-you messages were sent to volunteers last year by council leadership and staff, volunteers, parents, and girls. Nominations for Council- and GSUSA-earned awards also rose by 35 percent and volunteers reported feeling highly valued on satisfaction surveys 22 percent more than the previous year.

- A troop leader stepped into the role of Troop Organizer to assist with recruiting at her school district. This membership year, she attended 4 family information nights, out of which 3 troops were established. 42 Girl Scouts now have a troop to call their own, thanks to the volunteer's efforts.

- A Daisy troop leader organized a field trip to visit a local police station as part of the Respect Authority petal badge. After discovering other Daisy troops in her school district were also earning petals, she coordinated with those troops and the police department to ensure that 23 Daisies were able to earn the petal and see this piece of the Girl Scout law in action.

Adult Award: Commitment to Excellence Award

Description
This award recognizes volunteers who have served girls with dedication while implementing the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) over a period of at least three years with GSSEM. This person shares their ideas and enthusiasm for the Girl Scout Mission and looks for ways to include resources from the community to enhance the troop experience.

Criteria
- Registered adult member of Girl Scouts.
- Current background check on file with GSSEM.
- Has served in a volunteer role for three consecutive membership years.
- Previously received the Volunteer of Excellence award.
- Has completed training for the position held.
- Owes no debt to GSSEM.
- Role models the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted, including a biography that indicates how the nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: A former Volunteer of Excellence honoree that has volunteered for 5 or more years with Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan that has continued to provide a well-rounded, girl-led experience for their troop.

Example of Candidate
Shamika Fakename was awarded the Volunteer of Excellence Award in 2022. Since then, Shamika has continued to support the Girl Scout mission both in her troop and her service unit. Troop 13579's retention rate is a testament to Shamika's strong leadership, with Troop 13579 experiencing over 80% retention in each of the past three membership years. Shamika frequently shares her expertise with other troop leader in her service unit as an active contributor to service unit meetings and social media. Her troop has remained active in their community with all Girl Scouts in the troop earning their Silver Award.

Adult Award: Appreciation Pin



Description
The Appreciation Pin recognizes an individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. This service, which has had a measurable impact on one geographic area of service, such as a service unit, helps GSSEM reach and surpass the mission-delivery goals of the area.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout.
- All criteria listed for the Volunteer of Excellence Award has been satisfied by the candidate.
- The service performed by the candidate is above and beyond the expectations for the position held, and made an impact on a geographic area within the council's jurisdiction.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted to the Volunteer Experience team, including a biography that indicates how the candidate or nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: A troop leader who guided her troop to host a badge-earning event for other troops in her Service Unit, a Service Unit Manager who grew attendance at service unit meetings, a recruitment volunteer who partnered with local volunteers and staff to increase new adult memberships by 5% in the service unit.

Example of Candidate
At an event, a troop leader noticed that the diversity of the girls did not match the diversity of the community. She talked with her council staff and found that they had identified a potential for membership increase among the Latinx communities in her area. She partnered with the service-delivery team to create and implement recruitment strategies to reach both girls and adults and new ways of work to support new members. As a result, Latina girl membership rose by 14 percent and adult membership by 15 percent last year. The new members participated in series and camps, as well as 78 percent in troops.

Adult Award: Honor Pin



Description
The Honor Pin recognizes an individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, which has had measurable impact on two or more geographic areas of service (i.e. multiple service units or multiple GSSEM communities) allowing the council to reach and surpass its mission-delivery goals.

Criteria
- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout.
- All criteria listed for the Volunteer of Excellence Award has been satisfied by the candidate.
- The service performed by the candidate is above and beyond the expectations for the position held and made an impact on two or more geographic areas within the council jurisdiction.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted to the Volunteer Experience team, including a biography that indicates how the candidate or nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: A committee volunteer who partnered with multiple area organizations to create a catalog of youth volunteer opportunities for troops within Community 07, A long-standing Service Unit Manager who partnered with council staff to mentor other newer Service Unit Managers in their community, a volunteer who organized a day camp for all Girl Scouts in Community 04 to attend.

Example of Candidate
An Adult Learning Facilitator realized that many volunteers in her service unit were unfamiliar with traditional Girl Scout songs and games. She worked with the Volunteer Experience team to develop a new training, making videos showing examples of traditional Girl Scout songs and games in partnership with her Girl Scout troop. She also provided a script for the Manager of Volunteer Experience to use for course narration. After sharing the training with her service unit at a service unit meeting, the training was shared by several more volunteers. To date, 150 volunteers have taken this training and are prepared to pass down time-honored Girl Scout traditions to their troops.

Adult Award: Thanks Badge - One Endorsement Letter



Description
The Thanks Badge honors an individual whose ongoing commitment, leadership, and service have had an exceptional, measurable impact on meeting the mission-delivery goals and priorities of the entire council or the entire Girl Scout Movement.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout.
- All criteria listed for the Volunteer of Excellence Award has been satisfied by the candidate.
- The outstanding service performed by the candidate resulted in outcomes that benefitted the total council or the entire Girl Scout organization, and is so significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted to the Volunteer Experience team, along with supporting documentation indicating how the candidate or nominee meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: An adult learning facilitator who helped deliver a staff-approved training of the facilitator's design which served 40 volunteers council-wide and partnered with staff to edit the training based on feedback received. A committee volunteer who worked with local religious leaders to provide an interfaith event serving Girl Scouts council-wide. A volunteer who partnered with staff to create young alumnae events that brought 40 former Girl Scouts back to the organization as volunteers.

Example of Candidate
A volunteer saw an opportunity to use the Take Action Award to increase membership in one of the council's target markets. She helped the council partner with local companies and groups to provide in-kind, financial, and volunteer support to build a Take-Action Tree House at each camp. She led a task group of girls to design and develop progressive programming, based on girl-led processes and Girl Scout programming, which culminated in take-action projects. The three-year project brought in 300 new Girl Scouts, a 5 percent overall increase in camp registrations the following year, 90 new volunteers, and new partnerships with 11 local organizations.

Adult Award: Thanks Badge II - One Endorsement Letter



Description
The Thanks Badge II honors a previous Thanks Badge award recipient who has continued to provide exemplary service in a leadership role, resulting in a measurable impact that benefits the entire Girl Scout Movement.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout.
- All criteria listed for the Volunteer of Excellence Award has been satisfied by the candidate.
- The candidate has received the Thanks Badge.
- The outstanding service performed by the candidate resulted in outcome(s) that benefitted the entire Girl Scout organization, and is so significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted to the Volunteer Experience team, along with supporting documentation indicating how the candidate meets the criteria.

This award is a good fit for: A previous Thanks Badge honoree who took the successful initiative they worked on to another council or nationwide. A previous Thanks Badge honoree whose service legacy over many years has served as an inspiration to Girl Scouts throughout GSSEM and beyond.

Example of Candidate
After receiving the Thanks Badge, the volunteer from the Thanks Badge example was motivated by the success of the Take-Action Tree House project and submitted to present this best practice at a GSUSA conference. She then served for the two years on a national task group to help educate and support all 111 other councils to create long-term plans that integrate all council departments to implement the camp pathway to grow membership and deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) through outdoor program pillar.

GSSEM Adult Award: Friend of Girl Scouting

Description
The Friend of Girl Scouting Award honors community and business partners who support Girl Scouting within Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan's service area.

Criteria
- The community/business partner actively recognizes, understands, and practices the value of inclusive behavior.
- The community/business partner has worked with Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan to provide at least 1 event related to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience within the past membership year.
- The community/business partner actively supports Girl Scouting with funds, resources, community connections, and/or in-kind donations.

Nomination
A nomination form is completed and submitted to the Volunteer Experience team, along with supporting documentation indicating how the candidate or nominee meets the criteria. The GSSEM staff reviews the nomination documentation, then approves or denies it. The Volunteer Experience team sends notification of the decision to the council's board of directors for confirmation.

Example of Candidate
- A local museum offers badge programs for Brownies.
- A community college works with Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan to provide space for a badge-earning event.
- An organization that supports Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan by providing funding and/or in-kind donations for programming.