

A Brief History of the Girl Scout Movement

For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts of the USA has inspired generations of girls to lead with courage, confidence, and character. The Girl Scout Movement began on March 12, 1912, when Savannah, Georgia, native Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low gathered 18 girls together to provide them the opportunity to evolve physically, mentally, and spiritually. Her goal was to bring together girls of all backgrounds to develop self-reliance and resourcefulness, preparing them for future roles as professional women, as well as for active citizenship outside the home. Within just a few years, there were nearly 70,000 Girl Scouts nationwide, including the territory of Hawaii. An inclusive movement from its very foundation, the first African-American troops were established in 1917, and by 1920, troops for girls with disabilities were established as well.

Today, there are more than 59 million living Girl Scout alumnae. And 2.7 million girls and adult volunteers are active members in our 112 Girl Scout councils in every corner of the United States, Puerto Rico, and United States territories, and in more than 90 countries overseas. The Girl Scout Movement has grown into the largest girl-serving organization in the world, with a robust program that helps girls develop into confident leaders by learning new skills and measurable outcomes. The award-winning Girl Scout Leadership Program creates a safe environment for girls to discover themselves and their values, take healthy risks, connect with others, and take actions to make the world a better place. Additionally, this initiative stimulates the development of vital life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, cooperation and team building, conflict resolution, and advocacy, among others.

Core programs around outdoor education, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), environmental stewardship,

entrepreneurship, healthy living, financial literacy, and global citizenship have been bedrock pillars of the Girl Scout experience from the beginning of the Movement. STEM badges were first introduced in 1913 with the “electrician” and “flyer” badges, offering girls of every age activities relevant to everyday life. This legacy continues to this day, with modern-day Girl Scouts earning badges in digital arts, computing, code-writing, financial literacy, graphic design, and business. Camping, hiking, kayaking, and map-reading are also foundational elements of the Girl Scout Movement, which continue to be central, to this day.

Girl Scouts’ financial literacy programming – most notably, the iconic Girl Scout Cookie sale – helps girls set financial goals and gain the confidence they need to ultimately take control of their own financial future. And this entrepreneurial groundwork has now gone digital with the introduction of Digital Cookie in 2014, teaching vital new skills like online money management, electronic commerce, app usage, Internet safety and behavior (a theme repeated in programs focusing on anti-bullying, and healthy body images for girls).

Celebrating its centennial in 2016, Girl Scouts’ highest awards, now known as the Gold Award, is the highest honor a girl can earn. It requires girls to make a measurable and sustainable difference in their community: assess a need and design a solution; find the resources and the support to make it happen; complete the project; and also inspire others to sustain it. It has been known as the Curved Bar, Golden Eaglet, and First Class over the years. But whatever it’s called, every girl who has earned it is part of an elite group of selfless, civic-minded individuals who have taken action in their communities to tackle a local or global problem in a sustainable way – and that means they’ve made our world a better place.

Today, 52 percent of women in business are Girl Scout alumnae. Nearly every woman who has been in space wore the Girl Scout uniform, as did two-thirds of all female members of Congress, and Girl Scout alumnae in the world of public service include three former secretaries of State. And, the Girl Scout mission continues, seeking to help girls from all walks of life build the courage, confidence, and character they need to transform the world. Girl Scouts of the USA protects and propels girls, families, and society by updating programs, making it faster and easier for adults to volunteer, and working with an unwavering dedication to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape facing the modern girl. ●

Top 10 Accomplishments

1. Founder Juliette Gordon Low organized the first Girl Scout troop on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia.
2. In the early 1900s, Juliette Gordon Low introduced what is now known as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to Girl Scouts by offering welding, aviation, and circuitry badges.
3. In 1956, Martin Luther King Jr. described Girl Scouts as a “force for desegregation.”
4. Girl Scouts of the USA was ranked #7 in the 2016 Brand World Value Ranking.
5. More than 59 million American women alive today participated in Girl Scouts during childhood.
6. Fifteen of the 20 women (75 percent) in the U.S. Senate and more than half of the 88 women in the U.S. House of Representatives are Girl Scout alumnae. Additionally, all three female U.S. secretaries of state are Girl Scout alumnae. And there are currently six women serving as governors across the U.S. – and five are Girl Scouts alumnae.
7. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. Girl Scouts sell about 200 million boxes of cookies – nearly \$800 million worth – during each cookie season.
8. There’s more to Girl Scout Cookies than what’s in the box. When a Girl Scout sells you cookies, she’s building a lifetime of skills – goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics – essential to leadership, success, and life.
9. Girl Scouts launched its first-ever national digital platform – Digital Cookie 1.0 – in 2014 with two separate ways for girls to market their online cookie business by inviting customers to visit a personalized cookie website, or by taking in-person orders using a mobile app. In 2015, Girl Scouts of the USA built on the initial success of Digital Cookie 1.0 by launching Digital Cookie 2.0, with dynamic, engaging, and interactive new tools and fun new upgrades that make learning and selling cookies more exciting and educational for girls.
10. *Fast Company* ranked Girl Scouts among the “World’s Top 10 Most Innovative Companies of 2015 in Not-for-Profit,” touting Digital Cookie as “showing girls that technology is about more than texting.” ●

A word from Girl Scouts of the USA’s National Board President, Kathy Hopinkah Hannan

“Girl Scouts has an over 100-year-old legacy of providing girls with the guidance they need to become the best leaders they can be, and to be girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Over the course of our rich history we have had devoted leaders to continue the legacy of Juliette Gordon Low, a visionary pioneer. As a Movement, we welcome Sylvia Acevedo, a life-long Girl Scout who brings extensive experience as a talented leader, entrepreneur, and technology executive as well as a deep passion for and understanding of Girl Scouts, for her service as interim CEO as we continue our mission to serve girls and invest in our collective future.”

For more information on Girl Scouts of the USA

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www.girlscouts.org