



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **LOCAL GIRL SCOUTS RECEIVE GOLD AWARDS**

**Uniontown, PA** – Breann Zahrobsky and Elyse Hughes have learned a thing or two from their involvement in Girl Scouts. They know how to make a plan, work hard and delegate. They display confidence and leadership – skills they displayed in earning their respective Gold Awards in recent months.

The Gold Award is the highest level a Girl Scout can achieve. Zahrobsky earned her award with Connellsville Troop 53037, while Hughes earned her Gold Award as a member of Masontown Troop 51309.

After attending services at Central Fellowship Church in Connellsville, Zahrobsky decided to install a shower at Connellsville Area Community Ministries. Hughes focused on education, creating nine STEM summer workshops for middle school students, as well as a STEM kid for lending at German-Masontown Library. She also taught organization leaders and library staff about program plans for future use.

“I’ve been thinking about my Gold Award for awhile, and we had this lady who came to our church, and she was homeless,” Breann said. “A lot of times, we would invite her to come to church events, and she would say no because she didn’t feel clean.”

Breann said the church would sometimes pay for a room for the woman so that she could use the shower and have a comfortable place to sleep. The woman’s situation got Breann thinking about others in her position, as well as others who might be without the ability to shower, like when a water line is undergoing repairs.

“My mom and I were talking one day, and I said, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if there was a place where anybody who needed to shower could come and get a free shower?’” Breann said.

She brought up the idea at her church where a fellow parishioner, who also volunteers at Community Ministries, suggested reaching out to Executive Director Dana Check.

“She had had this idea for awhile (too),” Breann said. “So, it worked out.”

Check said Breann’s project was a “godsend,” as she had been planning to approach the board about putting in a shower due to the many requests she’d received. “She is a lovely young lady. Her parents and everyone who helped were just fantastic.”

In her Gold Award essay, Elyse said she chose to create a STEM program for middle schoolers simply because there aren't any in this area. She also noted many families can't afford to pay for such programs, so finding a place to host them free of charge was key.

"Getting to programs and paying for them are both major problems kids in our area face," Hughes wrote. "Also, many middle schoolers don't have much to do over the summers; it's that weird middle age where they are no longer little kids, but they also can't drive to get to places."

Elyse's mom, Bethany Hughes, said she thought the project was a great way to introduce middle schoolers to STEM topics. "She really wanted to have the program at a place that kids could get to, so the German-Masontown Library was great because kids could walk or bike there if they wanted. Also, she was passionate about the project because she used to go to a lot of camps and programs, and that's how she learned about environmental engineering and about water and soil issues."

Bethany noted that Elyse is currently pursuing that career as a student at St. Francis University, where she is majoring in environmental engineering and minoring in civil engineering.

Scouting projects usually require materials and time to be donated, and it was up to Breann and Elyse to solicit those donations.

"It's a leadership project, so I had to make calls and ask people to help," Breann explained.

Central Fellowship Church donated the shower and sink, Breann said, and someone already had donated a washer and dryer to Community Ministries. They were installed in the room, as well as a hot water tank donated by Craig Appliance, which also donated installation service.

"My uncle owns an electrical company," Breann said. "He did all the electrical stuff and made sure it was good, and he taught me. My Girl Scout troop helped out and some of my friends came."

Breann also reached out to area churches, which collected donations of shower supplies, as well as individual bags, into which the supplies were packed. Bags are given out to those who use the shower.

"That's one of the things my troop helped with. There are men's bags and women's bags," Breann said, noting Community Ministries keeps the bags restocked. "I think we made a few hundred of them to begin with."

Check said it was wonderful to see the support the project received. "I could not ask for a better person to do it, a better family to do it," she said.

And the project has turned out to be quite a success. "We have probably provided showers for one or more people every day since it's gone in," Check said.

Elyse did not need to concern herself with the materials for her project, as she created the STEM programs herself. But she needed to find people willing to teach them.

"It was rather difficult to find people willing to come and teach, and the fact that many libraries struggle to find programming is very understandable," Elyse wrote. "For my project, I was able to work with the

Mountain Water Association, PennDOT, Fallingwater, 4-H, and myself. These organizations had all agreed to teach a few sessions.”

Elyse herself made up a schedule, coordinated with the library director, and advertised the programs on social media and via connections with middle school teachers. She also attended each of the sessions. She noted the programs, which were held throughout the summer, seemed to have had a positive impact. She tried to make sure that continued.

“I made sure to have all of the programs spread out throughout the summer so that the students would have activities to do all summer long,” she wrote. “Having this at the library was also important because it gave the library more visitors; according to a survey, the majority of the kids had never been to the library before. Now, a few of them have library cards. I was also able to create a STEM Kit Lending Library, so that kids could continue learning about STEM. All of the items were donated from an Amazon Wish-List, which works like a registry.”

Both Gold Award recipients come from scouting families. Elyse, like Breann, joined Girl Scouts in first grade. And both have moms who earned the Gold Award as well.

“Girl scouting is in our family,” Bethany said. “My mom was my leader when I was little. I am a leader and lifetime member myself, and a Gold Award recipient as well!”

Breann, a junior at Southmoreland High School, actually lives in Mt. Pleasant with her mom, Bobbi, a former Gold Award recipient; dad, Brian; and older brother, Ben, who received his Eagle Scout designation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Scouting is a big part of our lives,” Bobbi said.

Due to her parents’ schedules, Breann would often attend Boy Scouts with Ben, and she was excited to join her own troop. After attempts to join troops closer to home didn’t work out, someone suggested Troop 53037.

“I never thought about taking her to another town,” Bobbi said.

It turned out to be a bit of a homecoming, though. Breann’s troop is led by Joan Emanuel and Colleen Peary, and Emanuel was also the troop leader when Bobbi received her Gold Award.

“I got my Gold Award in, I believe it was 1994,” Bobbi said. “I did a historical walking tour of Connellsville.”

Seeing her daughter achieve the same award in the same troop, Bobbi said, makes her “very proud.” And even though she hadn’t imagined bringing her daughter back to her old troop, she said it was a good choice. “We had a great troop there, a great family.”

To learn more about local Girl Scout programs, visit [www.gswpa.org](http://www.gswpa.org). To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettcountypa.org](http://www.fayettcountypa.org).

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