VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION HANDBOOK

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girl scouts of northeastern new york

2026 GSNENY AWARDS HANDBOOK

Nominate the outstanding volunteers in your life.

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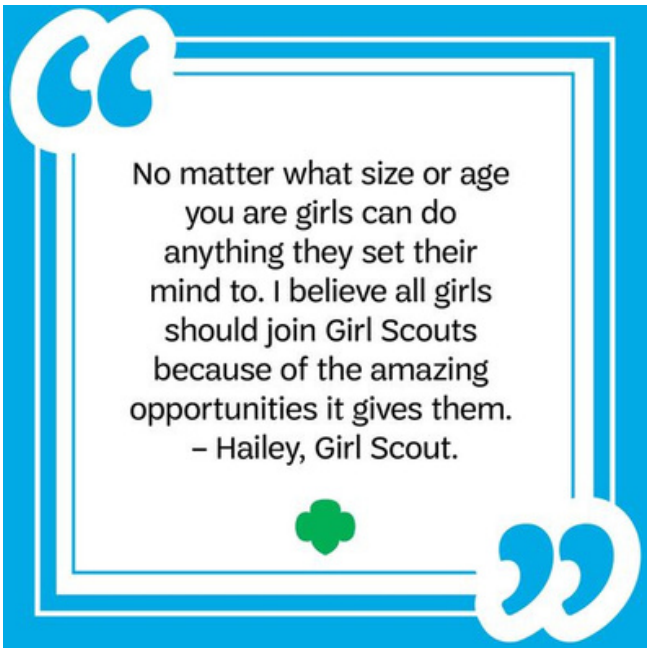

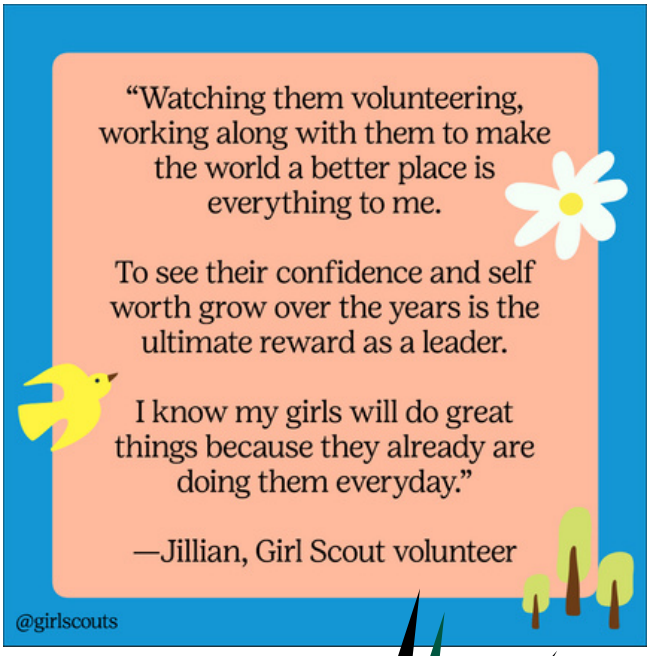

2026 Volunteer Dinners

April 14, 2026
5-8pm
The Butcher Block
15 Booth Drive
Plattsburgh, NY

April 24, 2026
5-8:30pm
Hilton Garden Inn
235 Hoosick Street
Troy, NY 12180

MISSION

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

LAW PROMISE

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try
to serve God* and my country,
to help people at all times,
and to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong
and responsible for what I say and do,
and to respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place,
and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

*members may substitute the word God in accordance with their own beliefs.

DEDICATION

This Handbook is dedicated to all our volunteers.
Thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment to GSNENY.
Every Girl Scout volunteer is truly extraordinary and deserves our heartfelt appreciation! Each year, there are many who shine brighter, going above and beyond to make an exceptional impact. These recognitions listed in this handbook are crafted to honor these exceptional individuals.

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Nominate the outstanding volunteers in your life.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- **Any adult over the age of 18 involved at any level of volunteering. This includes but is not limited to leaders, parent helpers, service unit team members and council volunteers.**
- **Must be a current registered Girl Scout adult in good standing with GSNENY (ie: completed all required training, current background check, no outstanding balances or restrictions)**
- **Actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behaviors.**
- **Provides service that is above and beyond expectations for the position held.**

Must follow GSUSA and GSNENY policies and guidelines. As recognition recipients, they are being held up as a role model who shows progression as a leader in their role. Must have performed services between October 1 and September 30 of the current or previous membership year unless otherwise stated in criteria of a specific recognition.

IMPORTANT DATES

Nominations Start: **December 2, 2025**

Nomination Deadline: **March 23, 2026 at 9am**

All nominations must be submitted electronically using the Jotform.
Paper nominations will not be accepted.
Late nominations will not be considered for recognition in 2026.
If you have a problem with Jotform, please contact customercare@girlscoutsneny.org to be put in contact with a Volunteer Engagement Specialist for assistance.

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HOW TO NOMINATE?

1. Choose the recognition that best matches the outstanding contributions of the nominee.
2. Recruit others to complete and submit the required number of nomination forms for the award for the nominee.
3. Complete the JotForm nomination submission for the nominee. You will receive an email confirmation after each submission.

While you can nominate multiple people for awards, each nominee requires their own nomination form to be completed separately. Each endorsement letter requires a separate JotForm submission.

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WHO CAN NOMINATE?

Nominations can be submitted by anyone OTHER than the nominee. This includes but is not limited to GSNENY council staff, GSNENY volunteers, Girl Scout family members, and Girl Scouts. The person submitting the nomination does not need to be a registered member of Girl Scouts. Before you nominate a volunteer, refer to the list of recognitions in this handbook to review the descriptions and requirements. Then, complete and submit the online Jotform nomination form. All nominations must be submitted electronically, paper submissions will not be accepted. Late submissions will not be considered for recognition in 2026.

Pro Tip: it's not all on you! Recruit others to complete and submit nomination forms!

Some awards require multiple endorsement letters. When needed, multiple Jotform submissions for a nominee to receive an award will be required from different nominators. Endorsement letters should speak specifically to the criteria for the recognition the volunteer is being nominated for using specific examples and measurable outcomes.

HOW THE NOMINATION PROCESS WORKS

All nominations are reviewed, and awards status is determined by the GSNENY Volunteer Services Department and/or select committee members, unless otherwise noted. This group of individuals prioritizes service impact, meaning more weight is given to results rather than years in a position (although it often takes some time in a position before the person can achieve truly outstanding results).

The group review each nomination and endorsement and compare the information presented about the volunteer with the criteria established for each recognition. Upon review, they will:

- Approve the candidate for a nominated recognition OR,
- Approve the candidate for a different recognition OR,
- Deny the nomination. In a case where there is no indication given that the candidate's service met the criteria, the nomination could be denied.

RECEIVING YOUR AWARD

Approved nominees for Council-level and GSUSA-level recognitions will be awarded at the GSNENY annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinners in April 2026. Each approved nominee will be notified via email that they have been approved for an award but will not find out which award until it is presented. For the award recipients unable to attend the Volunteer Appreciation dinner, all recognitions will be provided to their Service Unit Managers, or available for pickup at one of our Service Centers after the Volunteer Appreciation Dinners have concluded.

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HOW TO WRITE A STRONG NOMINATION

The Volunteer Recognitions rely heavily on the content received. Use this chart to convert a statement into the strongest nomination for review.

Initial Statement	Thoughtfully Consider	Strong Nomination Statement
"She has been a leader for a long time."	How many years? Through which levels?	"For 11 years, she has led a large troop from Daisies, persevering through the challenging middle school years, to their current Senior Troop."
"Our Leader is Great!"	What kind of leadership qualities do they bring? What makes them stand out?	"Our leader continually brings leadership opportunities to the girls. They support a girl-led approach by encouraging girls to vote on and implement their activites."
"Our Leader always goes above and beyond"	Be specific! Tell a story about the great benefits received by those around them due to their efforts.	"Her troop voted to start the aMuse Journey. Because she never considered herself a "creative soul" when it came to artistic endeavors, she recruited troop parents, artists, and actors as resources for her girls to draw from. As a result, the girls had a great time meeting community experts and discovering parent talent in their own troop! They now have several opportunities for Take Action projects."

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"One cannot manufacture confidence, but one can inspire it."

-Juliette Gordon Low

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AWARDS OVERVIEW

There are several types of awards available to volunteers

GSUSA Level Recognitions

Volunteer of Excellence

Appreciation Pin

Honor Pin

Thanks Badge

Thanks Badge II

GSNENY Recognitions

Product Program Rising Star

Golden Leader

Key to Success

Rising Star

Diversity Matters

New Award

GSNENY Council Awards

Helping Hands

Legacy Award

Service to Adults

Years of Service

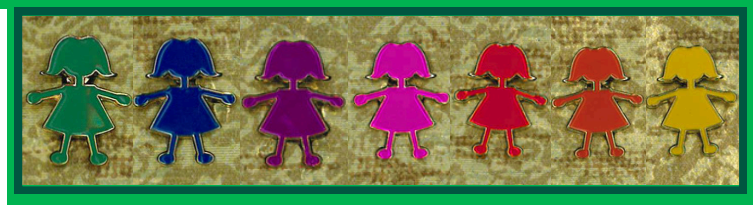
Service Unit Cookie Rockstar

Service Unit Sweets & Treats Rockstar

Resourceful Recruiter

Volunteering Hours Recognitions

GSNENY Service Unit Awards



Service to Girls

Grow Your Garden

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2026 GSNENY AWARDS HANDBOOK
GSUSA National Awards

The GSUSA National Awards are the highest Adult Awards that can be earned in Girl Scouting. The criteria for these awards are set by GSUSA and awards are distributed for service that is above and beyond the expected position of a volunteer when no other award would be appropriate.

Volunteer of Excellence

Recognizes volunteers who have contributed significantly while partnering directly with girls in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through the use of the National Program Portfolio OR who have contributed outstanding service in support of the council's mission in one or more of the following functional areas:

- **Membership Development/Community Cultivation**
- **Volunteer Support**
- **Program**
- **Leadership and Governance**
- **Fund Development**
- **Council Support Services**

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who has been an approved volunteer of 1 year (minimum) prior to nomination
- Has presented the GSNENY to successfully achieve the 5 outcomes (Strong Sense of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, Community Problem Solving)
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

1 letter of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Appreciation Pin

Recognizes the volunteer's exemplary service while partnering directly with girls to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through the use of the National Program Portfolio OR who have contributed outstanding service within at least one specific Service Unit or geographic area, and is in support of the council's mission in one or more of the following functional areas:

- **Membership Development/Community Cultivation**
- **Volunteer Support**
- **Program**
- **Leadership and Governance**
- **Fund Development**
- **Council Support Services**

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who has been an approved volunteer of 3 years (minimum) prior to nomination
- Has presented the GSNENY to successfully achieve the 5 outcomes (Strong Sense of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, Community Problem Solving)
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

2 letters of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

Previously earned Volunteer of Excellence

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2026 GSNENY AWARDS HANDBOOK
GSUSA National Awards

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Honor Pin

Recognizes the volunteer's exemplary service while partnering directly with girls to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through the use of the National Program Portfolio OR who have contributed outstanding service within two or more Service Units or geographic areas ,and is in support of the council's mission in one or more of the following functional areas:

- **Membership Development/Community Cultivation**
- **Volunteer Support**
- **Program**
- **Leadership and Governance**
- **Fund Development**
- **Council Support Services**

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who has been an approved volunteer of 3 years (minimum) prior to nomination
- Has provided significant assistance in two or more Service Units or geographic areas, measurably contributing to the goals and/or objectives of the region.
- Has presented the GSNENY to successfully achieve the 5 outcomes (Strong Sense of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, Community Problem Solving)
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

2 letters of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

Previously earned Appreciation Pin

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.
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Leadership is not about being in charge, but about taking care of those in your charge.

-Juliette Gordon Low

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GSUSA National Awards

The GSUSA National Awards are the highest Adult Awards that can be earned in Girl Scouting. The criteria for these awards are set by GSUSA and awards are distributed for service that is above and beyond the expected position of a volunteer when no other award would be appropriate.

Thanks Badge

Honors an individual whose ongoing commitment, leadership, and service have had a measurable impact on meeting the mission-delivery goals by building communities of young women that support our Girl Scout values and mission as a priority of the entire council or the entire Girl Scout movement.

- **The outstanding service performed by the nominee resulted in outcomes that benefited the total council or the entire Girl Scout organization and is significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate.**
- **The nominee has taken a leadership role at the council level in one or more of the following areas:**
  - **Increasing membership growth and retention**
  - **Increasing the percentage of adult-generated funding in the total council income**
  - **Increasing innovative program or training opportunities and participation council-wide**

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who has been an approved volunteer of 3 years (minimum) prior to nomination
- Has presented the GSNENY to successfully achieve the 5 outcomes (Strong Sense of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, Community Problem Solving)
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings
- Assistance to GSNENY or GSUSA measurably contributing to the goals and/or objectives of the region

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

3 letters of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

Previously earned Appreciation Pin or Honor Pin

Thanks Badge II

Honors a previous Thanks Badge recipient who has continued to provide exemplary service in a leadership role which resulted in a measurable impact benefiting the entire Girl Scout Movement.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who has been an approved volunteer of 6 years (minimum) prior to nomination
- Has presented the GSNENY to successfully achieve the 5 outcomes (Strong Sense of Self, Positive Values, Challenge Seeking, Healthy Relationships, Community Problem Solving)
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings
- Assistance to GSNENY or GSUSA measurably contributing to the goals and/or objectives of the region

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

3 letters of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members. Including 1 letter from a council staff member.

Previously earned Thanks Badge

and at least 3 years has lapsed since receiving Thanks Badge

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

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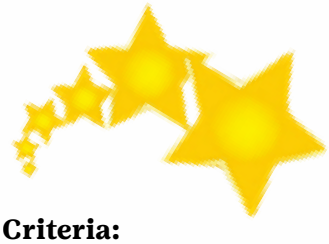
GSNENY Council Awards

The GSNENY Awards are the Adult Awards that can be earned only in the Northeastern New York Council. The criteria for these awards are set by GSNENY and awards are distributed for service that is above and beyond the expected position of a volunteer. These awards are available to all volunteers in good standing throughout the council.



Product Program Rising Star

Recognize a new volunteer, focused in helping a troop or Service Unit with the product program, who has fully embraced the Girl Scout movement with energy and passion and has performed outstanding work in their first or second year.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Volunteer who provided significant assistance during product program seasons in their first or second year as a volunteer.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

1 letter of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

Key to Success

**colors will vary*

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

Submitted completed New Leader Checklist to Volunteer Services via email

Completion of checklist will be verified by Volunteer Services.

Criteria:

- New Leader who completed the requirements outlined in the New Leader Checklist within their first 12 months as a volunteer.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Diversity Matters

**New Design coming soon*

Recognizes a volunteer who has gone above and beyond to include diverse members of their community in the Girl Scout movement.

Criteria:

- Actively recognize, understand, and practice the values of inclusive behavior.
- Girl Scout Adult member who is an approved volunteer in good standing.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

2 letters of Endorsement

Provided by any parent/girl/volunteer.

A volunteer may receive this recognition more than once.

Because of you, she shines!

Thank you!

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GSNENY Council Awards

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Rising Star

Recognizes a first-year or second-year volunteer who has fully embraced the Girl Scout movement with energy and passion and has performed outstanding work.

Criteria:

- Girl Scout Adult member who is an approved volunteer in their first or second year of service.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

1 letter of Endorsement

Can be provided from any parent, volunteer or girl. Letters do not need to come from GSNENY Members.

The volunteer may only receive this recognition once.

Golden Leader

Honors a leader, in good standing, who is nominated by the Girls/parents of their troop for the exceptional Girl Scout Experience that the leader delivers.

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

1 letter of Endorsement

Provided from any parent or girl associated with the troop.

A volunteer may receive this recognition more than once.

Criteria:

- A leader in good standing who has delivered exceptional Girl Scout Experience to their troop/Service Unit.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings
- The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

New Adult Award Coming Soon!

Presented to a current or past troop volunteer who shared the gift of their time and talents to help a troop effectively participate in all 13 years of our Girl Scout Leadership Program, continuously from kindergarten Daisies through 12th grade Ambassadors. The recipient(s) can include co-leaders and any other approved troop volunteers who helped the troop to prosper throughout the entire troop experience.

Criteria:

- Volunteer started with Kindergarten Daisies and has maintained an active, registered membership until the graduation of the troop in 12th grade. Verified by Volunteer Services.
- The graduating troop members demonstrate mastery of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through their activities within the four pillars: STEAM, Entrepreneurship, Life Skills, and Outdoors, as well as earning badges and community service.
- Participation in the fall Sweets & Treats Program and Cookie Program
- Attended service unit and council-sponsored programs
- Participated in outdoor and camping activities
- Completed all appropriate leader trainings

Pre-Requisites/Nominations/Endorsements

1 Nomination

2 letters of Endorsement

Provided by any parent/girl/volunteer. Including 1 from a Girl in the troop, cannot be from own child.

The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

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GSNENY Council Staff Nominated Awards

These are awards that are Council-nominated. These cannot be nominated for by volunteers but we place them here to make you aware of them.

Minimum Criteria for all Council Nominated Awards:

- Must have a current Girl Scout membership.
- Must not owe any debt to council.
- Consistently lives by and practices the ideals outlined in the Girl Scout Promise & Law.
- The nominee actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.

Helping Hands

Recognizes adult volunteers who give of their time to assist with council-run events, programming, council committees, and product sales.

Volunteers may receive this recognition more than once.

Product Program Rockstar Awards

This award is given to the Service Unit Sweets and Treats Manager for their dedication to the Sweets and Treats Product Program. Managers that increase their overall Sweets and Treats sales by 10% from the previous year will receive this award.

This award is given to the Service Unit Cookie Manager for their dedication to the Cookie Product Program. Managers that increase their overall cookie sales by 10% from the previous year will receive this award.

Volunteers may receive these awards more than once.

Legacy Award

Recognizes a volunteer with 10 or more consecutive years with the same service unit. This award is automatically given when Council is notified that a member has served ten years in their service unit.

Awarded in 10-year increments

Resourceful Recruiter

This award is given to a volunteer who has gone above and beyond in recruiting new girls and adults into Girl Scouts.

Award can be earned more than once

Service to Adults

This award is given to the Service Unit that has an adult retention rate of 75% or more.

Award can be earned more than once

Years of Service

To recognize years of Girl Scout Membership. This includes Girl and Adult years. Volunteers with more than 20 years of membership will be recognized by our CEO.

Number Guards awarded in 5-year increments.

Volunteering Hours

Recognizes volunteers for their hours of service to GSNENY.

This recognition is based on self-reported hours. Hours must be tracked annually, all hours must be completed withing a 12-month period. Hours are to be submitted via email to mlee@girlscoutsneny.org by the awards nomination deadline.

- Bronze: 100-249 hours in 12 months
- Silver: 250-499 hours in 12 months
- Gold: 500+ hours in 12 months
- Lifetime Achievement: 5000 hours throughout lifetime

Award can be earned more than once, with the exception of the Lifetime Achievement.

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GSNENY Service to Girls Awards

To recognize volunteers based on progressing requirements of participation in their Service Unit. This award has 7 levels of achievement. This is tracked by service units. Only Service Unit Managers or approved Service Unit Team Members can request these awards on behalf of the leaders in their Service Units. Each adult can only be awarded one per year.

Green

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings

Blue

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Previously been awarded Green Service to Girls Award

Purple

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Attend a Service Unit activity
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Previously been awarded Blue Service to Girls Award

Pink

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Attend a Service Unit activity
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Chair a Service Unit activity committee
Previously earned Purple Service to Girls Award

Red

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Attend a Service Unit activity
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Chair a Service Unit activity committee
Attend GSNENY or other enrichment training
Previously earned Pink Service to Girls Award

Orange

Be a registered troop leader or service team member
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Attend a Service Unit activity
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Chair a Service Unit activity committee
Attend GSNENY or other enrichment training
Hold a service unit team position or be a delegate for your Service Unit
Previously earned Red Service to Girls Award

Yellow

Be a registered troop leader or service team member.
Attend or be represented at 75% of SU Leader meetings
Attend a Service Unit activity
Participate on a Service Unit activity committee
Chair a Service Unit activity committee
Attend GSNENY or other enrichment training
Hold a service unit team position or be a delegate for your Service Unit
Volunteer on a GSNENY council committee or event
Previously earned Orange Service to Girls Award

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GSNENY Grow Your Garden Awards

The Grow a Garden Membership Program is for volunteers to "grow their own garden" of other volunteers. This will help Girl Scouts of Northeastern NY offer Girl Scouting to a greater number of girls in our Council footprint. This is self-reported. Each Volunteer can only earn one per year.

White Daisy Pin
1st Recruit
Mention and recognition at volunteer dinner

Yellow Daisy Pin
5th Recruit
Mention and recognition at Volunteer Dinner
Recognition in GS Express newsletter

Blue Daisy Pin
10th Recruit
Mention and recognition at Volunteer Dinner
Recognition in GS Express newsletter
$5 gift card to Starbucks/Dunkin/Stewarts

Silver Daisy Pin
15th Recruit
- **Mention and recognition at Volunteer Dinner**
- **Recognition in GS Express newsletter**
- **$10 gift card to Starbucks/Dunkin/Stewarts**

Gold Daisy Pin
20th Recruit
Mention and recognition at Volunteer Dinner
Feature article in GS Express newsletter
Recognition on GSNENY Social Media
$25 gift card to Starbucks/Dunkin/Stewarts

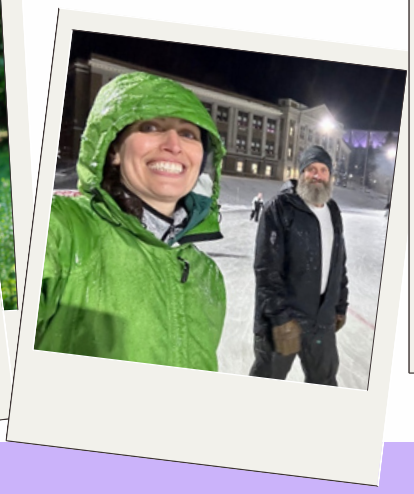
Recruit an adult to fill a volunteer position.

The adult registers in one of the following Girl Scout volunteer roles:

- Troop Leader
- Troop or Service Unit Helper
- Troop or Service Unit Cookie Parent Troop
- Service Unit Sweets and Treats Manager
- Troop or Service Unit Treasurer
- Troop or Service Unit Secretary
- Other Troop or Service Unit Volunteer Role

Minimum Criteria for Adult Recruits:

- Must have a current Girl Scout membership with valid background check.



Thank You to our Volunteers

2026 Volunteer Dinners

April 14, 2026
5-8pm
The Butcher Block
15 Booth Drive
Plattsburgh, NY

April 24, 2026
5-8:30pm
Hilton Garden Inn
235 Hoosick Street
Troy, NY 12180