



Agency Name: Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways

Program Name: Membership (Troop) Program

Program Success Story:

Alyssa N., Girl Scout Ambassador from Chenango Forks, high school senior and Gold Award recipient spoke at the Endicott Women of Distinction Event that was held on March 10, 2010. Alyssa spoke about the importance of Girl Scouting and how it has impacted her life. She has given permission to print her speech.

Lois Juliber, the President of Colgate. Elizabeth Dole, President of the Red Cross. Hilary Rodham Clinton and more than 60 other nationally elected women. Barbara Walters, the iconic news anchor of ABC "20/20" and Chief Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. If you were asked what these women all had in common, what would come to mind? Would it be that they were all strong and powerful, and hardworking? Would it be that they were leaders? Would it be that they were role models? All of the above could be true, but there is something else that links all of these inspirational and dignified women - they were all Girl Scouts.

I too am a Girl Scout, but I am a lot of things. I am a Temple volunteer, an environmentalist, a newspaper writer, a participant in Mock Trial, a former swimmer, and a Wendy's employee, to name a few. There are some days where my activities will leave me going from 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. straight, and that is the way that I like it. However, out of all of my extra-curricular activities, I truly believe that Girl Scouts is the one that had the greatest positive impact. It was, and still is, a catalyst for many positive changes and influences in my life, and was the hand that sculpted me into who I am today.

In the beginning of Girl Scouts, five-year-old me was shy and quiet. At that point, Girl Scouts to me was all about arts and crafts, finger painting and making neon colored puffy painted sweatshirts for my family (that they wore gladly by the way, and for that I owe them a lot). I enjoyed the delicious snacks, and looked at Girl Scouts as time with my friends and an excuse to hang out. Now, I realize that it was so much more.

The things I learned, though basic, formed the morals that I have today and dictate the way that I act. For example, in the Girl Scout Law it says to use resources wisely, and to make the world a better place. I was inspired by this law when I planned my Gold Award project. Beginning in August, I worked with the school board and various faculty and staff to start a composting program. I built a bin and placed it in the backyard of our school, and now our school has begun the long road to composting. I hope that this program will succeed, and that we will increase environmental consciousness while producing healthy soil that can be used around the school grounds and even sold.

The reason I was able to accomplish this difficult project was because of my background in Girl Scouting. I was given a support system of people who believed in me, and who never told me "no". I was never told to aim lower, never told I couldn't do something, and never told something would be impossible. Most importantly, I was never told "never." This allowed me to set high standards and to achieve high goals, and never to be afraid of hard work.

Another example of a positive Girl Scout experience is my time at Camp Amahami. I attended many different sessions, but the most memorable was one called "Survivor Amahami." In that session, we learned basic camping and outdoor techniques, such as how to build fires and how to hike. One day, my counselor told us that we would be making tents out of mud and sticks. I thought that was fine, and I had a great time doing it. That was, until my counselor told me I would be sleeping in it. I was scared, and didn't think I could do it, but my counselor told me that I could, and I did! I'm alive today to tell the tale.

This taught me independence, and independence will be useful next year when I make the transition to college. I will not be eating out of mess kits and sleeping in mud huts (hopefully), but I will still need to take care of myself and be a strong woman. While many people my age are nervous to go to college, I am nothing but excited. I have faith that the lessons learned and friendships formed in Girl Scouts will make the transition flawless. I have the courage to speak out and stand up for myself, and the courage to speak here today. I have the confidence to know that I am capable of anything as long as I try my hardest. I have the character to be responsible for what I say and do. All of this courage, confidence and character was grown, encouraged and nurtured in Girl Scouts. As I continue in the future to blossom and grow, I will never forget my Girl Scout roots.

I hope one day that I can be as positive a role model as Patricia Cummings, Nancy Phillips and Robin Mead, (Women of Distinction honorees) and that my impact will not only be felt in my community, but in the world. The founder of Girl Scouts, Juliette Gordon Low, once said "The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers." Because of Girl Scouts, I know that I can make history like all of these powerful women, and my work starts today.