

# Girl Scouts of the USA

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The **Girl Scouts of the United States of America** (**GSUSA**) is a youth organization for girls in the United States and American girls living abroad. It describes itself as "the world's preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls".<sup>[2]</sup> It was founded by Juliette Gordon Low in 1912 and was organized after Low met Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, in 1911.<sup>[3]</sup> Upon returning to Savannah, Georgia, she made her historic telephone call to a distant cousin, saying, "I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all of America, and all the world, and we're going to start it tonight!"<sup>[4]</sup>

GSUSA aims to empower girls and to help teach values such as honesty, fairness, courage, compassion, character, sisterhood, confidence, and citizenship through activities including camping, community service, learning first aid, and earning badges by acquiring other practical skills. Girl Scouts' achievements are recognized through rank advancement and by various special awards. Girl Scouts welcomed girls with disabilities early in their history, at a time when they were not included in most other activities.<sup>[4]</sup>

Membership is organized according to grade with activities designed appropriately for each level. The GSUSA is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), and has an extensive history of accepting girls from all backgrounds.

In 1994, the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, an industry publication, released the results of the largest study of charitable and non-profit organization popularity and credibility. The study showed that the Girl Scouts was ranked as the 8th "most popular charity/non-profit in America" of over 100 charities researched with 41% of Americans over the age of 12 choosing Love and Like A Lot for the Girl Scouts.<sup>[5]</sup>

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## Girl Scouts of the United States of America



<b>Headquarters</b>	New York, New York
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Founded</b>	March 12, 1912
<b>Founder</b>	Juliette Gordon Low
<b>Membership</b>	2,425,641 youth 904,788 adults (2009) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>CEO</b>	Kathy Cloninger
<b>Affiliation</b>	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

### Website

<http://www.girlscouts.org/>

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## 100th Anniversary

The rich and productive history of the first 100 years of Girl Scouting will be showcased in both traditional, innovative and novel ways throughout the nation. GSUSA is in contact with museums, businesses and organizations to join with the Girl Scouts in showcasing Girl Scouts.<sup>[6]</sup> GSUSA has celebratory T-shirts and accessories, including jewelry and hats embellished with the 100th Anniversary logo.<sup>[7]</sup>

President Barack Obama signed the "Girl Scouts of the USA Commemorative Coin Act" for the 100th Anniversary celebration. The act authorized the minting of 350,000 silver dollar coins in honor of Girl Scouts and the achievements of the 50 million women influenced by Girl Scouting during the last 100 years.<sup>[8]</sup>

Many plans are in the works for the 100th Anniversary of the founding of Girl Scouts by Juliette Low on March 12, 1912. The kick off will be a "Bridge to the Second Century" event on November 13, 2011 at the GS National Convention in Houston and sites around the country. The Anniversary will also be celebrated by participating in the world famous Pasadena, California Tournament of Roses Parade of 2012, featuring the Girl Scouts 100th Anniversary float. Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles is organizing the effort and has selected Fiesta Parade Floats, a multi-award winning float company, to build the float. The float will be designed and decorated by Girl Scouts.<sup>[9]</sup> Girl Scouts and Girl Scouts Alumnae can ride on the float virtually by having their name placed on the float <sup>[10]</sup>

Colorado is staging a vigorous campaign to create a special license plate to honor the Girl Scout Centennial. The campaign has gone national with the Girl Scouts asking for votes at their website.<sup>[11]</sup>

The Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital in Washington, DC will host a 100th Anniversary Sing-Along on the National Mall, on June 9, 2012 called Girl Scouts Rock the Mall: 100th Anniversary Sing - Along.<sup>[12]</sup> In Girl Scout tradition, thousands of Girl Scouts will line the National Mall for a sing-along celebrating the 100th year of Girl Scouting.

## Girl Scout Promise, Law, Motto, and Slogan

## Promise

The Girl Scout Promise can be made in English, Spanish, or in American Sign Language with the same meaning.<sup>[13]</sup>

*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.<sup>[14]</sup>

The Promise is often recited at Girl Scout troop meetings while holding up the three middle fingers of the right hand, which forms the Girl Scout sign. Girl Scout policy states that the word "God" may be interpreted depending on individual spiritual beliefs. When reciting the Girl Scout Promise, "God" may be substituted with the word dictated by those beliefs. The Girl Scout Motto is "Be Prepared."<sup>[15]</sup>

## 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.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Motto

"Be Prepared."<sup>[16]</sup>

## Slogan

"Do a Good Turn Daily"<sup>[16]</sup>

## Girl Scout Uniforms

For girls ages 5 to 14, the unifying look includes wearing a choice of a tunic, vest, sash for displaying official pins and awards, combined with their own solid white shirts and khaki pants or skirts. Girl Scouts in high school can also wear a scarf that unites their look with the sisterhood of Girl Scouts around the world. For adult members the unifying look of the uniform is a Girl Scout official scarf or tie for men, worn with the official membership pins, combined with their own navy blue business attire. Girl Scouts at the Daisy and Brownie levels will continue to have a full uniform ensemble available.<sup>[17]</sup>

Girl Scout uniforms have changed significantly over the years from the original khaki

Girl Scout uniforms have changed significantly over the years from the original khaki and the familiar green. The evolution has included uniforms with the specificity to designate each age level of Girl Scouting. Since 2008, Girl Scouts at each level have one required element (Tunic, Sash or Vest) for the display of official pins and awards which will be required when girls participate in ceremonies or officially represent the Girl Scout Movement.

For all levels, earned awards go on the front of the vest or sash following official placements. Fun patches can be displayed on the back of their vest or sash. Girl Scout Daisies can chose a blue vest or a smock with a full uniform or white shirt and khaki pants an skirt. They have their own Daisy Pin and a choice of accessories. Girl Scout Brownies can chose a traditional brown vest or sash to be worn with the historic Brownie Pin and other uniform pieces or white shirt and khaki pants or skirts. Girl Scout Juniors wear their official vest or sash to display insignia including awards, coupled with a white shirt and khaki pants or skirt. Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors can chose a khaki sash or vest to go with khaki pants or skirt and a white shirt.

The adult uniform also changed, with registered women and men wearing navy blue business attire, again from their regular wardrobes. Also available for women are official sweaters and an insignia scarf, while men have the option of an official tie.<sup>[18][19]</sup>



Girl Scout in uniform, 1973

## Girl Scout Logos



Designed by Juliette Low, the sole emblem of the Girl Scouts of the USA from 1912 until 1976

The current Girl Scouts of the USA logo was adopted in 2010, based on the Saul Bass's 1978 logo. He was a graphic designer known for his motion picture title sequences. The hair and facial styles were updated by Jennifer Kinon and Bobby Martin of The Original Champions of Design.<sup>[20]</sup>

The emblem designed by Juliette Low was the only emblem used for Girl Scout Pins through 1980. The 1978 GSUSA National Convention voted to use two logos, and allow Girl Scouts to pick which they wanted to wear as their Girl Scout Pin (for Girl Scout Juniors and up).

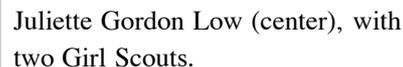
## History

Girl Scouting in the United States of America began on

March 12, 1912 when Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low organized the first Girl Scout troop meeting of 18 girls in Savannah, Georgia. It has since grown 3.7 million members.<sup>[4]</sup> Low, who had met Baden-Powell in London while she was living in the United Kingdom, dreamed of giving the United States and the world "something for all the girls." She envisioned an organization that would bring girls out of their sheltered home environments to serve their communities, experience the out-of-doors, and give them the opportunity to develop "self-reliance and resourcefulness." Unlike other organizations, from its inception, Girl Scouts has been organized and run exclusively by women, for girls and women.<sup>[21]</sup>



The organization's original name was the Girl Guides of America. In 1913, it was changed to the Girl Scouts of the United States and the organization was incorporated in 1915. The name was finally changed to the Girl Scouts of the United States of America in 1947, and was given a congressional charter on March 16, 1950. The GSUSA started with 18 members — within months, members were hiking through the woods in their knee-length blue uniforms, playing basketball on a curtained-off court, and going on camping trips. By 1920, there were nearly 70,000 members, and by 1930 over 200,000. In 2005 there were over 3.7 million Girl Scouts — 2.8 million girl members and 954,000 adult members — in the United States.<sup>[22]</sup> More than 50 million American women have participated in the Girl Scouts. Through its membership in the WAGGGS, GSUSA is part of a worldwide scouting family of over 10 million girls and adults in 145 countries.<sup>[23]</sup> The names and ages of the levels — and the larger structure of the program — have evolved significantly. Troops were initially fairly independent before joining together into small councils, which have recently merged into larger councils.



Juliette Gordon Low (center), with two Girl Scouts.

The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, located in Savannah, Georgia in the former Gordon family home, became the National Girl Scout program center in 1956.<sup>[24]</sup> It provides tours to thousands of Girl Scouts yearly. Upon Low's death in 1927, she willed her carriage house, which would eventually become The Girl Scout First Headquarters, to the local Savannah Girl Scouts for continued use.<sup>[25]</sup> The first National Headquarters was in Washington, D.C., but it was moved to New York City in the spring of 1916 and has remained there ever since.

The aim of the Girl Scouts is that girls will develop to their full potential by pursuing four goals: developing their full potential; relating to others with increasing understanding, skill, and respect; developing a meaningful set of values to guide their actions and to provide for sound decision-making; and contributing to the improvement of society.<sup>[26]</sup>

## World War II



Girl Scout presentation at Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival) on Japanese Girl's Day at Crystal City Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas

During World War II, 1943–1945, many young Japanese-American girls were confined in internment camps with their families. Girl Scout troops were organized, even in these camps. These girls participated in many activities, including dramatic presentations, which took place in the Crystal City Internment Camp, located in Crystal City, Texas.

## Desegregation

Most Girl Scout units were originally segregated by race according to state and local laws and customs. The first troop for African American girls was founded in 1917; the first American Indian troop was formed in New York State in 1921; and the first troop for Mexican Americans was formed in Houston, Texas, in 1922. In 1933, Josephine Groves Holloway founded unofficial African American troops in Tennessee. She also fully desegregated the

Cumberland Valley council in 1962.<sup>[27]</sup> The first official African American troop in the South was founded in 1932 in Richmond, Virginia by Lena B. Watson and led initially by Lavnia Banks, a teacher from Armstrong High School. It first met in Hartshorn Hall, Virginia Union University.<sup>[28]</sup>

By the 1950s, the GSUSA had begun significant national efforts to desegregate the camps and maintain racial balance. One of the first desegregations, accomplished by Murray Walls in 1956, was Camp Shantituck in Kentucky.<sup>[29]</sup> Later the same year, Martin Luther King, Jr. described Girl Scouts as "a force for desegregation".<sup>[30]</sup> In 1969, a national Girl Scout initiative called Action 70 was created that aimed to

eliminate prejudice. Gloria D. Scott, an African American, was elected National President of the Girl Scouts in 1975.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Wing Scouts

*Main article: Wing Scout*

The **Wing Scout** program was a Senior Girl Scout program for girls interested in flying and wanting to serve their country, started in 1941 and ending in the 1970s. In July 1942, 29 troop leaders from fifteen states met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to take Wing Scout leadership training. These leaders returned to their councils and began setting up Wing Scout troops. In 1959, Girl Scout Council in North San Mateo County, California was presented with an offer from United Airlines San Francisco Management Club President J. L. Burnside to start an aviation program for Senior Girl Scouts. One of the highlights of the Wing Scout program was the courtesy flight provided to Senior Girl Scouts using United Airlines' jets. For many of the girls, this was the first time they had flown in a plane. Senior Girl Scouts who had been in the program for three years were given the opportunity to take over the controls during flight in a small aircraft. The program was discontinued after United Airlines experienced financial setbacks in the 1970s.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Age levels

*Main article: Girl Scout levels (USA)*

The program was originally for girls aged from 10 to 17, but it was subsequently divided into three levels. Brownies (for younger girls) was based on a program developed in England in 1914 and was officially recognized in the mid-1920s. At the same time, girls over 18, or over 16 if First Class Scouts, became known as Senior Scouts. In 1938, the age divisions were: Brownies (ages seven through nine), Intermediates (ages 10 through 13), and Seniors (ages 14 through 17).<sup>[33]</sup>



Bess Truman with Girl Scouts and their leaders



Hillary Clinton posing with Girl

In 1963 the age structure was rearranged to Brownies (ages seven through nine, later six through nine), Juniors (ages nine through 11), Cadettes (ages 11 through 14), and Seniors (ages 14 through 17).<sup>[34]</sup> In 1984, the Daisy program for kindergarten girls or those aged five was introduced.<sup>[35]</sup> In 2003, the Studio 2B program for girls aged from 11 up to 17 was introduced though Cadettes and Seniors.<sup>[36]</sup>

Studio 2B allowed girls to call themselves by any name of their choosing, including but not limited to "Studio 2Bs,"<sup>[37]</sup> "teen Girl Scouts," or Cadettes and Seniors. Girl Scouts, aged 11 through 17, can earn both traditional badges and undertake Studio 2B activities, and the Silver Award and Gold Award requirements were rewritten to require both. Studio 2B activities differed from badges in two ways: each booklet focused on topics such as environmentalism or self-confidence rather than being; and to earn each Studio 2B charm, the Girl Scout had to choose activities from the booklet and then meet a goal relevant to the booklet topic. She would create her own plan for achieving her goal, following a basic planning procedure called SMART (standing for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely).

On October 1, 2008, all levels were changed to have Girl Scouts as the beginning of their name, e.g. "Girl Scout Brownies" instead of

Scouts

"Brownie Girl Scouts", and all levels are by grade only instead of by age or grade. A new level, Girl Scout Ambassadors was created for girls in Grades 11 and 12 (around 16 to 18 years old), with Girl Scout Seniors to be only in ninth and tenth grade (around 14 to 16 years old) and grades for other levels were changed. The new levels were trialed in approximately 6 councils in Spring 2008, and began national use after October 1, 2008.

Although troop membership has always and is still the most common way to participate in Girl Scouting, girls who do not desire to participate in troop activities can still sign up as an individual Girl Scout, known as a Juliette. Juliettes attend activities independently and work individually on badges and awards. The term Juliette may be phased out in the future. [ref. needed]

The Campus Girl Scouts program allows women(ages 18 and older) to be active in Girl Scouting while in college. Campus Girl Scouting is an organization that helps promote and build student involvement in the community, the local council, and the college campus through service.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Mariner Scouts

The 20th National Council of the GSUSA launched the Mariner Girl Scout program in October 1934.<sup>[39]</sup> Similar to the Boy Scouts' Sea Scouts, the program was designed for older Girl Scouts interested in outdoor water-based activities. By the end of 1934, 12 Mariner ships were registered and the first two handbooks, *Launching a Girl Scout Mariner Ship* and *Charting the Course of a Girl Scout Mariner Ship* were published. The Mariner Girl Scout program remains active but in a smaller form; most girls have instead joined the Sea Scouts, which has been co-ed since 1971.<sup>[40]</sup>

## Special programs

There are programs for girls in unusual situations that make it difficult for them to participate in the standard program. The *Girl Scouts Beyond Bars* program helps daughters of incarcerated mothers to connect with their mothers and to have the mothers participate in Girl Scout activities. Another program, *Girl Scouting in Detention Centers*, allows girls who are themselves in detention centers to participate in Scouting. Other initiatives try to help girls in rural areas or in public housing. There are also programs for American girls living overseas.<sup>[41]</sup>

## Organizational structure

The national organization has its central headquarters in New York City. It has a staff of 400, and is headed by a Chief Executive Officer and a 40 member National Board of Directors. Kathy Cloninger has been the Chief Executive Officer since 2003 and is retiring in November 2011; the Chair of the National Board of Directors, the highest volunteer position, is Connie L. Lindsey.<sup>[42]</sup>

Below the national organization were, as of 2006, 312 regional Girl Scout councils, which own the 236,000 local troops and other groups. As part of the August 26, 2006 reorganization, the National Board of Directors decided to restructure the 312 councils into 109 councils.<sup>[43]</sup> Some Councils own and run camps for the troops within its area of responsibility. Councils are usually subdivided again into areas, called Neighborhoods, Service Units, or Associations (terms vary), these are program delivery areas that consist of troops at all age levels in a smaller area, such as a town.

The basic unit is the troop which may or may not be sponsored. In contrast to Boy Scout troop chartered organizations, Girl Scout troop sponsors do not own the troop. Troops range in size from as small as six to as large as 30 or more girls and may be divided into several patrols of 8 or fewer girls.

In 2004, Girl Scouts of the USA hired Professor Willie Pietersen, an instructor at Columbia Business

School, to use his expertise in business metrics "to help Girl Scouts develop a strategy to ensure our future success and growth." They used his help in setting targets and implementing ways to change the organization for the better. In addition, six "Gap Teams" looked at ways for Girl Scouting to improve their structure to prepare for future growth and success for the organization.<sup>[44]</sup>

## Activities

One of the original and continuing attractions of Girl Scouts is that girls become proficient campers and participate in many outdoor activities such as canoeing or backpacking with their troops. Troops do service projects such as carrying out flag ceremonies, collecting food for food drives, visiting nursing homes and Christmas caroling or other community services.<sup>[45]</sup> Troops may also plan and take extended trips such as visiting another part of the United States or even travel to another country. Troops may organize cultural or learning events such as first aid training or attending live theatre. The Girl Scout activity most familiar to the general public may be the annual sale of Girl Scout Cookies, which started in 1917 as a money earning opportunity for the local council and troops.

## Destinations

*Main article: Destinations*

Once known as "Wider Opportunities" or Wider Ops, Destinations are travel opportunities for individual older Girl Scouts. Destinations are held within the United States and in other countries. Destinations are primarily international, outdoor, science, people, or apprenticeship oriented,<sup>[46]</sup> such as kayaking in Alaska, or career oriented such as learning about working for NASA.<sup>[47]</sup>

A "Destination" may be a trip to one of the WAGGGS World Centres:

- Our Cabaña in Cuernavaca, Mexico
- Our Chalet in Adelboden, Switzerland
- Pax Lodge in London, England
- Sangam in Pune, India <sup>[48]</sup>

## Traditions

The Girl Scouts of the USA have many customs and traditions: camping, community service, singing, and money earning to support their activities. The Girl Scout Handshake and the Girl Scout signal for silence are two shared by WAGGGS member organizations. Other traditions include the Friendship Circle with "the squeeze", taking bandanas and home-made sit-upons on camping trips and the buddy system.

"Bridging" is the process of going from one level to another. Bridging is usually done at the troop level, although area bridgings are often held. The girls that are bridging walk across a bridge to their new level and are greeted with the Girl Scout Handshake. There is a notable bridging ceremony held in San Francisco, as GS Juniors bridge to GS Cadettes over the Golden Gate Bridge.

World Thinking Day and "Girl Scouts' Own" are traditions throughout the world of Girl Scouting. World Thinking Day has occurred annually since 1926 on February 22, the birthday of both Robert Baden-Powell and Olave Baden-Powell. On Thinking Day, Girl Scouts and Guides around the world think about their sisters in other lands;<sup>[49]</sup> Councils or local service units (associations) hold a celebration on or near this day, in which each participating troop gives a presentation of the culture and customs of a country selected by the troop. Many Girl Scouts in America celebrate Juliette Gordon Low's birthday on October 31, Founder's Day. The parties often include the girls dressing up in Halloween costumes, and serving birthday cake.

A "Girl Scouts' Own" is a special ceremony that expresses the spirit of Girl Scouting when the girls reflect upon their feelings about Girl Scouting and the world around them. A "Scouts' Own" can have any theme, or none at all. It is a solemn time given for Girl Scouts to create a moment of their very own. It can be held at any time and include the girls' troop or be held at any inter-troop gathering.<sup>[50]</sup>

## Awards and badges

Members can earn awards appropriate for their age level. Originally called badges, the terminology has changed to Learning Petals for GS Daisies, GS Try-Its for Brownies, GS Badges for Juniors, and Charms and Interest Project awards for GS Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors (older girls). These Girl Scout awards are expected to be renamed "badges" in 2012-2014. Girl Scout Daisies will still earn Learning Petals and will be able to earn "Leaves".<sup>[51]</sup> Girl Scouts at every level can also earn Journey Awards. Journeys have become a large part of the Girl Scout program. In 2011, there were three Journeys, with books and awards for each level: "It's Your World - Change It!", "It's Your Planet - Love It!", and "It's Your Story - Tell It!".

The highest achievement in Girl Scouting is the Girl Scout Gold Award, which can only be earned by GS Seniors and Ambassadors. The highest award for GS Cadettes is the Silver Award and Bronze Award is the highest award for Girl Scout Juniors. These awards require large-scale service projects showing leadership along with service hours.<sup>[52]</sup> The service projects must improve a current situation, such as restoring the eroded banks of a stream.

Girl Scouts can also earn and display on their uniform awards from outside organizations, such as the religious emblems from religious organizations, or the President's Volunteer Service Award. Girl Scouts can also receive awards for lifesaving and leadership.

## Adult Recognition

There are also GS awards for adults including: Outstanding Volunteer, Outstanding Leader, Appreciation Pin, Honor Pin, Thanks Badge, and Thanks Badge II. Outstanding Volunteer is awarded for Outstanding service as Girl Scout volunteer (other than a leader). Outstanding Leader is awarded for Outstanding service as Girl Scout leader. Appreciation Pin is awarded for exceptional performance beyond expectations for the position. Service benefits one or more service units. The Honor Pin recognizes an adult member who has delivered exceptional service beyond expectations to two or more geographic areas, service units or program delivery audiences in a way that furthers the council's goals.<sup>[53]</sup> Thanks Badge recognizes outstanding service for two or more "service units". Different GS councils use different terminology for regions within their council. Thanks Badge II is awarded where the recipient has received the Thanks Badge and the recipient's service continues to merit further recognition. At least one nomination, two endorsements, and a review of the forms is required for each of these awards.<sup>[54]</sup>

## Impact on American life

Among the many famous American Girl Scouts are Dakota Fanning, Lucille Ball, Katie Couric, and Elizabeth Dole.<sup>[55]</sup> Many Girl Scouts have become successful leaders in numerous professional fields such



A Girl Scout working on her Gold Award project.

as law, medicine, politics, journalism, and science.<sup>[55]</sup> Beginning with Lou Henry Hoover, the incumbent First Lady has served as the Honorary President of GSUSA. Lou Henry Hoover was also the actual President of the Girl Scouts from 1922–1925 and Chairman of the National Board of Directors from 1925–1928.<sup>[56]</sup>

During World War I and World War II, girls involved in Scouts helped the Allied forces by selling defense bonds, growing victory gardens, and collecting waste fat and scrap iron.<sup>[57]</sup> Girl Scouts also spread their values into their communities through community service projects such as soup kitchens and food drives.

Over twenty of NASA's career astronauts were former Girl Scouts. The first American woman to spacewalk was a former Girl Scout, Dr. Kathryn Sullivan.<sup>[58]</sup>

## The American Girl

From 1917 until 1979 Girl Scouts published a magazine, originally called "The Rally" (1917–1920) and then "The American Girl", with the 'The' later being dropped (not to be confused with the currently published American Girl magazine).<sup>[59]</sup> At one time this magazine had the largest circulation of any magazine aimed at teen-aged girls.

## Girl Scout Senior Roundups

*Main article: Girl Scout Senior Roundup*

International Girl Scout gatherings named Senior Roundups were held every three years from 1956 until 1965.<sup>[60]</sup>

- Milford, Michigan (1956) attended by 5,000 girls
- Colorado Springs, Colorado, from July 3, 1959 to July 12, 1959, with 10,000 girls
- Button Bay, Vermont from July 18, 1962 to July 31, 1962, with 9,000 girls
- Farragut Reservation, Idaho, from July 17, 1965 to July 26, 1965, with 12,000 girls

## Issues

### No official stand on sexuality issues

Girl Scouts of the USA stated in an October 1991 letter:<sup>[61]</sup>

As a private organization, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. respects the values and beliefs of each of its members and does not intrude into personal matters. Therefore, there are no membership policies on sexual preference. However, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. has firm standards relating to the appropriate conduct of adult volunteers and staff. The Girl Scout organization does not condone or permit sexual displays of any sort by its members during Girl Scout activities, nor does it permit the advocacy or promotion of a personal lifestyle or sexual preference. These are private matters for girls and their families to address.

GSUSA upholds a "don't ask, don't evangelize" policy on sexuality.<sup>[62]</sup> The debate over this issue is split between those who feel that the policy should avoid and prevent discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and those who question the inclusion of homosexuals.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

### "To Serve God" in the Promise

In early 1992, the Totem Girl Scout Council suggested changing the promise to make it possible for girls

who did not believe in a monotheistic god to join. In November 1992, the parents of Nitzya Cuevas-Macias sued for their daughter to be permitted to participate even though she refused to promise to serve God.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

On October 23, 1993, the Girl Scouts of the USA voted 1,560-375<sup>[67]</sup> to permit individuals to substitute another word or phrase for "God" in their promise.<sup>[15]</sup>

"THAT, since the Girl Scout organization makes no attempt to interpret or define the word 'God' but encourages members to establish for themselves the nature of their spiritual beliefs, it is the policy of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. that individuals when making the Girl Scout Promise may substitute wording appropriate to their own spiritual beliefs for the word 'God'."

with the explanation that

"For some individuals, the word 'God', no matter how broadly interpreted, does not appropriately reflect their spiritual beliefs. Since the belief in a spiritual principle is fundamental to Girl Scouting, not the word used to define that belief, it is important that individuals have the opportunity to express that belief in wording meaningful to them. It is essential to maintain the spiritual foundation of Girl Scouting, yet be inclusive of the full range of spiritual beliefs. This [policy change] does not take the word 'God' out of the Girl Scout Promise. It gives those individuals who wish to do so the option to state their commitment to the spiritual concepts fundamental to the Movement with a word or words more appropriate to their own beliefs. For instance, an individual may say 'my faith' or 'Allah' or 'the Creator'."

Girl Scout President B. LaRae Orullian made an official statement that the change is "a very strong statement that Girl Scouts continue to be on the cutting edge, and this is a continuing effort to show that we have strength in diversity and that we are an inclusive organization."<sup>[67]</sup>

Some groups consider that the Girl Scouts of the USA have not gone far enough in making Scouting open to non-theists; others that they have gone too far in removing God or that they are violating the constitution of the WAGGGS. The WAGGGS constitution requires member societies to maintain membership standards to include a promise similar to the one established by Baden-Powell, which includes the concept of duty to God.<sup>[68][69][70]</sup> The GSUSA policy adopted in 1993 led to the 1995 formation of an alternative organization, the American Heritage Girls that accepts only leaders and chartering organizations that agree with a specific Christian statement of faith.<sup>[71]</sup> The organization had a little over 5,000 members in 2006. According to the organization, membership as of 2010 is about 10,000.<sup>[72]</sup>

## Prayer at meetings

The official Girl Scout policy does not ban or require prayer.<sup>[73]</sup>

The Girl Scout organization does not endorse or promote any particular philosophy or religious belief. Our movement is secular and is founded on American democratic principles, one of which is freedom of religion. Although Girl Scouts has policies supporting religious diversity, there is no policy by Girl Scouts of the USA that prohibits or requires the saying or singing of a grace, blessing, or invocation before meals by Girl Scout members in a troop/group setting, in a resident or day camp, or at meetings, conferences, and other large events. The decision to say a grace, blessing, or invocation is made locally at the troop or group level, and should be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of all participants.

## National Presidents

- Juliette Gordon Low (1915–1920)
- Anne Hyde Choate (1920–1922)
- Lou Henry Hoover (1922–1925) (1935–1937)
- Sarah Louise Arnold (1925–1926?) (she had previously been first Dean of Simmons College (Massachusetts) (1901–1919))
- Mira Hoffman (1926?–1930) (Mrs. William H. Hoffman)
- Birdsall Otis Edey (1930–1935) (Mrs. Frederick Edey) (after ceasing to be President she became National Commissioner for the Girl Scouts until her death in 1940)
- Mrs. Frederick H. Brook (1937?-1939)
- Mildred Mudd (1939–1941) (Mrs. Harvey S. Mudd) (she later supported the founding of Harvey Mudd College named after her husband, Harvey Seeley Mudd)
- Mrs. Alan H. Means (1941-1945)
- Harriet Rankin Ferguson (1946–1951) (Mrs. Vaughan C. Ferguson)
- Olivia Cameron Higgins Layton (1951–1957) (Mrs. Roy F. Layton) (died 1975)<sup>[74]</sup>
- Marjorie Mehne Culmer (1958–1963) (Mrs. Charles U. Culmer) (later chair of WAGGGS, died in 1994)
- Margaret W. Price (1963–1969) (Mrs. Holton R. Price Jr.) (died in 1973)<sup>[75]</sup>
- Grace M. S. McKittrick MacNeil (1969–1972) (Mrs. Douglas H. MacNeil) (died in 2000)<sup>[76][77]</sup>
- Gloria Randle Scott (1975–1978)<sup>[78]</sup>
- Jane C. Shields Freeman (1978–1984) (her husband is Orville Freeman)<sup>[79]</sup>
- Betty Fuller Pilsbury (1984–1990), she received the Silver Buffalo Award in 1986.
- B. LaRae Orullian (1990–1996)
- Elinor Johnstone Ferdon (1996–1999)
- Connie L. Matsui (1999–2002)
- Cynthia B. Thompson (2002–2005)
- Patricia Diaz Dennis (2005–2008)
- Connie L. Lindsey (2008–present)



Portrait of Juliette Gordon Low (1887)

## Chief Executive Officers

The title has changed over the years.<sup>[80]</sup>

### National Secretaries

- Edith D. Johnston (June 1913-June 1914)
- Cora Neal (June 1914-June 1916)
- Montague Gammon (June 1916-August 1917)

### National Directors

- Abby Porter Leland (August 1917-February 1919)
- Jane Deeter Rippin (February 1919-November 1930)<sup>[81]</sup>
- Josephine Schain (November 1930-September 1935)
- Constance Rittenhouse (September 1935-December 1950)

### National Executive Directors

- Dorothy C. Stratton (December 1950-July 1960)
- Sally Stickney Cortner (July 1960-May1961) (Interim)
- Louise A. Wood (May 1961-April 1972)

- Dr. Cecily Cannan Selby (April 1972-September 1975)
- Frank H. Kannis (September 1975-July 1976) (Interim)
- Frances R. Hesselbein (July 1976-February 1990) was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998 in part for her work in Girl Scouts.
- Mary Rose Main (February 1990-October 1997)
- Joel E. Becker (October 1997-January 1998) (Interim)
- Marsha Johnson Evans (January 1998-July 2002) - retired rear admiral, left the Girl Scouts to become president of the American Red Cross

#### Chief Executive Officers

- Jackie Barnes (July 2002-October 2003)(Interim)
- Kathy Cloninger (October 2003–present)

## Similar organizations

Camp Fire Girls was founded in 1910, two years prior to the Girl Scouts, by some of the creators of the Boy Scouts of America.<sup>[82]</sup> In 1975, the group became co-educational and soon afterwards changed its name to "Camp Fire Boys and Girls". The name was changed to Camp Fire USA in 2001. As of 2009, the group has a membership of about 750,000.<sup>[83]</sup>

Another parallel group is the American Heritage Girls (AHG), started in 1995 in West Chester, Ohio, by a group of parents upset with available female Scouting organizations.<sup>[84]</sup> AHG is a Christian organization that states that it is "a nonprofit organization dedicated to the mission of building women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country."<sup>[71]</sup> It has a membership of about 10,000.

Various religions have their own youth clubs such as Missionettes (now Impact Girls) for the Assemblies of God.

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## Further reading

- Girl Scout Collector's Guide: A History of Uniforms, Insignia, Publications, and Memorabilia (Second Edition) (<http://www.ttup.ttu.edu/BookPages/0896725464.html>)
- Block, Nelson R.; Proctor, Tammy M. (2009). *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement's First Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN 1-4438-0450-9.

## External links

- Girl Scouts of the USA website (<http://www.girlscouts.org/>)
- Girl Scout Uniform, ca. 1917, in the Staten Island Historical Society Online Collections Database (<http://statenisland.pastperfect-online.com/00039cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=E274B4EE-581B-4373-A081-160648306045;type=101>)

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Categories: AmeriCorps organizations | Girl Scouts of the USA | WAGGGS member organizations | Organizations established in 1912

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