



# GIRL SCOUTS CELEBRATE

## Girl Scouts: Learning For A Lifetime

By Marc A. Catone

Mention Girl Scouts to most folks and they visualize girls delivering cookies. Yet, there's far more to scouting than fund-raising. On March 12, local Girl Scouts will celebrate their heritage as they mark their 85th anniversary with ceremonies at Pyramid Mall in the Village of Lansing.

Troops in Lansing and Southern Cayuga County follow a tradition of guiding girls towards independence through experiences that are fun and broaden individual knowledge and skills according to the guidelines set by Juliette Gordon Low, who founded the Girl Scouts in 1912. Low believed that girls could *and should* plan their own programs, make their own decisions and run their own troops -- with a little help from adult leaders.

Scouting captured the spirit of girls who wanted to make choices and lead an active life. It spread rapidly to Central New York before 1920. "In the early days, just about every town or county had its own council," explained Seven Lakes Girl Scout Council Field Director Jane Converse. Though many smaller councils from Pennsylvania through central New York consolidated in the 1960s to form the Seven Lakes Council, the spirit of girls being able to reflect, make their own decisions and to evaluate the consequences of their choices continues to this day.

The Girl Scout program has four fundamental goals that express the ways girls may benefit from the scouting experience. They are:

- ◆ - To help a girl develop to her full potential;
- ◆ - To help a girl relate to others with increasing understanding, skill and respect;
- ◆ - To help a girl develop values to guide her actions and to provide the foundation for sound decision-making; and
- ◆ - To help a girl contribute to the improvement of society through the use of her abilities and leadership skills, working in cooperation with others.

Though the Girl Scout philosophy hasn't changed in 85 years, society has become much more receptive to women's leadership qualities, said Converse.

The Girl Scout's 1916 movie "The Golden Eaglet," portrayed teenaged girls for the first time as physically and mentally capable citizens, desirous of giving service to others in the public

arena as well as in the family, explained Converse. Though the images of girls swimming in full body bathing suits seem humorous at first, the program, "maintains a continuity in that's proven flexible enough to adjust to the changing technology and social values of our time."

In Scouting's early days, merit badges focused on skills that led girls to careers in teaching and nursing. Today's scouting activities can lead to careers in early childhood education, aerospace, health careers and engineering.

This past year, Lansing Junior Troop #1014 divided itself into patrol groups which were responsible for selecting and implementing weekly activities, explained Troop Leader Cindy Wagner. They collected pet food and supplies for the Tompkins County SPCA, made Christmas cards for the residents of Lakeside Nursing Home and will take a BOCES course in baby-sitting. "The girls learned to cooperate in a mature manner and are on their way to independence," said Wagner.

Genoa's Daisy Troop # 789 just started in October, 1996. The kindergarten and first grade-aged girls are already working with leaders Connie Merrihew and Michelle White on their fourth merit badge with a unit called "Math Fun" that teaches them skills in handling money.

Lansing's Brownie Troop #886 combined costumed "Trick or Treat" fun with community service by collecting canned goods at Halloween for the Lansing Food Pantry. The girls also rang bells for the Salvation Army at Christmas time.

Brownie Troop #380 is so large that it's been split into two smaller sections. They studied the different types of trees near Lansing's Central Fire Station, made bandanas and learned about "fun food" from a Cooperative Extension specialist. "I love the girls' spontaneity," says co-leader Wendy Wingate.

"Lansing has fantastic parental support for its scouts," stated Troop # 380's other co-leader Susan Hranek. "One of our Brownies was diagnosed with a severe illness; another girl's home was destroyed by fire. The girls learned about compassion and kindness when their parents helped them make get-well cards for an ailing friend and provide donations to a family in a special time of need."

As the Girl Scouts from our region meet at Pyramid Mall to celebrate their 85th birthday, they'll turn in books collected to help Head Start, the Family Reading Program and the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County.

Juliette Gordon Low wanted girls to understand themselves and others. Our local scouts' activities are proof that their founder's wish has been realized. And you thought all they did was to sell cookies.



KING FERRY BROWNIES, 1971



LANSING BROWNIE TROOP # 380-A



GENOA TROOP # 789



KING FERRY SR. TROOP #427, 1987



KF BROWNIE TROOP # 171



KF BROWNIE TROOP, 1970



LANSING JUNIOR GIRL SCOUT TROOP # 1014

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