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25 Local Girl Scouts Earn Prestigious Gold Award



Editor's note: View a short video about the GSNYPENN Class of 2024 Gold Award Girl Scouts on YouTube [[here](#)]. This video and the above photo of recipients in attendance at the celebration can be used by the media. Individual photos of most award recipients are available upon request.

Syracuse, N.Y. (December 4, 2024) — The [Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways \(GSNYPENN\) Council](#) is proud to recognize the 25 members of its Gold Award Girl Scout Class of 2024. These Girl Scouts dedicated countless hours to making a sustainable impact on causes they care about within their communities. Their projects demonstrate the range of issues teens find most pressing today.

The recipients were recognized for earning their Girl Scout Gold Award during the 2023-2024 membership year at a luncheon in late November at Bella Domani in North Syracuse, N.Y.

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Attendees included the award recipients and their families, council staff, board members and special guests New York State Sen. Lea Webb (District 52—Broome, Cortland and Tompkins counties) and Assemblyman Scott Gray (District 116—Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties). Dr. Juhanna Rogers, Ph.D., senior vice president of racial equity and social impact at CenterState CEO and host of “Behind the Woman” on WCNY-TV, served as the keynote speaker.

“Our Class of 2024 Gold Award Girl Scouts embody our Mission, Promise and Law. The solutions they’ve created through Take Action projects that address local and global challenges will have a lasting impact. I’m excited to see how these remarkable individuals will continue to make their world a better place,” says GSNYPENN CEO Julie Dale.

Since 1916, the Gold Award has symbolized excellence and leadership for Girl Scouts everywhere. It is the most prestigious award that Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9-10) and Ambassadors (grades 11-12) can earn. Through their work on sustainable Take Action projects, award recipients gain tangible skills and prove they are the leaders our communities and the world need.

2024 Gold Award Scholarship Recipients

Olivia Barnhart of Manlius, N.Y., was awarded a \$5,000 Girl Scouts of the USA National Gold Award Scholarship for her community-based project, “Informing & Educating My Community on Mental Health & the Resources Available.” She is one of 111 Girl Scouts nationwide recognized for projects that exemplified the core components of the Gold Award and demonstrated extraordinary leadership to drive lasting change in the world.

Six additional GSNYPENN Gold Award recipients were selected for Council Scholarships, with a total of \$12,850 awarded as follows:

- **Marie Hepworth Scholarship** (\$3,500) to Alexis Drozdowski from Binghamton, N.Y., for the project “Music Through Deaf Ears.” Hepworth dedicated her life to supporting girls’ development, serving 20+ years as executive director of the GSNYPENN Legacy Council Indian Hills and through volunteer activities in her Johnson City, N.Y., community.
- **Kelly Perkins Scholarship** (\$2,500) to Dariyan DeWeese from Baldwinsville, N.Y., for the project “Paws for Soldiers and Sailors.” Perkins, a lifelong Girl Scout and GSNYPENN summer camp staff member, impacted the lives of campers and younger Girl Scouts in her Newark Valley, N.Y., community.
- **Kerrie Black Scholarship** (\$2,500) to Elizabeth Cordeiro from New Hartford, N.Y., for the project “Beat the Heat.” Black, a lifelong Girl Scout, was a council regional support manager for Broome and Delaware counties, serving volunteers with excellence and always willing to help colleagues.
- **GSNYPENN Staff Scholarship** (\$2,000) to Madison DelCostello from Memphis, N.Y., for the project “Play On: Inspiring Continuity in Band.” This scholarship recognizes staff fundraising efforts, including participation in events such as the Boilermaker 15K and other personally designated donations.

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- **Women of Distinction Donor Scholarships** (\$1,500) to Morgan Adamson from Macedon, N.Y., for the project “Recycling Awareness and Recycled Art” and (\$850) to Lucille Walker from Ithaca,

N.Y., for the project “Preparing Teens for Professional Communication.” These scholarships recognize the generosity of donors to the council’s annual event honoring a woman in the Greater Binghamton community whose outstanding leadership embodies the Girl Scout Mission.

GSNYPENN Class of 2024 Gold Award Girl Scouts

(Individual photos of most award recipients are available upon request.)

Morgan Adamson

Macedon, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Recycling Awareness & Recycled Art

Morgan addressed the recycling issue in her community by creating a website with easily found information to help people know where things can be recycled. She also held classes at her local library teaching children and adults how to create recycled art and even installed a beautiful three-panel recycled art mural at Palmyra Community Library. Morgan enjoyed the challenge of earning both her Girl Scout Silver and Gold awards. She will graduate from Palmyra Macedon High School this spring.

Olivia Barnhart

Manlius, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Informing & Educating My Community on Mental Health & the Resources Available

Olivia addressed the stigma around mental health and the lack of knowledge of services in her community through the creation of an online document as well as a pamphlet. She made these materials accessible by tabling at events where she also distributed mental health awareness bracelets. Olivia’s favorite Girl Scout memory is attending Camp Woodland overnight as a Brownie.

Carly Chapman

Marion, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Church Backroom

Carly’s project addressed the issue of accessibility in churches. She renovated a room in her church to make it an accessible meeting room to help community members have a place to meet regardless of age or ability. Carly’s favorite Girl Scout memory is when her troop transitioned to Brownies and her troop leaders had them climb through a cardboard oven.

Emily Chilson

Sayre, Pa.

Take Action Project: Drama Department Costume Closet

Emily used her passion to help turn her school theater into a safe space by creating a costume closet for Sayre High School (SHS) Drama Department. Some of her favorite Girl Scout memories are traveling to Disney World, Universal Studios and on a Disney cruise with her troop. Emily is currently a senior at SHS and plans to attend college to study nursing.

Elizabeth Cordeiro

New Hartford, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Beat the Heat

Elizabeth educated the public about the importance of keeping dogs cool during hot weather. With her team, she developed a quiz, wrote a news article and presented educational posters at community

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events to spread awareness. She also created a fundraising campaign to donate six large sunshades to Anita’s Stevens Swan Humane Society, a no-kill animal rescue and shelter in Utica, to protect outdoor kennels from

the hot summer sun. Elizabeth said the most rewarding part of her project was seeing the dogs under the sunshades, wagging their tails and no longer panting.

Julia DeGroot

Victor, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Action in Environmentalism

Julia made her community more environmentally friendly by restarting the Garden Club at her school and placing more plants around campus. Her favorite Girl Scout memory is singing songs with her troop as a Daisy. Julia graduated from Victor Senior High School. She currently attends the University of Vermont where she studies animal science, minors in music and competes on the synchronized skating team.

Madison DelCostello

Memphis, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Play On: Inspiring Continuity in Band

Madison addressed negative stigmas and declining participation of middle schoolers in band class. She did this by hosting a workshop where students learned about the benefits of band and opportunities to play musical instruments beyond school. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is the annual excitement of managing cookie sales and helping satisfy the sweet tooth of many customers, especially at her school. Madison is a graduate of Jordan-Elbridge High School. She currently attends Houghton University and studies mathematics while continuing to pursue her passion for music.

Olivia Derouin

Sackets Harbor, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Go Green

Olivia addressed sustainability and waste management by working to increase recycling efforts across several school districts in her community, collecting shoes to be sent to third-world countries and helping start a school thrift shop to provide clothing for those in need. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is going to Camp Trefoil with her troop. Olivia graduated from Sackets Harbor Central School, with the honor of Salutatorian. She currently attends SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry and studies wildlife science.

Dariyan DeWeese

Baldwinsville, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Paws for Soldiers and Sailors

Dariyan educated her community on the PAWS (Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers) for Veterans Therapy Act by launching a letter-writing campaign to the U.S. Congress. She also created community awareness and support for K9 Caring Angels, a nonprofit providing service and therapy dogs to those in need. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories was working directly with veterans and their service dogs for her Silver Award project. Dariyan is a senior at C.W. Baker High School.

Alexis Drozdowski

Binghamton, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Music Through Deaf Ears

Alexis used her passion with the D/deaf community to create a three-hour workshop highlighting D/deaf culture, survival signs and different ways to experience music. She also taught American Sign Language and D/deaf culture at Girl Scout summer camp. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is laying in the grass with other counselors watching the Perseid meteor shower and singing camp songs. Alexis is a graduate of Binghamton High School and attends Keuka College for ASL-English interpreting.

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Kara Fitch

DeLancey, N.Y.

Take Action Project: K-9 Health

Kara's project focused on dog health. She created a brochure for tabling events to raise awareness of the importance of exercise to a dog's overall health. Through her efforts, Kara was able to help her local Humane Society build an outdoor obstacle course. Kara is a graduate of Delaware Academy High School and attends SUNY Delhi where she studies veterinary science.

Gabrielle Kallin
Nichols, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Mental Health

As a youth, Gabby experienced mental health issues. Unfortunately, she didn't know how or where to find appropriate resources. Years later, she wanted to create something to help teenagers in her community who faced the same challenges. So, she built Teen Place, a website with information about mental health disorders and local resources. Gabby is grateful for the support she received from Tioga County Mental Health, Kate Varga, her advisor, her mom and her troop leader Dianne Zelaska.

Norah Keeney
Ontario, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Walworth Bark Park

Norah addressed the lack of safe off-leash areas in her town and surrounding areas by collaborating with the Town of Walworth to build a fenced-in dog park for dogs of all sizes. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is attending many camping trips with her troop over the years. Norah is a graduate of Wayne Central High School. She currently attends Penn State Behrend where she studies mechanical engineering technology and competes on the school's NCAA Division III Track & Field team.

Ella Larry
Floyd, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Camp Amahami Farm Program and Composting System

Ella implemented a composting system at Camp Amahami to support the camp and teach campers about composting and how to repurpose waste to keep it out of landfills. She also implemented a farm program so campers could learn about animals and how to care for them. She learned so much through her Gold Award journey and is glad the impact of her project will continue for many years to come. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is taking an all-day canoe trip and singing camp songs down the river while fighting for judgmental cows. Ella graduated from Larry Family Homeschool and attends BOCES for cosmetology.

Angelina Masotti
Newfield, N.Y.

Take Action Project: NYSSMA Sheet Music Collection

Angelina wanted to make opportunities to perform at NYSSMA Solo Festivals in New York State more accessible to young musicians, regardless of background. She created a collection of donated sheet music that student musicians can borrow to perform these solo pieces. The collection is housed at Southworth Library in Dryden. Angelina's favorite Girl Scout memories are sailing at Camp Comstock and seeing one of the WAGGGS Centers in Adelboden, Switzerland. Angelina is a graduate of Newfield Senior High School and Tompkins Cortland Community College. She currently studies commercial aviation and music at the University of North Dakota.

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Mikayla Morris
Manchester, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Sensory Garden

Mikayla has always been passionate about mental health and the impact it has on teens. She created a Sensory Garden at her local park to keep the five senses in mind and as a peaceful environment for those struggling with mental health. Visitors can also sit on park benches to practice meditation and scan a QR Code that links them to

techniques and exercises to calm their minds. One of Mikayla's favorite Girl Scout memories is the overnight at the Niagara Aquarium, sleeping among the penguins. Mikayla is a senior at Red Jacket High School and plans to pursue mechanical engineering in college.

Erika Newcombe

Macedon, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Restoring the Old Baptist Cemetery

Erika has a passion for preserving community history and chose to help restore one of the oldest cemeteries in Macedon. The Old Baptist Cemetery, also known as Bryant Cemetery, contains all pre-Civil War burials, veterans from the Revolutionary War, Winston Churchill's great-great-grandparents and a few of the original town and church founders. Throughout her project, Erika learned how to properly clean and repair headstones, tracked down the names of some of the unknown pioneers buried in the cemetery and created a website about it. One of Erika's favorite Girl Scout memories is playing gaga ball for the first time with her troop.

Madison Plonka

Dolgeville, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Dolgeville Cemetery Fence and Grief in the Community

Madison helped her community learn how to cope with grief and loss through educational materials. She also repaired a fence and cleaned up the Dolgeville Cemetery to ensure it's a welcoming environment for families and friends visiting loved ones. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is making goodie bags for the local residential living home. Madison is a graduate of Dolgeville Central School. She currently attends SUNY Canton and is working towards a bachelor's degree in funeral service administration.

Taylor Ratliff

Syracuse, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools

Taylor addressed the stigma of the stress and anxiety children face at school and surrounding environments. She created a club called Meaningful Mentors. This after-school program allows for meaningful relationships between high school mentors and middle school students in her school district. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is when her troop facilitated a bridging ceremony; she says she took pride in those special nights when Girl Scouts advanced to the next program level. Taylor is a graduate of Fayetteville-Manlius High School. She currently attends Syracuse University where she studies inclusive elementary and special education.

Norah Ritter

Fayetteville, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Reset and Regulate for Mental Health

Norah addressed rising mental health challenges by creating a reset room at her local middle school. Her goal was to allow the opportunity for movement, which decreases anxiety, and a designated place to help students manage strong feelings while in school. She created a space that is calming and contains several hands-on activities. She also wrote an informational pamphlet with regulating strategies for students to practice. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories was a recent trip to Lake

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George where she and her troop paddle-boarded and took an extreme ziplining adventure. Norah is a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School and plans to study dance and elementary education in college.

Nicole Szalay

Clifton Springs, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Increasing School Pride Through Outward Building Appearance

Nicole addressed student pride in schools. She worked with students at Finger Lakes Technical and Career Center on a project to express themselves and their programs by creating shadowboxes. The shadowboxes are now displayed on signs near the school's road for the community to see. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories was

traveling to Savannah, Ga., and visiting Juliette Gordon Low's birthplace. Nicole is a graduate of Midlakes High School and currently attends SUNY Fredonia where she studies early childhood education.

Veronica Tavolette

Victor, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Giving More Food Options to Those in Need

Veronica identified the least-used items in her community's food pantries. She then researched recipes and produced instructional videos to educate food pantry users on how to prepare easy and healthy meals and snacks using least-used items and commonly found ingredients. Veronica's favorite Girl Scout memory was learning automotive repair.

Aanya Verma

Manlius, N.Y.

Take Action Project: BeatHemorrhage: Youth for Maternal Health

Aanya addressed the lack of public knowledge about postpartum hemorrhage, the largest cause of maternal death, through social media and collaboration with local hospitals. She educated 6,000+ people online through BeatHemorrhage International and in professional settings at Upstate and Crouse hospitals in Syracuse. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is planning the GSNYPENN Annual Girl Advisory Board (GAB) Meeting with her fellow GAB members. Aanya is a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School and plans to study medicine or business after graduation.

Lucille Walker

Ithaca, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Preparing Teens for Professional Communication

Lucille educated teens in her community on the importance of professional communication for schools and jobs. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is camping with her troop and falling asleep to the sound of waves crashing on the shore of Cayuga Lake. Lucille will graduate from Ithaca High School and plans to study biochemistry or political science at a four-year university.

Katherine Wojcik

Victor, N.Y.

Take Action Project: Creating Community Through Fiddle Music

Katherine inspired a creative space for musicians to embrace and perform music through a high school fiddle club, including performing for and working with adults with disabilities and other community performances. One of her favorite Girl Scout memories is the cruise her troop took to Bermuda to celebrate 13 years of being Girl Scouts. Katherine is a senior at Victor High School and will attend St. John Fisher University to study nursing.

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About Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, Inc.

Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls in grades K-12. Our extraordinary journey began in 1912 when our Movement was founded by Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low. Today, we continue the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We offer every girl the chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure and success. GSNYPENN is chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA to administer the Girl Scout program in 24 counties of New York and two in Pennsylvania. Learn more at gsnypenn.org.