

The Lowdown

Alum Newsletter // Winter-Spring 2026



Commemorating Our Nation's Semiquincentennial

Girl Scouts and official nonpartisan initiative America250 have formed a national partnership built on our Movement's longstanding commitment to civic engagement, community service and making the world a better place that gives every Girl Scout, no matter their age, a role in commemorating our nation's upcoming 250th birthday on July 4.

Through meaningful service and leadership activities that underscore our role as a platform for girls to engage in civic life, Girl Scouts can earn a special five patch collection representing landscapes across our country when they participate in our America250 events and initiatives.

By joining an event, taking part in a national project (or even creating one themselves), exploring history, discovering diverse stories, and giving back through service, Girl Scouts become part of the conversation about our nation's past, present, and future.

Families and Girl Scouts of all levels can learn more about America250 and download the free activity guide. Visit girlscouts.org/america250 or scan the code here.

Patches are available for purchase through our online storefront at nypennstore.org or when you book an in-person shopping appointment on Tuesdays through Thursdays at our Syracuse store. Call 315.352.8074 or book online at gsnypenn.org/locations.

Together, we can help shape how the United States of America commemorates this milestone to inspire what comes next!



 Scan Me

Dear Friends of Girl Scouting,

I feel it's important to share with you where *The Lowdown*—and in turn, I—have been over the past year. I was unable to put together the last two editions due to a medical issue and spent much of that time working remotely. I'm happy to report that I am doing so much better and truly enjoy being back and engaged in all the things.

Now, let's get to it!

This issue offers a recap of the last year, along with highlights of what's happened so far in 2026. This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate 250 years of our country; Girl Scouts has been part of that story for nearly half that time. How many organizations can say that?

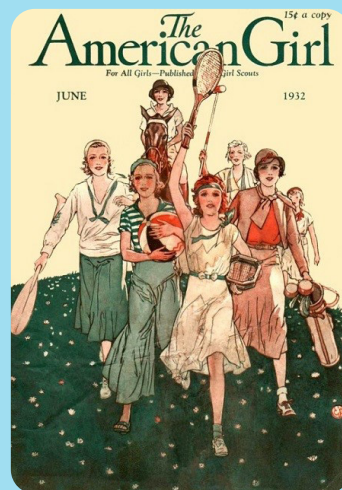
As always, there's something in this newsletter for everyone: board and staff member spotlights, celebrations, travel, history, and an introduction to our new Retail team, who are busy supporting members across all 26 counties through our new online store. You can place your order and have it delivered right to your door!

Thank you all for your patience over the past year. I would be remiss if I didn't also extend my sincere gratitude to my team and this council for their unwavering support.

Yours in Girl Scouting,



JoAnne Morak
Vice President of Advancement & Retail Operations



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“Come right over! I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all America, and all the world, and we're going to start it tonight.”

So began the Girl Scout organization, then chapter by chapter, writing millions of girls and women into the history of our nation.

Low was posthumously honored in 1979 by the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y., for her achievement in humanities. While there is no official count for all alums in the Hall, notable Girl Scouts who have been inducted include:



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Meet Our Advancement & Retail Team

We work together to provide exceptional customer service and foster meaningful connections across all 26 counties. Every interaction reflects our commitment to community, quality and care. Whether you're exploring nypennstore.org, planning a visit to our Syracuse store or supporting our mission by working with our press shop to purchase custom “products with a purpose” or through a donation, you'll always be welcomed with a friendly “make new friends” smile and attitude.

Pictured left to right—Melissa Sabatino, Custom Apparel Creator & Sales Representative; JoAnne Morak, Vice President of Advancement & Retail Operations; Karin Kozlowski, E-Commerce & Retail Manager; Isabella Giammarino, Spring 2026 Retail Intern (a Girl Scout alum and second-semester Senior at Syracuse University studying marketing & retail management); Jennifer Phillips, Director of Advancement & Retail Support.



History and Archives Corner

The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, making the United States a free and sovereign nation. This year also marks our Movement's 114th birthday.

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- Madelaine Albright, first female U.S. Secretary of State*
- Sandra Day O'Connor, first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court
- Janet Reno, first female U.S. Attorney General
- Mae Jemison, first African American woman to travel in space
- Karen DeCrow, attorney, author, activist and former president of the National Organization for Women

Fifty percent of female governors, 64 percent of female senators and 49 percent of women in the 118th Congress are Girl Scout alums, as are more than 60 percent of women in leadership positions across various sectors and fields of study. (Current as of 2025)

Additionally, Low was also instrumental in establishing the International Council of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 1919. This would later become the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), which today serves 11 million youth in 153 countries around the world.

Low's leadership ignited the growth of the Girl Scout organization, a movement based on the virtues of service, civic action and commitment to community.

With 1.1 million registered youth members, 650,000+ adult members and roughly 59 million alums (one in every three adult women), Girl Scouts continues to take the leadership role in advocating for girls and writing women into the history of our nation.

**Historically, all female U.S. Secretaries of State have been Girl Scout or Girl Guide alums.*



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Looking Back on 2024-25

Celebrating Our Gold Award Girl Scouts

We're proud to recognize the members of our Gold Award Girl Scout classes of 2024 and 2025. Each dedicated countless hours to make a sustainable impact on causes they care about within their communities, and their projects demonstrated the range of issues teens find most pressing today.

Olivia Barnhart and **Aanya Verma**, both of Manlius, N.Y., were selected as our council's 2024 and 2025 GSUSA National Gold Award Scholarship recipients.

Class of 2024

Morgan Adamson
Olivia Barnhart
Carly Chapman
Emily Chilson
Elizabeth Cordeiro
Julia DeGroot
Madison DelCostello
Olivia Derouin
Dariyan DeWeese
Alexis Drozdowski
Kara Fitch
Gabrielle Kallin
Norah Keeney
Ella Larry
Angelina Masotti
Mikayla Morris
Erika Newcombe
Madison Plonka
Taylor Ratliff
Norah Ritter
Nicole Szalay
Veronica Tavolette
Aanya Verma
Lucille Walker
Katherine Wojcik

Class of 2025

Aubrey Coyle
Skylar Gargash
Sierra Green
Isabel Griswold
Angilee Haberer
Kaitlin Houglund
Kelly Ingerick
Aislin Jaskolka
Allyson Ladouceur
Mikalya Miller
Sneha Poranki
Sophia Randolph
Aarohi Rastogi
Rayna Reed
Lyla Rivard
Isabella Robbins
Valerie Wansink
Kyndra Williamson



Travel Experiences

Our travel program gives members opportunities to explore new places while building their confidence, curiosity and connection.



Fall-Winter 2024

- Hands-on learning and interactive badge work at Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester
- Explored New York City, including attending a Rockettes performance

Winter-Spring 2025

- First GSUSA Destination joined Girl Scouts from across the country in Québec, Canada, to ice skate through forests, visit an ice castle and learn about Indigenous cultures
- Explored growth at Erie County Botanical Gardens, created terrariums and learned about plant life

Summer 2025

- Summer campers challenged themselves on a five-day backpacking trip through Vermont's Green Mountains and built resilience and teamwork
- International travel to Switzerland and WAGGGS Our Chalet connected members with Girl Guides from around the world as they experienced new cultures in the Swiss Alps
- Whale watching and coastal exploration in Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard combined nature and history

Women of Distinction Celebrates 25 Years

Each September, we honor an exceptional woman in the greater Binghamton, N.Y., community who demonstrates outstanding leadership that embodies our mission. Our 2025 celebration marked the 25th anniversary of this annual impactful event. Funds raised benefit our Gold Award Girl Scout Scholarship program.

2024 Honoree



Mary O'Malley-Trumble
Senior Location Executive, IBM

2025 Honoree



Sheila E. Doyle
Retired, Binghamton University & Foundation

Hall of Fame Inductees

Amy Szewc-McFadden of Clifton Springs, N.Y., and **Rae Allen** of Sandy Creek, N.Y., received our council's most distinguished volunteer honor, the Hall of Fame Award, in 2025 and 2026, respectively.

They were each presented with the accolade at regional dinners during Volunteer Appreciation Month. Commemorated every April, the monthlong celebration includes Girl Scout Leader's Day on April 22 and recognizes the dedication and service of the thousands of volunteers who support Girl Scouting across our footprint.



The Hall of Fame Award recognizes a volunteer with a lifetime commitment to the Movement within our council. Recipients have sustained GSNYPENN through support of Girl Scouts in their community, volunteering in a variety of roles and gifts of financial support.



Board Member Spotlight: Kathy Burke Barry Syracuse, N.Y. (Onondaga County)

I've served on the Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways Board of Directors for several years and have gained a deep understanding of the council's complexity and scope. The council is not a traditional nonprofit; it is comprised of multiple interconnected components, each operating much like a distinct business unit.

Although I was not a Girl Scout growing up, my childhood was shaped by a wide range of academic, athletic and community activities that helped me form into a well-rounded individual. I studied accounting in college and began my career at Dermody, Burke & Brown, CPAs immediately following graduation.

My involvement with the council began through a client who was a strong advocate for the organization and encouraged me to join the Finance Committee. After two years of service, I was nominated to the board. What ultimately compelled me to accept was the council's sophisticated structure and the opportunity to contribute to my business and financial expertise in a meaningful way.

Serving on the board has been both challenging and rewarding and has reinforced the importance of strong governance and sound business practices in advancing the mission.

It's both a privilege and a deeply meaningful experience. I'm motivated by the council's mission and inspired by its impact—building courage, confidence and character in girls across our region.

Board service has broadened my perspective, strengthened my strategic thinking and deepened my appreciation for the lasting influence Girl Scouts has on individuals, families and communities. It has also reminded me that leadership is built long before adulthood—through small moments of courage, confidence and belonging.

Ultimately, my service on the board is about purpose—contributing to an organization that is locally rooted, forward-looking and committed to equitable access and leadership development. I value the opportunity to help ensure GSNYPENN continues to thrive and create opportunities for future generations of leaders.

Girl Scouts is more than a program—it is a pathway to possibility, helping girls become strong, smart and bold young women who will be our next generation of leaders.

LOOK INSIDE!

- Civics and Democracy in Action
- Council Highlights
- History and Archives Corner
- Board Member and Staff Spotlights

Staff Spotlight

Renee Rivera Senior Membership Manager, Seneca Falls

I will celebrate 10 years with Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways this August. I truly love the people I work with and the incredible volunteers who make the Girl Scout experience possible for girls in our communities.



Before joining the council staff, I served as a troop leader and Service Unit Manager, so supporting volunteers and building strong connections with leaders is something very close to my heart.

I have two amazing children, Ashley and Johnny, and two wonderful grandchildren, Arlo and Avianna Renee, who bring me so much joy. I share my life with my partner Ed, along with our dog Flare and our kitten Wednesday.

From mid-May through October, Ed and I live aboard our boat, Lola, traveling the New York canal system and enjoying life on the water. Our adventures inspired me to recently publish a book about our travels along the Erie Canal.

Girl Scouts has always been special to me because it builds confidence, leadership and lifelong memories for girls while bringing together such a supportive and inspiring community.

Juliette Gordon Low Society

Have you made a planned gift to Girl Scouts to become part of this national society? Please let us know so we can honor you with this beautiful pin! If you haven't, it's easy. You can leave any amount or percent of your life insurance or estate to Girl Scouts—a small bequest can make a huge difference for our Girl Scouts' future!



Did You Know?

In 2018, GSUSA and Dianne Belk, Founding Chair of the Juliette Gordon Low National Society, raised a challenge for each council across the nation to acquire four planned gifts. In return, each council would receive a planned gift of \$10,000 from Dianne Belk and Lawrence Calder. GSNYPENN accepted and met this challenge!

We hope you'll consider making a gift and joining the society! Contact JoAnne to discuss your options. Membership ensures you remain connected to GSNYPENN now and in the future.