

Service Unit Award and Recognition Handbook



Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character,
who make the world a better place.

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To our Volunteers

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles values you, our adult members and volunteers, for your dedication towards championing girl ambition. Our volunteers devote time and energy on top of their own busy lives to give Girl Scouts the opportunity to learn, have fun and grow in a positive, supportive environment.

Volunteer appreciation goes beyond a simple thank you. There are many ways to show your appreciation and say thank you; one of which is through the formal service unit-level awards. Anyone, including parents, troop leaders, staff members, and service team members can nominate a volunteer, family member, or community member for an award.

At the Service Unit level, volunteers can be nominated for:

- First Year Leader Award
- Leader with a Heart
- Volunteer of Excellence Award (GSUSA)

Additional Service Unit level recognitions:

- Numeral Guard – 5 years to 25 years
- Years of Service - 5 years to 20 years

Awards at a Glance

Name of Award	Description	What is required?
Numeral Guard 	Recognizes the number of combined years as a girl and adult member. In 5 year increments. Awarded at the service unit level from 5-25 years.	Advise service unit team for awards of less than 30 years.
Years of Service 	Recognizes the number of years as an adult Girl Scout volunteer. In 5 year increments. Awarded at the service unit level from 5-20 years.	Advise service unit team for awards of less than 25 years.
First Year Leader Award 	Recognizes Leaders and Co-Leaders who completed their first year of leadership and committed to serve a second year.	Awarded by service unit team.
Leader with a Heart Award 	Recognizes Leaders and Co-Leaders for outstanding program delivery and troop leadership.	Requires a nomination plus an endorsement given to service unit team.
Volunteer of Excellence 	Recognizes a volunteer who has contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with Girl Scouts in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.	Requires a nomination plus 2 endorsements given to service unit team. Special order through the Girl Scout retail shop.

Award Descriptions



Numeral Guard Pin

The numeral guard pin recognizes the number of combined years as a girl and adult member.

- The service unit may automatically award pin based on the current information the leadership team has available.
- Awarded at the Service Unit level from 5-25 years.
- Special order from retail shop for 20- and 25-year pin.
- The pin is awarded in 5-year increments.
- Nominee must be in good standing with the council.



Years of Service Pin

The years of service pin recognizes the number of years as an adult Girl Scout volunteer.

- The service unit may automatically award pin based on the current information the leadership team has available.
- Awarded at the Service Unit level from 5-20 years.
- Special order from retail shop for 20-year pin.
- The pin is awarded in 5-year increments.
- Nominee must be in good standing with the council.



First Year Leader Award Patch

The First Year Leader Award Patch is awarded to new leaders and co-leaders who completed their first year of leadership, took required training, and committed to serve a second year of leadership.

Nomination Criteria:

- Candidate must be a current troop leader or co-leader.
- Completed all required trainings for first-year leadership: *Mandated Reporter, LiveScan, New Leader Orientation, 611 Troop Leader Onboarding, 611 Grade Level Training, 611 Getting Out & About*
- Completed one full program year as a troop leader.
- Committed to serve a second year in the same or another troop leadership role.
- Candidate must be in good standing with the council.

- This award is typically automatically awarded by the Service Unit Manager based on leadership records and current information the leadership team has available.



Leader with a Heart Award Pin

The Leader with a Heart Award Pin honors a leader and co-leader by adults and girl members in the troop who believe the nominee to be outstanding in program delivery and troop leadership.

Nomination Criteria:

- Candidate must be a current troop leader or co-leader.
- Candidate must have completed all required trainings: *Mandated Reporter, LiveScan, New Leader Orientation, 611 Troop Leader Onboarding, 611 Grade Level Training, 611 Getting Out & About*
- Demonstrates exceptional commitment to the Girl Scout mission and values.
- Provides a high-quality experience for troop members.
- Shows consistent engagement with troop activities, planning, and girl-led programming.
- Requires one nomination and one endorsement by members of the troop.
- Nominee must be in good standing with the council.
- Awarded at the service unit level.

Nomination and endorsements should include:

- Details to support nomination.
- Include examples of the candidate's special qualities and details of activities.
- Girl Scouts are encouraged to write letters of support.
- Original letters should be presented to the candidate upon presentation of the award.

Candidate examples:

- A leader who has consistently progressed the troop and achieved a milestone, whether a large trip, a bridging event, or completing a community service project or award.
- A leader who looks for every opportunity to expose the troop to new experiences, whether by camping, field trips, or service projects.
- A leader who has provided assistance and reassurance, whether to the entire troop or to an individual Girl Scout and/or family, through a time of adversity.

Leader with a Heart Nomination & Endorsement Examples

Example of a nomination

I am nominating Ms. Angela for the Leader with a Heart Award because she consistently goes above and beyond to create a warm, inclusive, and empowering environment for our Girl Scouts. She ensures every girl feels heard and valued and brings creativity and care to every meeting. Whether it's organizing badge activities, planning community service projects, or simply being a supportive mentor, she leads with compassion and dedication. Her commitment to the Girl Scout mission is evident in the way she fosters courage, confidence, and character in our troop. We are so lucky to have her as our leader, and we believe she truly embodies the heart of Girl Scouting.

Endorsement Example from an adult

I wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Ms. Angela for the Leader with a Heart Award. As a parent of two girls in Troop 345, I've seen firsthand how she brings warmth, patience, and genuine care to every interaction. She doesn't just lead, she inspires.

Whether she's helping the girls navigate a badge activity, encouraging them to speak up during planning, or simply listening with kindness, Angela creates a space where every girl feels safe and empowered. Her dedication goes far beyond the meetings, she's the kind of leader who sends encouraging notes before cookie season, celebrates each girl's unique strengths, and always finds time to support parents too.

She truly embodies what it means to lead with heart, and I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition.

Endorsement example from a Girl Scout

I want to nominate Ms. Angela for the Leader with a Heart Award because she makes our troop feel like a second family. She always listens to our ideas and helps us turn them into real plans, like when we wanted to do a beach cleanup and she helped us organize everything.

She's kind, funny, and always makes sure everyone feels included, even when someone's shy or nervous. I used to be scared to speak in front of people, but Ms. Angela helped me practice and now I feel confident leading badge activities.

She believes in us and reminds us that we can do anything if we try. I'm really lucky to have her as my leader, and I hope she knows how much we love and appreciate her.



Volunteer of Excellence Pin (GSUSA Award)

The Volunteer of Excellence Award recognizes a volunteer who has contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with girls in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Nomination Criteria:

- Candidate is an active, registered Girl Scout member.
- Candidate has successfully completed the term of service and all requirements for their position.
- Candidate has performed beyond expectations for the position to deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to Girl Scouts, or
- Candidate's performance has been beyond the expectations of the position and has supported council's mission delivery goals in one or more of the following functional areas: *Membership, Development/Community Cultivation, Volunteer Support, Program, Leadership or Governance, Strategic Planning, Fund Development, and Council Support Service (such as IT, Customer Service, Merchandising, Marketing/Communications).*
- Candidate actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behaviors.

Nomination and endorsements should include:

- Details to support nomination.
- Include examples of the candidate's special qualities and details of activities.
- Original letters should be presented to the candidate upon presentation of the award.

Candidate examples:

- A troop leader consistently delivered high-quality programming aligned with the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. They developed a hands-on STEAM curriculum that was later shared across multiple troops, mentored new leaders, and ensured inclusive access to activities for all girls.
- The Service Unit Manager organized large-scale events that brought together dozens of troops for community service and enrichment. They cultivated partnerships with local organizations to support council goals and created inclusive, engaging experiences that strengthened Girl Scout visibility.
- A volunteer supported new leaders through training, resource sharing, and ongoing encouragement. They also served on a council committee, advocating for youth-led initiatives and inclusive governance. Their dual contributions in volunteer support and strategic leadership significantly advanced the council's mission.

Volunteer of Excellence Award Nomination and Endorsement Example

Nomination Example

I am honored to nominate Sarah West for her exceptional contributions and unwavering dedication to the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles. Her service has consistently exceeded the expectations of her role, demonstrating a level of commitment, creativity, and leadership that inspires everyone around her.

In her position as a Troop Leader and Service Unit Volunteer, Sarah has not only fulfilled her responsibilities with professionalism and care but has also gone above and beyond to elevate the impact of her work. From mentoring new leaders to organizing inclusive troop activities, her efforts have helped build a stronger, more connected Girl Scout community.

One particularly significant area of impact has been in Volunteer Support and Community Cultivation. Sarah developed a streamlined onboarding process for new volunteers, improving retention and boosting morale. She also coordinated community-building events that brought together troops, families, and leaders, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

For these reasons and more, I wholeheartedly recommend Sarah West for recognition. Her service exemplifies what it means to lead with purpose, passion, and the true spirit of Girl Scouting.

Endorsement Example

It is with great admiration and respect that I endorse the nomination of Sarah West for the Volunteer of Excellence award. Sarah embodies the spirit of Girl Scouting, leading with heart, vision, and an unwavering commitment to empowering young girls.

Her contributions have consistently gone above and beyond the expectations of her role. Sarah's leadership has not only strengthened her troop but has also had a ripple effect across the broader community. Her work in volunteer support and community cultivation has created a welcoming and inclusive environment where both new and seasoned volunteers feel valued and inspired.

She is the kind of leader who quietly transforms systems, uplifts others, and never seeks the spotlight, yet her impact is unmistakable. Sarah West is a shining example of what it means to live the Girl Scout Promise, and I wholeheartedly support her nomination.

Tips for Writing Nominations

Initial Statement	Thoughtfully Consider	Strong Nomination Statement
“She has been a leader for a long time.”	How many years? Through which levels?	“For 1 year, she has led a large troop from Daisies, persevering through the difficult middle school years, to their current level of Seniors.”
“She is a great leader.”	What kind of leadership qualities does she bring? What makes her stand out?	“She continually brings leadership opportunities to the girls. She encourages a girl-led approach by allowing girls to vote on and implement their activities.”
“She always goes above and beyond.”	Be specific! Tell a story about the great benefits those around her receive due to her efforts.	“Her troop voted to start the Outdoor Art Badges. Because she has never considered herself a “creative soul” when it came to artistic endeavors, she recruited troop parents, artists, and actors as resources for her girls to draw from. As a result, the girls had a great time meeting community experts and discovering parent talent in their own troop! They now have several opportunities for Take Action projects because of these connections.”
“He’s a dad who helps whenever needed.”	Be specific! Tell a story about the support given to girls, and how the girls benefitted.	“This good guy came to the rescue during a troop campout when the troops discovered a nest of baby rattlesnakes in the camp! He kept both the girls and leaders calm and assisted in striking camp, all the while educating the girls about the snakes and safety. The girls felt safe, and in control, thanks to the good guidance from an awesome Girl Scout dad!”

Recognizing Service Unit Volunteers

How to Plan an Adult Recognition Ceremony

Planning your local area's adult recognition event can be a fun experience for everyone! Develop this event as your service unit sees fit and create a memorable experience. Some service units add an adult recognition ceremony to their Service Unit Bridging Ceremony and others have a specific night set aside for volunteers. Some even forgo the ceremony and just have a fun event for the volunteers to socialize, catch up, and celebrate their sisterhood.

Curious about the magic behind Girl Scout ceremonies? Whether you're planning a bridging celebration, an investiture, or a flag ceremony, the official Ceremonies Manual is your go-to guide for inspiration, tradition, and meaningful moments. Dive in and discover how to make every gathering unforgettable! Check out [GSGLA's Guide to Planning Ceremonies](#).

Tip #1: Start with the Basics

Who is attending?

Your audience should include everyone who would like to join and honor the volunteers in your area! This can mean girls and adults, or just adults. Consider inviting local community members and community partners who have had a great impact on the local service unit.

What will we be doing? What is the theme?

Everyone loves a good theme! Whether you'd like to have a more formal recognition night or do a simple activity as a group, the possibilities are endless! For example, one large service unit may host a formal recognition night to honor all their local volunteers. Their neighbor, who is a smaller service unit, does a bowling night each year to honor their volunteers and have a little fun together. Others may tie their adult recognition into their May Service Unit Meeting. In short, do what works best for you and your service unit.

When will it be held?

Most service units honor local volunteers for their contributions each year in late April, May, or early June. Remember the summer is often busy, so later than June isn't ideal, but you could also honor volunteers from the previous year at the start of the next one! Nothing like a little gratitude to start the year off right.

Where will it be?

While your regular meeting space may be the best option, look for other options as well. Would it be fun to have a dinner at a leader's home or local restaurant? Perhaps a BBQ at a local park for volunteers, their families, and entire troops? The possibilities are endless!

Why are we holding this ceremony? What are our goals?

To hold a successful Service Unit Adult Recognition Ceremony, you must be clear on your goal. Is it to honor the volunteers who worked hard the previous year and to have a little fun together? Or is it to speak to the larger local community about the impact Girl Scout volunteers have on local girls and families? Maybe it is a combination of all of these and more. Whatever your goal, make sure it's clear in the recognition process. This will help guide your service unit to success.

Tip #2: Make it Your Own with Custom Awards

Creating custom awards can be a fun experience for your whole Service Unit! You can create nearly any custom award for your area. They can honor an entire troop's volunteers, or individuals. Here are some examples:

- Service Unit Most Girl-Led Troop—for the troop that most assisted girls in planning and implementing their year.
- Service Unit Money Maker—for the volunteer and troop who earned the most in product programs the previous year!
- Service Unit Best Event/Experience—for the troop volunteers who planned and led the best troop experience the previous year.
- Man Enough to be a Girl Scout—for the Girl Scout dad that's always helping out!
- Service Unit Finance All-Star—for the Girl Scout volunteer that keeps all the finances in order and every cent accounted for!

Keep an eye out for great champions each year in your service unit! These people and successes can be the beginning of a great award for your area. In the end, great volunteers deserve to be acknowledged for all their strengths! Don't forget to reach out to your Membership Specialist, they may have ideas for great volunteers and custom awards as well!

Creative Ways to Say “Thank You”

Awards are given when someone meets all the criteria for a specific honor. "Thank Yous" are informal acknowledgments to show appreciation for volunteers and leaders who've done a great job. These can be given anytime, ideally in front of peers, and should be timely. Whether someone chaired an event, supported a troop outing, or helped with Service Unit activities, a quick thank-you goes a long way.

Thoughtful “Thank You” Ideas for Volunteers and Leaders

- Deliver a casserole to a leader after a troop outing so they can skip cooking dinner.
- Cover the cost of a Girl Scout training or workshop—or offer babysitting while they attend.
- Gift a Girl Scout mug paired with coffee or tea.
- Place a sign outside their home: “A Proud Girl Scout Leader Lives Here.”
- Wrap cinnamon buns or cupcakes with a note: “Thanks for working your buns off!” or “You take the cake!”
- Present a candle with the message: “No one holds a candle to you. Thanks for your leadership.”
- Give a pasta spoon with a tag: “Girl Scout volunteers create amazing ‘pastabilities’ for girls.”
- Share a Million Dollar chocolate bar with a note: “Thanks a million!”
- Brighten their day with fresh flowers.
- Offer a gift card for coffee, shopping, or a favorite local spot.
- Create pins from puzzle pieces with messages like: “You fit us well” or “You’re an essential piece.”
- Give a magnifying glass labeled: “Thanks for your vision.”
- Share seed packets with a note: “Thanks for planting the seeds of our success.”
- Pair a coffee gift card with a message: “Our cup runneth over with gratitude for your time and effort.”



Explore [GSGLA's Pinterest](#) page for ready-to-use ideas on volunteer recognition and appreciation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Service Unit Awards and Recognitions?

Service Unit Awards and Recognitions are a way to honor volunteers, leaders, and community members who go above and beyond in supporting Girl Scouts. These can range from formal awards to informal thank-you gestures.

Who can be nominated for an award?

Any registered Girl Scout volunteer or leader who has made a significant impact within the Service Unit may be nominated. This includes troop leaders, event chairs, committee members, and behind-the-scenes helpers.

What's the difference between an award and a thank-you?

- Awards are formal recognitions given when someone meets specific criteria for a designated honor.
- Thank-Yous are informal gestures of appreciation that can be given anytime to acknowledge effort, kindness, or support

How often are adult recognitions presented?

Formal presentation of National and Council Awards are presented each year at an annual recognition ceremony in April. Service units may present local awards at any time and are encouraged to recognize volunteers informally throughout the year. Please see the Service Unit Award Handbook for more information.

Who can nominate for a Service Unit Award?

Nominations for awards can be made by any person who has knowledge of the service performed. This includes parents, community members, volunteers, and staff. Please look at the descriptions of each type of award above for more information on who can nominate for specific awards.

What is the difference between the Numeral Guard and Years of Service?

The Numeral Guard is for the number of years a person has been a member of the Girl Scout organization, including years as a girl member. It is available for purchase by individuals and troops at any Girl Scout retail shop from 5 to 25 years. The Years of Service Award is given for the number of years of volunteer service as an active, registered adult member. Service units can recognize volunteers locally from 5-20 years. Both Numeral Guard and Year of Service pins can be ordered through the retail shop.

When do I need to have the nomination paperwork turned in, and who gets it?

Each service unit has their own process to honor local volunteers. Please reach out to your service unit for more information about your specific area.

Where can I order official Girl Scout pins for awards and recognitions?

You can order all official Girl Scout pins directly from the Girl Scout retail shop.

Can staff be nominated for an award?

No. These awards are for volunteer members only.

First Year Leader Award Checklist

Instructions: Please complete all sections of the form and submit it to your designated Service Unit team member. Be sure to include any required documentation or signatures.

Name: _____
Troop No. _____
Date: _____

Leadership Commitment

- ☐ Registered as a Girl Scout adult member.
- ☐ Completed mandated reporter training.
- ☐ Served as a troop leader or co-leader for one full program year.
- ☐ Attended Service Unit Leader Meetings regularly.
- ☐ Committed to continue as a leader for a second year.

Training Requirements

- ☐ Completed New Leader Orientation.
- ☐ Completed Troop Leader Onboarding on gsLearn.
- ☐ Completed Grade Level Learning Path on gsLearn.
- ☐ Completed LiveScan Background Check

Troop Engagement

- ☐ Held regular troop meetings throughout the year.
- ☐ Encouraged girl-led planning and decision-making.
- ☐ Troop is at or above troop minimum or open to accepting Girl Scouts.
- ☐ Participated in Service Unit or Council events (optional but encouraged)

Troop Finances

- ☐ Opened and managed a troop bank account.
- ☐ Submitted Annual Troop Finance Report to GSGLA.

Product Program Participation

- ☐ Participated in Fall Product Program or Cookie Program.
- ☐ Completed relevant Product Program training.

Verification by Service Unit Team Member

_____ The candidate has met the criteria to receive award.

Leader with a Heart Nomination Form

Submit nomination along with endorsements to Service Unit team.

Candidate Information

Date: _____

Nominee: _____

Leader or Co-Leader Name: _____

Troop No. : _____

Mailing Address:

Phone: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Person submitting nomination form

Name: _____

Girl Scout Position: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Nomination should remain secret from the nominee in case the nomination is not approved.

Verification by Service Unit Member

The candidate is a registered volunteer.

The candidate has completed required training for the position.

Nomination of: _____

By: _____

Award: Leader with a Heart

Note: You may attach a separate sheet if additional space is needed. Please be sure to label each section clearly.

1. Describe how this leader led the troop with heart. Please give examples of ways in which this leader showed a friendly, open attitude to girls in the troop and their families.
2. Please list any accomplishments the troop has achieved this year whether a troop community service project, troop trip or exceptional troop activity, running an event for other Girl Scouts, or earning a Bronze or Silver Award.

Volunteer of Excellence Nomination Form

Submit nomination along with two endorsements to Service Unit team.

Candidate Information

Date: _____

Nominee: _____

Troop No. : _____

Mailing Address:

Phone: (____) _____

E-mail: _____

Person submitting nomination form

Name: _____

Girl Scout Position: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Nomination should remain secret from the nominee in case the nomination is not approved.

Verification by Service Unit Member

The candidate is a registered volunteer.

The candidate has completed required training for the position.

