

Pattie's Blog



New troop year? Bring it on!

We asked five current Girl Scout volunteers the same 4 questions on what being part of a Girl Scout Leadership team means to them. This exercise reinforced to me the diversity of experiences a Girl Scout leader has as well as the diversity of who a Girl Scout volunteer is. They offer a variety of perspectives but an underlying theme of commitment and true appreciation and admiration for the children in their midst. What follows are excerpts of their replies.

Chrissy – Girl Scout Leader for 4 years

Christina – Kindergarten teacher and Girl Scout Leader for 5 years

Debbie – Pre-school teacher and Girl Scout Leader for 18 years

Jessica – Communications professional and Girl Scout Leader for 7 years
Theresa – Girl Scout Leader for 5 years

1. *As a Girl Scout Leader, we know girls get a lot from you. What do you get from them?*

Debbie – **As a troop leader, working with the girls puts a smile on my face every time we meet! They make me happy and keep me feeling young. Watching the joy in a girl's face when we sing Girl Scout songs, or go on a trip, play games and work on our badges, is really worth it for me. Giggles, and smiles make my heart melt.**

Christina – **It warms my heart to hear the girls acting out lessons from our meetings when I'm in the [school] hallway or [school] cafeteria. The joy it brings me, knowing that they might not have that knowledge or perspective if we hadn't begun this journey together is insurmountable.**

Chrissy – **I'm always impressed with the girls - they see solutions in places we leaders don't always think to look. They point out times we are using the promise and law, even when we aren't in meetings (park play dates, after school, etc.).**

Jessica – **Girl Scouts was an important part of my childhood and I learned so much from my experience back then — leadership, service, new skills, and traveling. I am still learning, not only by helping my troop plan and execute activities, but from the girls in my troop.**

2. *Looking back on your first year as a Girl Scout Leader, what would you tell yourself now?*

Jessica – **Having seasoned leaders as mentors is so invaluable to getting a troop started. Ask questions, discuss challenges. You have an amazing support network!**

Debbie - **If I could give myself some advice, it would be to take more pictures and label them!**

Christina - **Today I would go back and tell myself that "this is so much more than you think it is! These girls are going to transform in front of your eyes, they are going to step up and become amazing ambassadors of the values you are instilling today. Hold onto your heart because when you see it happen it's going to burst!"**

Chrissy – **Girl-led is best-led! Things aren't 'perfect' but they are certainly amazing, inspired, and the choices are the girls'. (Age appropriate of course!)**

3. *What are your observations from day one in the new troop year to the end of the troop year or bridging ceremony? How have the Girl Scouts grown? What have they gained?*

How have they changed? What are they bringing to their everyday life that they didn't have before?

Jessica - I love starting out the troop year having the girls look at the different badge options and talking through what goals they would like to achieve for the year — and then reflecting back at the end of the year. They often grow by trying new things out of their comfort zone, honing skills for things they may have done before, and leading/participating in community service. These kids are bringing their leadership and service to their everyday life — in the classroom, in sports, plays and other extracurricular activities, as well as home.

Debbie - I love looking back at photos at the end of the year, as we get ready for bridging and noticing how much the girls have changed. Not only physically, but in so many other ways too. The beginning of the year, many have just turned 5, so they are not reading yet, or are shy and not comfortable in groups. By May, many can now read, some have become more comfortable speaking up in the groups, some are willing to try something new, watching friendships grow, and just seeing how comfortable they are in their own world is wonderful. Anyone who doubts how a cookie booth can affect a girl, hasn't seen the joy of them making their first in-person sales and waving at cars, with the posters they made.

Theresa – What have they gained? They have gained people skills, how to speak up, how to foster an idea into a project into a completion. They have learned how to showcase their accomplishments.

How have they changed? Oh dear. They have changed, by growing up right in front of our eyes. I remember the day we met for the first time, each little girl peeking out behind their mom, shy and scared...To boldly telling a customer they gave the wrong amount of change, to organizing a council-wide crafts drive for Camp Bonnie Brae. The courage and self-assurance they possess is amazing.

What are they bringing to their everyday life that they didn't have before? They bring a "can-do" attitude. And they question appropriately. Just this week one of my Girl Scouts noticed a Veterans Memorial that said "We honor our sons" and she immediately asked: "What about daughters?" We talked about it and she asked me to take a photo so that she could write a letter to the Mayor of the town and ask her some questions about it.

4. What is your favorite Girl Scout tradition and why?

Theresa - Making S'mores of course!! My other favorite Girl Scout tradition is reciting the Girl Scout Law. It reinforces our values and reminds us of our true North. It keeps us steering toward that point.

Jessica - Singing! I love to sing and it's been fun to share the gift of Girl Scout songs with my two children.

Christina - Our troop's favorite tradition is closing-circle with the Make New Friends Song. They say it's a reminder of what we are all about. Everyone is welcomed in our circle, member or not. We are a family, supporting and caring for each other.

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