

girl scouts 
of the desert southwest
southern new mexico
& west texas

Girl Scout Volunteer Award Guide



Adult Recognition

It is meaningful to be recognized for the things we do well. When people recognize our contributions, it shows that they see us, value what we do, and appreciate that we are part of the organization.

People volunteer for many different reasons, but most volunteers want to make a difference and contribute to something meaningful. When volunteers know their time, energy, and commitment are appreciated, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed to Girl Scouts.

Recognition helps volunteers understand that their service matters—that the work they are doing is contributing to something bigger than themselves and helping make a difference in the lives of girls. For that reason, meaningful recognition is one of the most powerful tools we have for engaging and retaining the invaluable volunteers who support Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest.

Focus and Impact of Service

When considering volunteer recognition, look at both the focus of the volunteer's service and the impact of their contributions. Consider who the volunteer serves, the role they play, and the difference their service makes.

A volunteer may serve in a variety of ways, such as working directly with a troop, coordinating Service Unit activities and events, or serving on a council-wide committee or task group. Understanding the volunteer's area of service can help determine which award or form of recognition is most appropriate. Review the award descriptions and criteria to identify the recognition that best aligns with the volunteer's service.

Length of service is an important reflection of a volunteer's dedication and ongoing commitment to Girl Scouts and should always be recognized and appreciated. When considering an official award, also celebrate the results and meaningful contributions of that service. Consider the difference the volunteer has made and the ways their dedication has benefited girls, volunteers, the organization, or the community.

Meaningful impact can take time to develop. As volunteers build relationships, gain experience, and deepen their understanding of the needs of those they serve, they often create opportunities for lasting and significant results.

When considering recognition, ask:

- Who does this volunteer serve?
- What role do they play?
- What have they accomplished?
- What difference has their service made?
- Who has benefited from their contributions?
- Does their service align with the criteria for the award being considered?

Council Award Requirements

Nomination deadline: Friday, October 2, 2026.

Award Presentation

Council level awards are presented at the annual Ceremony of Honors held in December of each year. Awardees are notified that they will be honored, but the awards are kept secret until the presentation at the event!

Who Can Submit Nominations

- Girl Scout Volunteers
- Girl Scouts
- Community Members
- Council Staff

Nomination Criteria for all Awards

- Service performed was between October 1, 2025, and September 30, 2026.
- The candidate was an active, registered Girl Scout member for the year of nomination in good standing.
- The candidate can be involved at any level of volunteering, from parent helpers to service unit team members, to council volunteers.
- The candidate encourages each of our members and shows progression as a leader in their role.
- The candidate actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusivity. They live by the Girl Scout Promise and Law in word and deed.
- The service performed is above and beyond the expectations for the position held.

How to Submit a Nomination

- Review all award descriptions and requirements in the Girl Scout Volunteer Award Guide.
- Fully complete and submit the Nomination Form (linked in each award description)

Nomination Review Process

The Adult Recognition Committee is comprised of volunteers and staff from throughout GSDSW territory. They review each nomination and endorsement and compare the information presented about the volunteer with the criteria established for each award. They only know what is presented in the completed nominations. Upon review, they will:

- Approve the candidate for nominated award or,
- Approve the candidate for a different award or,
- Deny the award. In a case where there is no indication given that the candidate's service met the award criteria, the nomination could be denied.

The committee decisions are sent to the GSDSW Board of Directors for final approval. Upon final approval, you will be notified regarding the status of your nomination.

How to write a Nomination

Be Specific

The nomination form asks you to describe how the nominee's service meets the award criteria. Use specific examples, measurable results, and clear impact statements rather than general praise.

Uninformative Example

Sally Jones should receive the award because she is always organized and is great with parent volunteers. We are all very fond of her and are willing to be under her leadership.

Informative Example

Sally Jones should receive the award because she is an outstanding example of volunteer leadership for both girls and adults. Under her leadership, ten parents actively volunteer with troop activities. When she was out of town for several weeks, she delegated event-planning responsibilities to troop volunteers, ensuring activities continued without interruption. Her ability to delegate responsibilities and empower others has increased parent involvement, strengthened the volunteer team, and helped troop activities run smoothly. As a result, girls benefit from a stronger support network and a more successful troop program.

Avoid Using Only “Feel-Good” Statements

Provide concrete facts and measurable results rather than opinions. Focus on what the nominee did and the impact of their actions.

Uninformative Example

Mary Smith is really good with cookies with her Cadette troop. When she took over as Service Unit Cookie Chair after the previous volunteer resigned, it was a successful sale.

Informative Example

When the Service Unit Cookie Chair resigned, Mary Smith stepped in to lead the program. Drawing on several years of cookie program experience, she successfully managed the distribution of 19,000 packages with no reported errors. Through her strong organization and communication, the service unit achieved 100% troop participation and increased overall cookie sales by 40%.

If you have any questions about nominating someone, please contact us at info@gsdsw.org ATTN: Awards

Nomination deadline:
Friday, October 2, 2026

Show Results

Explain how the nominee's service made a measurable impact. Include numbers, outcomes, or specific achievements whenever possible.

Uninformative Example

Brenda Garcia provided an excellent training to our volunteers.

Informative Example

When the scheduled trainer became ill, Brenda Garcia stepped in on short notice to lead a Medic First Aid training for local volunteers. Because of her willingness to serve, 20 new volunteers were able to complete their First Aid and CPR certification on schedule, ensuring they were prepared to safely support troop activities.

GSUSA Awards

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The President's award recognizes the efforts of a service unit team or committee whose exemplary service in support of delivering GSLE surpassed team goals and resulted in significant and measurable impact toward reaching the council's overall goals.

Additional Criteria:

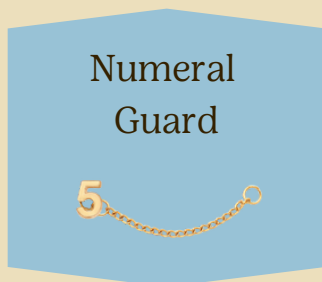
- All members of the service unit team were active, registered Girl Scout members, in good standing, for the year of nomination and completed appropriate trainings for their positions.
- Delivered Girl Scout program to the membership resulting in the retention of at least 75% of the troops and troop leaders from the previous year.
- Overall girl membership for the service unit reached or surpassed the council goals.
- Service Unit maintains ongoing communications with each troop leader using methods that serve the needs of each leader as well as with individually registered girls within the service unit.
- Cultivated contacts in the community through scheduled talks to civic groups, sponsorship agreements, approved media coverage and community profile updates.
- Council required reports are submitted on time.
- Service Unit encourages adult participation in fund development and has increased annual giving support to the council.
- Composition of the adult Girl Scout members reflects the diversity of the community.

Submit nomination form and supporting documentation here:

<https://tinyurl.com/PresAward25-26>.

Numeral Guard & Years of Service Pin

The Numeral Guard is a longevity recognition for an individual for their total years of registered membership, including years as a girl and as an adult member.



The Years of Service Pin is a longevity recognition for an adult volunteer's dedication to Girl Scouting.



- Years do not need to be consecutive.
- Pins are available in five-year increments.
- Individuals track their total years. GS DSW does not automatically distribute pins. Please submit a request form to receive your pin(s): <https://tinyurl.com/yrspins25-26>.

GSUSA Awards



APPRECIATION PIN

The Appreciation Pin recognizes individuals whose exemplary service has made a measurable impact on Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) delivery within a geographic area. Their efforts have helped the area achieve and surpass its mission delivery goals.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/AppPin25-26>



VOLUNTEER OF EXCELLENCE

The Volunteer of Excellence Award recognizes a volunteer whose exceptional service has directly supported girls through any program pathway while advancing the council's mission. Through leadership and meaningful contributions in areas such as membership development, community relations, volunteer support, governance, or fund development, the recipient has made a significant impact on girl and adult members.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/VolEx25-26>



HONOR PIN

The Honor Pin recognizes individuals whose exemplary service in support of GSLE delivery has had a measurable impact across two or more geographic areas. Their contributions have helped the council achieve and surpass its mission delivery goals.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/HonorPin25-26>



THANKS BADGE

The Thanks Badge recognizes individuals whose exemplary service in support of GSLE delivery has had a measurable impact on advancing the mission delivery goals and priorities of the entire council or the Girl Scout Movement. The recipient's contributions are so significantly beyond expectations that no other award is more appropriate.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/ThanksI25-26>



THANKS BADGE II

The Thanks Badge II honors a previous Thanks Badge recipient whose continued exemplary leadership and service have produced a measurable impact across the entire Girl Scout Movement. Through exceptional contributions sustained over time, the recipient has performed at a level so far beyond expectations that no other award is more appropriate.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/ThanksII25-26>

GSDSW Council Awards



REGIONAL LEADER OF THE YEAR

The Regional Leader of the Year Award recognizes a leader whose exemplary implementation of the girl-led model has provided girls with exceptional leadership opportunities and experiences. The recipient must have served in a troop leadership position for at least five consecutive years.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/RegLeadYr25-26>



GIRL SCOUT OF THE YEAR

Awarded to a registered Senior or Ambassador Girl Scout. Exemplifies through both words and actions the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism, and service. She upholds the mission of Girl Scouts and has held leadership positions in both Girl Scouts and the community.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/GSYr25-26>



MAN ENOUGH TO BE A GIRL SCOUT

This award recognizes our male volunteers that have gone above and beyond in service of Girl Scouts, whether a dad, grandfather, uncle, older sibling, or guardian.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/ManEnuf25-26>



GIRL SCOUT SUPPORT

The Girl Scout Support Award is presented to a parent, grandparent, or caregiver, excluding troop leaders and co-leaders, who has gone above and beyond in service to a troop or an individually registered member.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/GSSup25-26>

GSDSW Council Awards

FAMILY AWARD



The Family Award is presented to a family whose exceptional volunteer service demonstrates a strong commitment to Girl Scouts. Through contributions that exceed normal expectations, the family has provided continuous service for at least two years with GSDSW and has positively impacted two or more service units within the council.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/Fam25-26>

OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST



The Outdoor Enthusiast Award recognizes an adult member whose commitment to outdoor education has enriched the Girl Scout experience through outstanding programming delivered to at least one Service Unit or program audience. Recipients must have provided outdoor education opportunities spanning at least two Girl Scout membership years.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/OutEnth25-26>

COOKIE CHAMPION



The Cookie Champion Award recognizes an adult member whose exemplary service as a Troop Cookie Coordinator or Service Unit Cookie Chair has made a measurable impact on the success of the troop, service unit, and council. Recipients must have served in one of these roles for a minimum of two Girl Scout membership years.

Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/CookieChamp25-26>

FALL PRODUCT CHAMPION



The Fall Product Champion Award recognizes an adult member who has demonstrated continued exemplary service as a Troop Fall Product Coordinator or Service Unit Fall Product Chair, resulting in a measurable impact that benefits the troop, service unit, and council. Nominees must have served in one of these roles for at least two Girl Scout membership years.

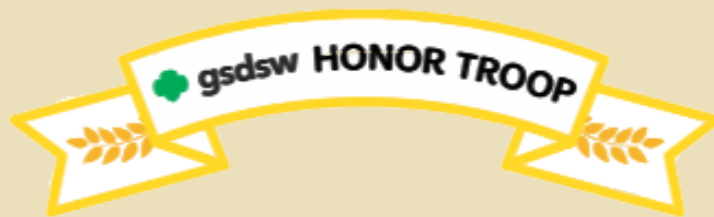
Submit nomination form here: <https://tinyurl.com/FallProd25-26>

Honor Troop

The Honor Troop program provides a framework for recognizing troops that offer a well-rounded Girl Scout experience throughout the year. It outlines a combination of required activities and additional troop-selected requirements designed to ensure girls have opportunities to participate in a variety of Girl Scout experiences, develop leadership skills, make decisions, and take an active role in their troop.

The program includes a series of mandatory requirements that all Honor Troops must complete, along with additional requirements selected by the troop from a designated list. This structure provides consistency across participating troops while allowing flexibility for troops to choose experiences that reflect their girls' interests and needs.

The Honor Troop requirements are intended to serve as a guide for troop planning and participation throughout the Girl Scout year, helping ensure girls are exposed to diverse, girl-led leadership opportunities and the many facets of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.



FAQ's

Q: We worry that if we give out too many recognitions, their significance will be "watered down." How do we Maintain Quality?

A: We should celebrate having growing numbers of people who deserve recognition. Take pride in having many to recognize. Girl Scout adult recognitions are not a competition. There should be no limit to the number of awards given.

Q: What about recognizing people more than once. Should you give the same recognition to a person more than once?

A: It is great to celebrate people whose continuing service and commitment make a difference in Girl Scouting. Rather than giving a duplicate award, consider personalizing a certificate, gift or service. This would be appropriate when someone deserves repeated recognition at the same level, for example, as an Appreciation or Honor Pin recipient.

Q: How does a person decide which recognition to wear?

A: If an adult has received more than one special recognition (e.g., Volunteer of Excellence & Appreciation pins), typically the highest award received is the one worn on the uniform. People with numerous pins usually retire the remaining ones with honor, either placing them in a scrapbook, framing together with other mementos.

Q: Is there a hierarchy for the awards?

A: We recognize that volunteers do amazing work and should be recognized when that work occurs. A volunteer can earn any award at any time during their Girl Scout volunteering career*, as long as they meet the criteria outlined for the award. However, we recommend that the awards are built upon, like we scaffold for the girls. For example, we might suggest the Appreciation Pin and then the Volunteer of Excellence. (*The only exception is the Thanks Badge II, which requires the candidate to have previously earned the Thanks Badge.)

Q: What happens if I miss the nomination deadline?

A: The deadline is a hard deadline due to the timing of approvals and the Ceremony of Honors. Unfortunately, that volunteer will not be recognized.