Our Investment in Girls is Worth Every Penny

Girls deserve our very best and Girl Scouts wants to deliver. “The value of the all-girl, girl-led environment offered by Girl Scouts cannot be overstated, and is so important to the social-emotional and personal development of girls,” said Dr. Andrea Bastiani-Archibald, Chief Girl Expert at Girl Scouts of the USA. “Girl Scouts is a place where girls are free to be girls; to try new things, experiment, and have fun learning from and leading one another. There is no other leadership development program in the world that offers girls this inclusive, safe space, without the distractions and pressures of school and other social settings.”

At Girl Scouts of North East Ohio, we want to make sure our facilities are those safe spaces where girls try new things and experiment. That’s why I was so pleased that we were able to open the Chickadee Program Center at Camp Ledgewood. This 9,843 square foot building features a large-scale program space, a discovery kitchen for cooking and science, and a 1,000 square foot space called the Nest for messy experiments and activities. The Daley Family Foundation donated a FabCab with special equipment like laser and vinyl cutters, computers, and others tech gear for our girls to try rapid prototyping and experimentation. We know our girls need places like these to build STEM confidence and put them on the path to consider training or education for jobs in the fastest growing and highest paying segment of today’s economy. Your investment in girls is worth every penny and pays big dividends. Join us and support the next generation of go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders.

Jane Christyson, CEO
Girl Scouts of North East Ohio
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On October 10, Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) opened the Chickadee Program Center at Camp Ledgewood in Peninsula with special guest Sylvia Acevedo, CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA. Over 300 donors and dignitaries attended the grand opening event. There were also two events for Girl Scout members, including volunteers, and their families giving members a chance to view the new program center.

At the events, donors and members got their first tour of the program center, including The Feeder Discovery Kitchen and Nest activity area where there were STEM demonstrations, the new Senses trail designed to help Brownie level Girl Scouts earn a badge, and a FabCab for high tech, hands on activities.

“Inspiring girls to unlock their inner G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)™ to reach their full potential is a priority for Girl Scouts of North East Ohio,” said Jane Christyson, CEO of GSNEO. “The new program center gives our members flexible space for training, special events, and other gatherings that allow us to offer unparalleled leadership experiences.”

The Chickadee Program Center, named after a native Ohio bird, has large rooms and a discovery kitchen to host girl programs and activities as well as volunteer trainings. The FabCab is a mini digital fabrication lab with equipment used to create rapid prototypes, providing Girl Scouts the resources to explore the entire engineering design process and earn badges through their experiences.

The building was designed by architect Rick Parker of Brandstetter Carroll Inc. and constructed by the female-owned Metis Construction, LLC. It was funded by combining donations and proceeds from the sales of council properties to create the GSNEO master plan.

Costing approximately $3 million to construct, the new Chickadee Program Center is part of a $6.2 million investment at Camp Ledgewood, including new cabins, a commemorative brick plaza recognizing some of our most loyal Girl Scout supporters, a bell tower, bridge and fire pit, the installation of Wi-Fi throughout camp, critical infrastructure improvements like water and septic systems, and more.

Camp Ledgewood is open year-round and is located in the village of Peninsula in Summit County, within the boundaries of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The 350-acre camp features low and high ropes courses, zip lines, archery range, hiking trails, amphitheater, observatory, and Lake Loomis for boating activities and nature studies. The camp is accredited by the American Camping Association (ACA) and has an average of 3,400 Girl Scout visits each year.

You can still purchase a brick paver at Camp Ledgewood to commemorate a beloved Girl Scout, a troop, a family member, or friend.

Order online at: https://ezengraver.com/GSNEOBricks
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-Jane Christyson, CEO of Girl Scouts of North East Ohio

The Georgianna Bonds Family sponsored the Flag Pole Plaza. Pictured L-R: Anna Belle Bonds, Sandy Bonds, Sylvia Acevedo, Stephen Bonds

Meredythe Daley, of the Daley Family Foundation, sponsor of the FabCab; Sylvia Acevedo, CEO of GSUSA

The new Chickadee Feeder is training chickadees to eat out of your hand

The Fire Pit was sponsored by the Debbie Baird Family

Senator John Eklund leading the Brownie Smile Song

Sorting bricks, Pictured L-R: Roberta Uhrich, Jane Christyson, Sunny Baddour, Jean Ganger, Barbara Parkinson, Fred Cash

GSNEO is partnering with the FirstEnergy Foundation to engage 4,000 Northeast Ohio girls in a FirstEnergy Patch Program. The program is designed to give girls hands-on experiences to spark their interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers while learning about electricity.

“Our innovative programming helps girls take the lead – in their own lives and in the world,” said Jane Christyson, CEO of GSNEO. “Girl Scouts is filling the female leadership and STEM workforce pipeline, which is something that partnerships with forward-thinking organizations like FirstEnergy Foundation helps us accomplish.”

Girl Scouts will participate in small group workshops and large group events that engage them in activities and experiments such as making electric currents, harnessing the wind for energy, and using the strength of the sun to generate power. Girls will also learn about energy terminology, electric safety, energy conservation, and STEM careers by using safety equipment and seeing a bucket truck in action.

“Women are underrepresented in the STEM fields, holding less than 28% of all STEM jobs in the United States,” said Lorna Wisham, president of the FirstEnergy Foundation. “Earning the ‘Girl Power’ patch will help Girl Scouts explore their natural curiosity about how things work, while ensuring more girls gain relevant skills and the confidence to meet the demands of a competitive workforce.”

Girl Scouts is proud to be a recognized industry leader when it comes to providing STEM programming for youth. Through hands-on learning in a girl-focused and girl-led environment, girls learn how to use STEM to help their community, improve the world, and build the future. We are so grateful to the FirstEnergy Foundation for their generous support and partnership!
Gina Vernaci is the President and CEO of Playhouse Square in Cleveland. Under her purview, Playhouse Square utilizes the arts to engage individuals and attract more than 1.2 million guests per year to 1,000 annual events. Her leadership has enabled so many more residents of Northeast Ohio to have the joy of experiencing professional live theater in a beautiful setting. Gina is proud that such an amazing partnership has grown between the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio and Playhouse Square over the years. In addition to the shows, Girl Scout members and troops have access to exclusive patches, meet-and-greets with cast members, and behind the scenes tours.

A portion of every Girl Scout ticket that is purchased is donated back to the council to support girls who might otherwise not be able to experience the best leadership program for girls. Through the arts, Gina strives to make the community a better, more enriching, and more accessible place to be. She truly embodies the Girl Scout qualities of go-getter, innovator, risk-taker, and leader. She is a role model to Girl Scouts and all women and girls across Northeast Ohio.

**What did being a Girl Scout teach you?**

As a Brownie, Junior, and Cadette, I looked forward to my troop meeting every week. Earning badges was so motivating and rewarding for me. I learned at a young age what it was to earn something. It set a high bar to live up to, made me appreciate my achievements, and helped me mold a sense of self.

**How did Girl Scouts prepare you for your career?**

Effective leaders need to know what it means to be on the team. It helped me identify good role models and engage with a group of good women. Girl Scouts helps you understand yourself, who you are, and emphasizes the importance of honor and integrity.

**How did Girl Scouts’ mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character have an impact on you?**

Girl Scouts offers great guidelines for life. It teaches kindness, responsibility, and accountability to those around you. The Girl Scout mantras and philosophies teach that it is an honor to be trusted. The most important thing one has is your integrity and your name – and Girl Scouts provides a guideline for this.

**Favorite Girl Scout story/experience?**

My first trip to the theater was with my Girl Scout troop. We sat in the balcony and I was so excited by the experience that I wanted to throw my beanie in the air. I also remember being at Girl Scout camp when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. We had a TV set up and watched this historic moment together.

**What advice would you give our girls?**

To those future Girl Scouts: This is a wonderfully rewarding experience, and it is fun! You go places, you sing songs, you learn compromise, and you develop skills that will serve you for a lifetime.

To those who are Girl Scouts: Congratulations on joining one of the greatest groups ever. Take advantage of every opportunity to get involved. Reach beyond your comforts of home, step outside, and achieve things that will take you to a higher level. Make new friends and learn about others who may have different backgrounds and lifestyles. Have eye opening experiences that will help you develop empathy and self-awareness. Girl Scouts allows for the social equalization of all girls – none of your differences matter when you are with your troop. It is a door opener to great experiences. Your leaders are there to help, and that is an extraordinary gift. I learned that life can be as much fun as you make it.
Being a Girl Scout helps girls thrive in five key ways:

- Develop a strong sense of self
- Display positive values
- Seek challenges and learn from setbacks
- Form and maintain healthy relationships
- Learn to identify and solve problems in their community

Important Council Dates

April 4
Annual meeting
Corporate Office, Macedonia

April 25
Adult Volunteer Recognition Event
Holiday Inn, Independence

May 12
Women of Distinction Awards Luncheon
InterContinental Hotel, Cleveland

June 27
Gold Award Celebration
John S. Knight Center, Akron

October 21-25
G.I.R.L. 2020 National Convention
Orlando, FL

Girl Scouts of North East Ohio serves girls in grades K-12 in 18 counties. Service Centers are located in Macedonia, Youngstown, North Canton, and Lorain. To learn more about this publication, or ways to support Girl Scouts, contact Julie Weagraff at jweagraff@gsneo.org/330-983-0399.

Are you a Girl Scout Alum or Gold Award Girl Scout?

We’d love to hear from you!
Share your success stories with us.
Email your story to funddevelopment@gsneo.org