

Girl Scouts of North East Ohio's STEM Initiatives

The future of America's economy lies in STEM-related businesses (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) yet opportunities for STEM education are limited. Women are more than 47% of the current workforce but comprise less than 28% of STEM jobs. As early as second grade youth are articulating that "math is for boys not girls." By high school, only 11% of girls declare a STEM interest.

In 2017, GSUSA launched new programming that includes new STEM and Outdoor badges. Since then, they have added other STEM badges including Cybersecurity, Automotive Engineering, and Space Science badges. This Girl Scout programming builds girls' skills and encourages their interest in STEM and environmental conservation from an early age—areas girls are not typically encouraged to explore outside Girl Scouting. Last year, **our girl members in Northeast Ohio earned 7,000 STEM badges.**

Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) has implemented plans for new STEM programming and will build a dedicated facility focused on STEM education. This **STEM Center of Excellence** is not only seen as a way to inspire Girl Scouts, but also to collaborate with local educators to impact a larger group of youth. The facility will be constructed at Camp Ledgewood, conveniently located between Cleveland and Akron, in the village of Peninsula in Summit County, and surrounded by the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. GSENO has been approved for two capital grants from the State of Ohio, in partnership with Kent State University.

This location also places the property within a half hour drive time of 51% of GSNEO members and over 100,000 Kindergarten through fifth grade students. Our council plans to collaborate with educators throughout Northeast Ohio to allow this facility to impact a larger group of boys and girls, not just members of Girl Scouts. Girl Scout members typically use Camp Ledgewood on weekends year-round and all summer long with multi day resident camp stays. This leaves an abundance of time weekdays during the school year to facilitate day programs or overnight experiences at the STEM Center for local students.

Camp Ledgewood is open year-round and an average of 3,400 Girl Scouts visit every year. The camp is accredited by the American Camping Association (ACA), meaning it complies with 300 national standards for health and safety. At Ledgewood, Girl Scouts can participate in a variety of activities, including canoeing, target sports, horseback riding, swimming, zip lining, and our high adventure course. Girls face their fears and do things they never thought they would do, all while experiencing the great outdoors.



Rendering of the STEM Center of Excellence

GSNEO is dedicated to improving and updating our camps to create meaningful experiences for our Girl Scouts. Our council has invested \$6.2 million in Camp Ledgewood in the last few years alone. We have been able to:

- expand sleeping accommodations by 160 bed spaces
- offer modern cabins with amenities such as heat, flush toilets, and full kitchens
- install Wi-Fi throughout camp to increase safety and offer additional learning opportunities
- add new program components to enhance the outdoor experience like zip lines as well as high and low rope courses
- updated necessary infrastructure and utilities to keep up with the local and federal requirements and to support robust use

In 2019, \$3 million was spent on the Chickadee Program Center that includes a demonstration kitchen, a FabCab with equipment designed to enhance our girls' badge earning experiences, and meeting rooms with a capacity of 300. The grand opening was held October 10, 2019 and the CEO of GSUSA was the featured speaker at the event.

In 2018 GSNEO formed a STEM Advisory Committee that is comprised of over 60 STEM professionals from a variety of disciplines including healthcare, law, higher education, manufacturing, engineering, technology, and more. The committee is led by GSNEO board member, Dr. Diana

Bilimoria, Chair of the Organizational Behavior Department at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. The committee members serve as ambassadors for the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and specifically promote that Girl Scouts provides STEM opportunities for girls. In addition, they identify new and innovative STEM programs for girls that provide opportunities that girls might not otherwise have, leverage contacts to build collaborative partnerships, and help secure funding for more STEM opportunities for all of our girl members.



The Chickadee Program Center at Camp Ledgewood