



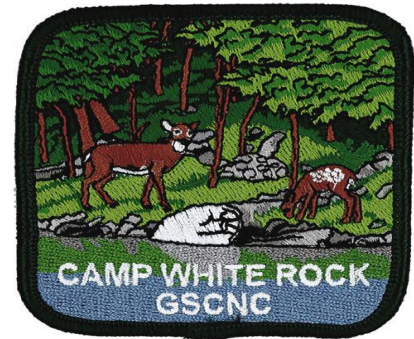
Hi! My name is MaryJane Weschler, and I'm an eighth grade Girl Scout Cadette.

I am so happy to be writing this post in celebration of the Women of Distinction of 2021 event!

If you were lucky enough to be at the Women of Distinction event four years ago, you may remember me as the Junior fourth grade Girl Scout that Ms. Lidia pulled on stage, and without missing a beat, I gave an unprepared public speech, my second ever!

My first unprepared speech was in West Virginia in front of members of the Berkeley Springs Town Hall where I talked about the importance of the Girl Scouts.

The Morgan County Girl Scouts were requesting a switch from an activity that had traditionally earned money for the Boy Scouts to the Girl Scouts. Their goal was to earn enough money to send every Girl Scout in Morgan County to Camp White Rock.



To my surprise, my speech worked! I even ended up in the newspaper, which is how Mrs. Lidia heard about me.

I'm not a Junior Girl Scout anymore, I'm a little taller, (4'11" to be exact). And since that moment, I have talked about how the Girl Scouts positively impacts girls and even adults every day.



I began my Girl Scout journey as a kindergartener in a small Title I school. I had no idea what the Girl Scouts were, but I came home with a flyer, and I knew that it was something I had to try!

Thankfully, my mom said "okay", but it was followed with "once you sign up for something you can't quit halfway through, you have to finish the season."



Little did either of us know, that “season” would be a lifetime of learning, growing, and experiencing something greater than I could have ever imagined. All the opportunities I have had are due to being a part of the Girl Scouts.

My troop, Troop 47876, quickly became the life of my school. And with the continued support of parents and school staff members, the Girl Scouts became a household name in our community.

During my very first year as a Daisy, I realized many kids at school didn’t have winter clothes to keep them warm. My school was so small that we didn’t have buses, everyone just walked, even in the brutal wintertime.

I remember my troop leader was teaching us about how to make the world a better place and that giving back to the community was one way that girls could do that. She asked how we could give back to our community and I raised my hand, very excited, and shouted “Let’s buy everyone scarves!”



Our troop didn’t have the money to buy every kid a scarf but with the help of our parents, we brainstormed a way to figure out how we could achieve our goals. We held a t-shirt drive at school. This took a lot of work, but by December, our troop proudly delivered scarfs to every student in every classroom, over 350 scarves in all!

That is where my passion to help others was born. This seemingly small task let me know that any dream I had could become a reality.

Winter Street Elementary closed when I was in 3rd grade. All my troop friends were redistricted and separated, but that couldn't keep us apart.

Every Monday, we still had our troop meetings. Some parents even drove over state lines to get their girls there! They recognized the importance that the Girl Scouts had on our friendship, growth, success, and confidence and how that continues to translate into everything we do.



Being a part of the Girl Scouts has allowed me to experience so many amazing things. From learning how to start a fire, (the simplest skill), to going with my troop to the Outer Banks for a week and visiting a Sea Turtle Hospital. We’ve done it all!

In the Outer Banks we learned about the efforts that conservationists are making to help sea turtles when they are injured, and how they protect their nesting areas in the dunes of North Carolina.





Many of the girls in my troop had never been out of the state, let alone to the beach! We rode a ferry for the first time and visited the lighthouse, and all of this happened because of the Girl Scouts!

We learned so many lessons running our own cookie business and learning how to budget for the trip. We even cooked all of our meals to save money on food. Can you say cooking badges earned?!?

I've made so many friends as a Girl Scout and I continue to make more wherever I go.

The main thing that has kept me going during one of the toughest years of my life, the COVID-19 Pandemic, has been the Girl Scouts. When all my sports were canceled, and I couldn't see any of my friends from school, I still had the Girl Scouts.

While it was no longer in person, I still met with my troop virtually and had the chance to participate in other virtual events, meeting girls from all over the council.



When I found out that the fifth grade Juniors who were bridging up to Cadettes were struggling, (because one of the requirements was interviewing a Cadette), I was happy to help! With the help of my mom, I was able to meet with hundreds of fifth graders virtually all summer long. I helped them meet the requirement they needed to bridge up and gave them hope by telling them about the fun things they will be able to do when they can meet in person again, this time as Cadettes.

For the first time this past summer I was a counselor at camp. I had a blast at the Brownie Junior Camporee at Camp White Rock! I bonded with the other counselors and the girls. My favorite things were breaking the ice with the girls and playing a huge game of freeze tag in the field. The experience was amazing, and I can't wait to do it again.

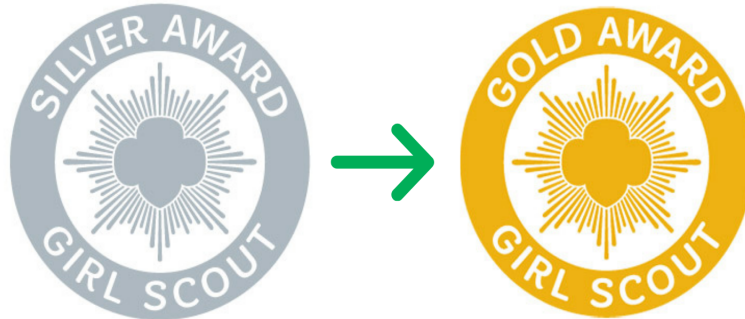


My goal this year is to earn my Silver Award. My friend Rylie and I are starting a Daisy Girl Scout troop at the church that was once our school. We have adults helping, but we are planning and running all the meetings ourselves. We hope that the parents see how stepping up and volunteering to lead their girls is easier than it looks.

My goal is that a new little Daisy troop will become the pride of that community and carry on the traditions of Girl Scouts like my troop has.



After accomplishing that goal and earning my Silver Award, I have my sights set on the Gold Award! I haven't had time to start planning that yet but when I do, I will be sure to update everyone.



When thinking about the huge impact the Girl Scouts has had on my life, I almost don't know if I will ever have the time or the words. The Girl Scouts mean everything to me.

I want to thank all of you reading this, for your constant support of the Girl Scout movement, and your support of girls like me across our council I also want to thank all the Women of Distinction and honorees for being amazing role models. You all are courageous, strong, confident, and working to make the world a better place; you give every girl someone to look up to. One day, I hope to be honored just like you!