



Adult Recognition Handbook



Table of Contents

Adult Recognition	3
Levels of Adult Recognition	5
Volunteer Recognition Ceremony	6
Adult Recognition Descriptions	7
Submission Process	15
Selection Process	16
Sample Nomination Questions	16



This Handbook supersedes all previous guidelines.

The online nomination procedures for council-level recognition has been improved to include award specific Nomination Forms, to be used by those nominating candidates as well as, those submitting additional recommendations. Detailed instructions for the new nomination submission process are located on page 14.

All necessary forms and reference information required to nominate candidates for any Adult Recognition are conveniently located on the [GSNI Recognition](#) page of our website.

Council-level recognition nominations must be submitted no later than **February 1, 2025**.

PLEASE NOTE: Both new and previously used designs in recognition insignia are valid and can appropriately be displayed on Girl Scout uniforms.

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Adult Recognition

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois places a high value on recognizing the adults who make a difference in Girl Scouts' lives. Awards and earned recognitions provide a means to acknowledge individuals, troops, and service units, in and of Girl Scouts, for their unique service.

This handbook contains all the information necessary to nominate a special volunteer or service unit member and highlight their accomplishments, including recognition descriptions and criteria, a detailed outline of the nomination process for each level of recognition, and helpful links to online forms and resources.

What is Recognition?

Recognition is given to acknowledge service. People volunteer for countless reasons, but underneath it all, most volunteers are motivated by the quality of their service and the people they serve. When volunteers know their time and energy are appreciated and they are valued by Girl Scouts, they commit themselves even more to the organization and the mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Adult recognition can be one of the most powerful tools for retaining the invaluable individuals who volunteer for our organization.

The Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Adult Recognition Program reflects:

- Quality of accomplishment as the primary determining factor in recognizing adult contributions
- Impact on Girl Scouts as the leading measure of quality
- Acknowledgment of many kinds of contributions (time, talent, and measure)
- Support of the Girl Scout mission through policies and procedures outlined in [Volunteer Essentials](#).
- Understanding and practice of inclusive behavior

Recognition reinforces high expectations and encourages continued growth and development. It is not a competition. Awards encourage adults to commit to greater levels of involvement and support while they help Girl Scouts develop skills, values, and ideals to reach their fullest potential.



Forms of Recognition

Showing appreciation for volunteers is essential. They contribute countless hours toward Girl Scouts on top of their own busy schedules and hectic lives. Girl Scouting wouldn't be the same without them. Recognition comes in many forms throughout the year.

- **Thank You:** Everyone should get one! Informal recognitions, like thank you's, should be used throughout the year. A thank you could include a greeting card, note, or certificate
- **Special Thank You:** These are reserved for a job well done. A special thank you could include a bouquet of flowers, small gift, or a cake
- **Service Awards:** Service Awards are given for years of service with the organization
- **Adult Recognitions:** Adult Recognitions are given for outstanding service that leaves a lasting legacy or impact

How Do I Know Who to Recognize?

1. List all the people who helped you the past membership year (October 1, 2023 - present) in Girl Scouts.
2. Write next to each name what kind of recognition is most meaningful and applicable for the individual. Would it be fun for them to receive recognition in front of a crowd? Would they appreciate recognition in private?
3. Highlight the individuals who went above and beyond. Should they receive a service unit or council recognition? Only nominate an individual or group for one award per year.
4. Mark the one person who stands out to you the most and nominate that person for recognition.
5. Search the Past Awardee Lists by Award to ensure the volunteer you would like to nominate has not already received the specific award. (Please be aware that names may have changed over the years. If you need assistance determining past award recipients, please contact Customer Care.)

What Can Recognitions Do?

For the Adult Girl Scout

Recognitions help the individual appreciate their own accomplishments and the worth of their position as a part of the Girl Scout Movement.

For the Troop

Recognitions for parents at the troop level build a base of support for the Girl Scouts in the troop.

For the Service Unit

Recognitions can be part of the service unit's traditions and contribute to the continuity of Girl Scouting.

For the Council

Recognitions acknowledge the hard work of the "behind-the-scenes" volunteers who keep the system working.



Levels of Adult Recognition

Service Unit Level Recognitions

Service units may recognize outstanding volunteers and community members or groups with a variety of awards. Service Unit Teams play a huge role in the nomination and formal recognition process for these awards by:

- Providing information to volunteers within their service unit about the kinds of recognitions available
- Planning implementing, and sharing information about the award nomination procedures
- Creating and prepping service unit certificates
- Planning the times and methods for the formal recognition of awardees

Service unit recognitions can include the following ideas: First-Year Leader Certificate, 5- or 10-Year Service Certificate, and Outstanding Leader Award Pin. These are only ideas for the Service Unit to use for local recognition.

Council Level Recognitions

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois provides many opportunities to recognize exceptional individuals or groups whose leadership or service had a measurable impact at the council- or movement-wide level. There is a rigorous nomination and selection process for most council-level recognitions which, along with award descriptions are outlined in this handbook.

Council-level recognitions include: Volunteer of Excellence Award, Appreciation Award Pin, Honor Award Pin, President's Award, Thanks Badge, Thanks Badge II, and Hall of Fame. The nomination criteria for each award are provided in this handbook.





Volunteer Recognition Ceremony

Every year, the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois recognizes and celebrates our outstanding volunteers and community members during our Annual Meeting's Volunteer Recognition Ceremony. This inspirational and much anticipated event showcases the exceptional acts of service and leadership performed within our Council during the previous membership year.

The annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony only highlights council-level recognitions. Service unit level recognitions may be awarded at separate ceremonies or events hosted by local service units.

The next Volunteer Recognition Ceremony, which will recognize awardees for the 2024 membership year (October 1, 2023 - present), will be held on **April 26, 2025**.

Did You Know?

88% of volunteers believe their life is better because they volunteer with Girl Scouts.

94% of volunteers say they have made new friends because they volunteer.






Two-thirds believe their volunteer experience has helped them professionally.

95% of Girl Scout volunteers are happy knowing they are making girls' lives better.








Council-level Recognitions

Recognition	Recognizes	Support Documents	Form of Award
Appreciation Award Pin	An individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience with impact on one geographical area of service	Completed online nomination form	
Volunteer of Excellence Award	A volunteer who has contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with Girl Scouts to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, or who has contributed outstanding service in support of the council's mission delivery goals to youth and adult members	Completed online nomination form	
Honor Award Pin	An individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience which as had measurable impact on two or more geographic areas of service, allowing the council to reach and surpass its mission delivery goals	Completed online nomination form	
President's Award Pin	A service-delivery team or committee whose exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience surpassed team goals and resulted in significant, measurable impact toward reaching the council's overall goals	Completed online nomination form	
Thanks Badge	An individual whose ongoing commitment, leadership, and service had an exceptional, measurable impact on meeting the mission delivery goals and priorities of the council or the entire Girl Scout organization	Completed recommendation form from nominator	



Council-level Recognitions

Recognition	Recognizes	Support Documents	Form of Award
Thanks Badge II	Continuing service of adult member who has already received the Thanks Badge and who continued to provide exemplary service in a leadership role, resulting in a measurable impact that benefited the council or entire Girl Scout organization	Completed recommendation form from nominator	
Hall of Fame	Recognizes a lifetime commitment to the Girl Scout Movement within Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois. The recipient has supported GSNI in a variety of ways including advocating for Girl Scouts in the community, volunteering in the variety of roles, and financially supporting GSNI. No more than 2 individuals shall be inducted in the Hall of Fame in a given year	Completed recommendation form from nominator plus 2 additional recommendation forms	
Belonging Award	Activities or projects performed by either an individual (Girl Scout youth or Girl Scout adult), troop/group, or service unit that has made significant contributions to advancing GSNI as a welcoming organization to our diverse members and potential members.	Completed online nomination form	



Council Level



Appreciation Award Pin

The Adult Appreciation Award Pin recognizes an individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience with impact on one geographic area of service.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout
- The service the candidate performed was between the dates of October 1, 2023, to present
- The service performed by the candidate exceeded expectations and had a measurable impact on one or more geographical areas of service

Examples of Candidate

- A volunteer organized and led a Higher Award workshop for Juniors, Ambassadors, increasing engagement and participation in a neighborhood
- After noticing many leaders in the neighborhood were struggling with implementing Journeys, a volunteer organized a Journey Workshop to help leaders get the most out of the experience. The workshop made it easier for troops to incorporate Journeys into their troop activities and made the implementation of the Journeys run smoother.

Procedure for Nomination

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.





Volunteer of Excellence Award

The Volunteer of Excellence Award Pin recognizes volunteers who have contributed outstanding service while directly partnering with Girl Scouts in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through the use of the National Program Portfolio or in support of the council's mission delivery to youth and adult members.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout
- The service the candidate performed was between the dates of October 1, 2023 to present
- The candidate completed a term of service and all requirements for the position
- The candidate's performance was beyond the expectations of the position to deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and supported the council's mission-delivery goals in one or more of the following functional areas: membership development/community cultivation, volunteer relations and support, program, fund development, or council support service

Examples of Candidate

- Wanting to see more Girl Scouts earn higher level awards, a volunteer worked closely with council to develop materials for the Gold Award. The volunteer worked hard to ensure the Girl Scouts understood the process and helped them reach their goals. Recognizing the importance of youth and adult retention, the volunteer has written many modules and workshops for trainers
- When GSUSA announced the new Girl Scout Trailblazer program, this volunteer worked closely with council to promote the program by developing plans and materials to help Girl Scouts build outdoor confidence, interest, and competence, while understanding the true meaning of environmental stewardship. Afterward, this volunteer continued to mentor troop leadership to growing the program

Procedure for Recommendation

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.



Honor Award Pin

The Honor Award Pin recognizes an individual's exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience which has had measurable impact on two or more geographic areas of service, allowing the council to reach and surpass its mission delivery goals.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout
- The service the candidate performed was between the dates of October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024
- The service performed by the candidate exceeded expectations and had a measurable impact on two or more geographical areas of service

Examples of Candidate

- A Service Unit Manager and Council Trainer set out to educate troop leadership on the benefits of participating in troop travel experiences. The volunteer worked with council to coordinate materials and facilitated Troop Trips courses council wide. This resulted in increased troop trip applications and countless travel experiences for Girl Scouts
- After declining participation at a service unit event, a volunteer took charge to revitalize it. The event was traditionally only offered to 5th grade Girl Scouts. The volunteer decided to open the event to Juniors and older and modify activities to peak the interest of Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors. This event has since been offered every year and retention has improved throughout the service unit

Procedure for Nomination

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.



Thanks Badge

The Thanks Badge honors an individual whose ongoing commitment, leadership, and service had an exceptional, measurable impact on meeting the mission-delivery goals and priorities of the council or the entire Girl Scout organization.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout
- The service the candidate completed was between the dates of October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024
- The outstanding service performed by the candidate resulted in outcomes that benefited the council or the entire Girl Scout organization, and was so significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate

Examples of Candidate

- A volunteer who has a passion for training other volunteers, as evidenced by their many positions in the service unit. Along with being a Council Trainer, the volunteer personally mentored new troop leaders to help them sort through all the information they received in the first few months. This volunteer also served as Service Unit Manager, and assisted the service unit with an event in which record numbers of Girl Scouts and adults participated. In addition, they went beyond the local level by regularly volunteering as Camp Director and at council events.

Procedure for Nomination

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.



Thanks Badge II

The Thanks Badge II honors a previous Thanks Badge recipient who continued to provide exemplary service in a leadership role, resulting in a measurable impact that benefited the Council or entire Girl Scout organization.

Criteria

- The candidate is an active, registered adult Girl Scout
- The candidate has previously received the Thanks Badge
- The service the candidate completed was between the dates of October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024
- The outstanding service performed by the candidate resulted in outcomes that benefited the council or the entire Girl Scout organization and so went significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate

Examples of Candidate

- After receiving the Thanks Badge, this volunteer continued to be dedicated to Girl Scouts. The volunteer served as chair on various service unit event committees and as Service Unit Manager for multiple terms, and taught numerous workshops and modules in an extra effort to bring more resources and tools to other volunteers. In everything, this individual worked to ensure Girl Scouts came first and that programming was educational and fun. The volunteer served the Girl Scout organization as a whole by sharing their Girl Scout experience with others around the country as a delegate at the National Convention. In addition, this volunteer continued to bridge the gap between seasoned volunteers while supporting new leaders

Procedure for Nomination

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.



GSNI's Hall of Fame

The Hall of Fame Award recognizes a lifetime commitment to the Girl Scout Movement within Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois. The recipient has supported GSNI in a variety of ways including advocating for Girl Scouts in the community, volunteering in a variety of roles, and financially supporting GSNI. No more than two individuals shall be inducted into the Hall of Fame in a given year. The Hall of Fame Award may be awarded posthumously.

Criteria

- The candidate has been a member for at least 20 years
- The candidate has delivered service that far exceeds the expectations of any position
- Has had long-lasting impact on the Girl Scout organization
- Has made a financial commitment to GSNI in the current or previous year

Examples of Candidate

- A volunteer who has a passion for training other volunteers, as evidenced by their many positions in the service unit. Along with being a Council Trainer, the volunteer personally mentored new troop leaders to help them sort through all the information they received in the first few months. This volunteer also served as Service Unit Manager, and assisted the service unit with an event in which record numbers of Girl Scouts and adults participated. In addition, the volunteer went beyond the local level by regularly volunteering as Camp Director and at council events

Procedures for Nomination and Endorsement

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form. Two other adult members complete the Hall of Fame Endorsement form to be submitted to GSNI.



President's Award Pin

The President's Award recognizes the efforts of a Service Delivery Team or committee whose exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience surpassed team goals and resulted in a significant, measurable impact toward reaching the council's overall goals.

Criteria

- All Service Delivery Team or committee members are active, registered adult Girl Scouts
- All Service Delivery Team or committee members met all requirements and expectations of the positions held
- The Service Delivery Team or committee significantly contributed to meeting one or more of the council's mission-delivery or committee goals
- The Service Delivery Team or committee reflects the diversity of the target audience or area it serves, in youth and adult membership, in all pathways offered

Examples of Candidate

- A Service Unit Team saw an opportunity to recruit more Girl Scouts within their schools. They implemented a new approach to recruitment by hosting individual school recruitments and then having one large recruitment night for the whole neighborhood. This allowed schools a second chance to get more members interested in Girl Scouts. This new method of recruitment led to an overall increase in youth membership
- This Service Unit Team worked together to overcome the limitations of recruiting Girl Scouts during a pandemic by promoting and facilitating virtual recruitment events throughout the neighborhood. This helped the service unit maintain the high membership levels that were seen in previous years

Procedure for Recommendation

Service Unit Team Members or any adult member nominates candidates by completing GSNI's online nomination form.



Belonging Award

The annual Belonging Award recognizes activities or projects performed by either an individual (Girl Scout youth or Girl Scout adult), troop/group, or service unit that has made significant contributions to advancing GSNI as a welcoming organization to our diverse members and potential members. This award is open to those who have made an exceptional dedication to advancing GSNI's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access goals and objectives.

Diversity refers to the presence of variety within the organization. It includes race, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, disability, class, or age. **Equity** refers to concepts of fairness and justice. More specifically, equity usually also includes a focus on societal disparities and allocating resources and decision-making authority to groups that have historically been disadvantaged, and taking into consideration a person's unique circumstances, adjusting treatment accordingly so that the end result is equal. Finally, **inclusion** refers to creating an organizational culture that creates an experience where all members feel their voices will be heard, and a sense of belonging and integration.

All nominees will be recognized – letter through the mail notifying them if they were nominated and meet the criteria. The awardees will be announced at the Annual Meeting. Troop and Service Unit awardees will receive \$100 in recognition for their work. Individuals will receive an ornamental award with their name etched on it.

Can be earned every two years for youth members as an individual awardee and troops.

Can be earned every 5 years for adult members as an individual awardee and Service Units.

Criteria

- You may self-nominate.
- Nominee(s) must be registered member of Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
- The nominee's(s') activity or project was completed between October 1, 2023, through present day. You can submit a completed nomination form by February 1, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.
- The activity or project was stand-alone, and not also used to earn a badge or other award.
- **Significance and Creativity** – The project or activity must demonstrate inclusive leadership and commitment to the development and embedding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access with their troop/Community or school/Service Unit/council. The project or activity must be unique in addressing key issues of diversity and inclusiveness.
- **Impact** – The nominee's(s') project or activity must have measurable outcomes that are specific, observable, and quantifiable results that can be used to assess the success of the project or activity. This project or activity must also be able to be replicated by others in the council.
- **Sustainability** – The nominee's(s') project or activity must be sustainable and continue to make an influence after it is completed.

Procedure for Recommendation

- Coordinate the completion of the required nomination form. This can be submitted by the same person or by different people as long as the nominator is familiar with the candidate's volunteer service. Note that all nominee's(s') projects or activities will be printed in the Annual Meeting and Recognition Event booklet.
- You can submit a completed nomination form by February 1, 2025 by 11:59 p.m. The nominations will be reviewed in mid-February by the Belonging Award Committee.
- Incomplete form or weak nomination may result in disqualification of the nomination.
- Complete the nomination form on the Adult Awards and Recognition webpage.



Submission Process

Adult Recognition Submission Process

After studying the criteria and determining the award you wish to recommend, please follow this procedure:

1. Gather information related to criteria for the award for which you want to nominate the volunteer. You may need to talk to others in your troop or service unit to ensure you have gathered enough information for the nomination. If the award requires an endorsement letter, contact references and share the award criteria and online endorsement form link with them.
2. Complete the online nomination form for the Adult Recognition Award for which you are nominating the volunteer. All online nomination forms can be found on GSNI's Recognition page. Nominations are due by February 1, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. Nominations requiring an endorsement form/letter will not be considered submitted until both have been received.
3. The GSNI Recognition Committee reviews all nominations and approves them before forwarding them to GSNI's Board of Directors for final approval. A decision letter will be sent to the nominator, and an approval letter will be sent to the nominee.

The time frame for this nomination term is for services performed from October 1, 2023 - present. Please note, some of the higher awards will ask for information prior to this time frame.

Tips for Nominating/Recommending Candidates

- Remember that candidates are nominated for council-level awards based on their achievements from the previous membership year to the present; for example to recognize a candidate's accomplishments from the 2024 membership year (October 2023 - present), that candidate would need to be nominated by the cut-off date for the spring Volunteer Recognition Ceremony in 2025
- Consult the Past Awardee Lists by Award, to see if the candidate you wish to nominate has received a particular award before: an individual may only receive any given council-level award once. Committees or Council Groups may receive the President's Award every 3 years
- Each Nomination Form must offer a distinct perspective on the candidate's suitability for the award - do not copy text from the candidate's other Nomination Forms
- Only one candidate may be nominated per submission on the online nomination form



Selection Process

Council-Level Recognitions

Council-level recognition awardees are chosen by the Recognition Committee in February, once all nomination materials for each candidate have been received by council. This committee includes volunteers from different council regions, along with a staff representative to help with administration.

The Recognition Committee reviews all nominations for each award and confirms that candidates meet all eligibility criteria. The Recognition Committee may ask nominators for more information with a short timeline to ensure each candidate is eligible for the award or suggest the candidate to receive a different award instead if necessary.

Award recipients are notified of their forthcoming recognitions, after all award selections are made. Awardees should plan to attend the Annual Meeting in the Spring to receive their awards and be recognized by the Board of Directors and their Girl Scout peers.

Sample Nomination Questions

All nomination forms use the same questions to gather specific information about the volunteer's work based on the criteria of each award. Here are the questions you will need to answer on each form as you gather your information and details to submit.

1. Basic information for both the Candidate and Nominator:
 - a. Full Name (As is listed in GSNI's system. No nicknames.)
 - b. Service Unit
 - c. Address
 - d. Email
 - e. Phone Number
 - f. Current Volunteer Positions
2. Is the candidate a registered Girl Scout member now and throughout the time period when the service was given?
3. Please describe the activity/activities this candidate implemented to support the delivery of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) that encourages girls to discover themselves, connect with others, and take action to make the world a better place. Guided by supportive adults and peers, Girl Scouts engage in age-appropriate activities that are girl-led, cooperative and hands-on in their troop, service unit, or the council. Give specific examples that meet the award requirements.
4. In what community/service unit area was this service delivered?
5. Who was impacted? For adults, include how many in what roles. For Girl Scouts, include how many and what grade level(s).
6. How were they impacted? What outcome did the Girl Scouts/adults experience, or what did they say they remembered/learned about the experience or activity?
7. To the best of your knowledge, what position did the candidate hold, and how did the candidate's service go above and beyond the expectations for the position? (www.girlscoutsni.org/volunteerroles) What were the goals or expectations? Use specific examples to support their nominations.