



# Volunteer Appreciation and Adult Awards Playbook

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## Why Recognition is Important

### **Adult volunteers make Girl Scouts happen.**

Volunteers selflessly give their time and effort to help build girls of courage, confidence, and character. Troop Leaders/ Troop Co-Leaders, product managers, chaperones, and incredible community partners each bring something unique to the table, and together, they make everything possible. They're not just volunteers; they're adventure guides, cookie connoisseurs, champions of fun, and much more!

### **Our Girl Scout volunteers have an enormous impact.**

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council (GSGC) volunteers are the everyday heroes and guides who introduce girls to life-changing experiences and help them discover their passions. Girl Scout volunteers make a meaningful difference in the world through motivating, inspiring and mentoring girls, and in many cases, each other.

### **Showing appreciation for our volunteers is an integral part of Girl Scouts.**

Our volunteers work hard to create a safe and fun environment for Girl Scouts to learn how to lead. They spend countless hours juggling their volunteer duties alongside their own busy lives so our girl members can have an amazing Girl Scout experience. Recognizing and celebrating a volunteer's dedication strengthens our Girl Scout community.

# GSUSA Adult Awards



## Volunteer of Excellence Pin

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers who have provided outstanding service while partnering directly with girls at every age to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, or who have contributed outstanding service in support of mission delivery to girl and adult members.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who are in good standing and have provided outstanding service for one or more years.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Clearly perform beyond expectations for their Volunteer role.
- Go above and beyond to deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) directly to girls.
- Support one or more council goals.

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Volunteer of Excellence Pin requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and two letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate a volunteer for the Volunteer of Excellence Pin HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Volunteers are at the heart of Girl Scouts. This award is a way to express gratitude to those who create meaningful opportunities that positively impact girls, inspire fellow volunteers, and leave a lasting mark on their community.



## Appreciation Pin

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for service that is above and beyond the expectations for the position held and has made an impact on a geographic area within the council's jurisdiction.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who are in good standing and have provided outstanding service for two or more years.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- ✿ Provide exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)
- ♥ Provide service that has had a measurable impact on at least one geographic area of service (i.e. community)
- ✿ Make a direct impact to allow council to reach and surpass its mission-delivery goals for that community.

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Appreciation Pin requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and two letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate a volunteer for the Appreciation Pin HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

This award recognizes volunteers who go above and beyond to strengthen their local Girl Scout community and the ties between troops, while also encouraging girls to make a lasting impact in their local area.



## Honor Pin

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for service that is above and beyond the expectations for the position held that have made an impact on two or more geographic areas within the council's jurisdiction.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who are in good standing and have provided outstanding service for two or more years.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least two of the following criteria:

- ✿ Provide exemplary service in support of delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)
- ◆ Provide service that has had a measurable impact on two or more geographic areas of service (i.e. communities, counties, etc.)
- ▲ Make a direct impact to allow council to reach and surpass its mission-delivery goals

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Honor Pin requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and two letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate a volunteer for the Honor Pin HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

This award recognizes volunteers who go above and beyond to strengthen their local Girl Scout community and the ties between troops, as well as encourage girls to widen their scope of service beyond their local communities.



## Thanks Badge I

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for their outstanding service in a leadership role to the Girl Scouts of Gateway Council or the Girl Scout organization over the last four years.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who are in good standing and have provided outstanding service for four or more years.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least two of the following criteria:

- ◆ Successfully held at least two adult volunteer roles with the Girl Scout Movement
- Volunteer significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate
- ♥ Demonstrate a measurable impact that advances the goals and priorities of the entire Council or Girl Scout Movement

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Thanks Badge I requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and four letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate a volunteer for the Thanks Badge I HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Individuals who demonstrate an ongoing commitment with the highest levels of community leadership and mission advocacy are critical to the individual communities within Girl Scouts of Gateway Council jurisdiction and the entire Girl Scout Movement.



## Thanks Badge II

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for their outstanding service to the Girl Scouts of Gateway Council or the Girl Scout organization for at least three years after receiving **Thanks Badge I**.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who are in good standing and have provided outstanding service for seven or more years.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least two of the following criteria:

- Length of service extending over a period of at least five or more cumulative years since receiving the Thanks Badge I
- Hold one or multiple volunteer roles, with sustained or increased services to the Gateway Council or broader Girl Scout Movement

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Thanks Badge II requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and two letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate a volunteer for the Thanks Badge II HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

This award honors a previous Thanks Badge recipient who has continued to increase their sphere of influence, resulting in a measurable impact that benefits the entire Girl Scout Movement.

# Girl Scouts of Gateway Council Adult Awards



## Community Trailblazer

### Overview:

To recognize the exceptional support of community partners, whether individuals or organizations, who go above and beyond to eliminate barriers for Girl Scouts in their local communities. This award honors their dedication and contributions that significantly enhance the Girl Scout experience, making it accessible and enriching for all.

### Who:

This award is designed for civic/community organizations, businesses, and individuals who are not registered Girl Scout members, but have made a meaningful impact on Girl Scouts through their ongoing or one-time support.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- ◆ Provide outstanding customer service and support to Girl Scouts, either on a continual basis or through a one-time effort.
- Serve as a strong community partner in supporting Girl Scout programming, activities, or initiatives.
- Demonstrate a commitment to eliminating barriers and increasing accessibility for Girl Scouts in their community.
- ♥ Offer resources, space, or expertise that enhances the Girl Scout experience, such as hosting troop meetings, cookie booths, large events, or workshops.

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

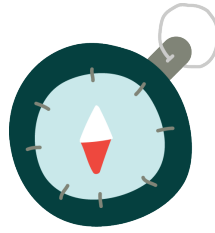
Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate a business, organization, or non-Girl Scout individual for this award. The Community Trailblazer Award requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate someone for the Community Trailblazer Award HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Strong community partnerships play a vital role in shaping positive experiences for Girl Scouts. This award is a way to express gratitude to those who create opportunities, open doors, and make Girl Scouts more accessible to all girls. Recognizing these partners helps to build lasting relationships that continue to benefit the Girl Scout Movement and the broader community.





## Compass Award

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers who provide exceptional one-on-one mentorship to other volunteers or Girl Scouts pursuing various paths within Girl Scouts, such as Higher Awards. Unlike troop leadership, which typically involves guiding a group, mentorship is a focused, intentional relationship that nurtures individual growth and helps mentees reach their next level of success in their Girl Scout career.

### Who:

This award is open to registered volunteers within Gateway Council who have demonstrated outstanding mentorship abilities.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Provide dedicated mentorship to a Girl Scout through the process of a Higher Award or through other award/progression paths.
- Offer sustained mentorship to another volunteer, supporting their growth and development over an extended period.
- Facilitate specialized training or knowledge-sharing sessions that empower other volunteers on an individual basis.

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may nominate an adult Girl Scout member for this award. The Compass Award requires one nomination from an adult Girl Scout member and two letters of endorsement from adult persons other than the nominator. The Volunteer Recognition Committee reviews nominations for approval or denial.

[Nominate someone for the Compass Award HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Mentorship is a powerful force in the Girl Scout community, helping individuals gain confidence, develop skills, and achieve their goals. By recognizing outstanding mentors, we celebrate the invaluable contributions of those who invest in the growth and success of others, strengthening the foundation of Girl Scouts for future generations.

# Years of Service Recognition



## Years of Service Pin

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for their total number of active volunteer service to Girl Scouts.

### Who:

This award is open to all actively registered Girl Scout Volunteers.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet the following criteria:

- ✘ Must be a registered member of Girl Scouts
- This pin is available in five-year increments

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may self-identify and report their years of service via the Years of Service recognition form.

[Submit Years of Service recognition form HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Celebrating the years of service creates a sense of pride for individuals who give of themselves for the Girl scout Movement, and create safe spaces for girls to grow, learn and play.



## Membership Numerals (Also known as Tenure Pin)

### Overview:

To recognize volunteers for their total number of years (not necessarily continuous or consecutive) of registered membership, both as a girl and an adult, in any Girl Scout Council. This pin is available in five-year increments.

### Who:

This award is open to all actively registered Girl Scout Volunteers.

### Criteria:

Nominees should meet the following criteria:

- ✿ Proof of girl and/or adult membership years in any Girl Scout council.
- ◆ This pin is available in five-year increments.

### Nomination, Approval and Award Process:

Any registered adult Girl Scout member may apply for the tenure pin.

[Submit request for Membership Numerals \(Tenure Pin\) HERE.](#)

### What Makes This Award Special:

Celebrating the combined years of service and membership creates a sense of belonging and longevity to the Girl Scouts organization.

## Timeline

### **May 1-June 30**

#### **Award Nominations open**

Nomination forms open via the [GSGC website](#). Review the available awards and their requirements as most will require a nomination form and endorsement letters.

*All components are due by June 30th.*

### **June-July**

#### **Committee reviews award applications**

The Volunteer Recognitions Committee will evaluate all award applications to determine the recipients of each award.

### **August**

#### **Award recipients announced/honored at local level kick off events**

Award recipients will be notified in the month of August and celebrated in many ways - some include, Troop Scoop announcement, Gateway Connect announcement, Website Highlight, and personal touchpoints. Additionally, it is encouraged locally that awardees are celebrated and honored at local new membership year kick off events.

### **April (of the following year)**

#### **Prior year awardees recognized at Spring Volunteer Conference (SVC)**

Join us at Spring Volunteer Conference where we will honor award recipients from the past award cycle.

# How to Nominate

## 1. Identify a Volunteer to Recognize

Think of someone who has made a significant impact on Girl Scouts, troops, or the community. Awards are intended to build on each other, starting with Volunteer of Excellence and moving forward.

## 2. Review the Adult Recognition Guide

Read through each award on pages three through ten to determine which award best matches the achievements of your nominee. Keep in mind that some awards, like Thanks Badge II, have a prerequisite.

## 3. Fill out the Nomination Form

Provide clear examples of the nominee's impact and contributions that align with their achievements for the selected award. Nomination forms can be found on each page and below.

## 4. Gather Endorsements

All endorsements must be submitted as part of the nomination. Please include the appropriate number of endorsements to support the selected award nomination. Nominations without the required number of endorsements will be considered incomplete. See page twelve for additional information on how to submit a great endorsement letter.

## 5. Submit Your Nomination

[Volunteer of Excellence Pin Nomination Form](#)

[Appreciation Pin Award Nomination Form](#)

[Honor Pin Nomination Form](#)

[Thanks Badge 1 Nomination Form](#)

[Thanks Badge 2 Nomination Form](#)

[Years of Service Pin](#)

[Tenure Pin Award Application](#)

[Gateway Compass Nomination Form](#)

[Gateway Community Trailblazer Nomination Form](#)

## 6. Submit Your Endorsement Letters

[Submit Endorsement Letters Here](#)

# Tips for Writing Letters of Endorsement

Make your Nominee shine with a glowing letter of endorsement! Use the following tips to write a strong endorsement:

## Be Specific and Detailed:

Explain your relationship to the Nominee, and highlight the Nominee's contributions with clear examples that demonstrate how their service has exceeded expectations.

- How long have you known the Nominee?
- In what capacity have you known the Nominee?

## Tell Their Story:

Share the Nominee's Girl Scout journey, including their positions, length of service, and personal impact. Connect their efforts to the mission of building courage, confidence, and character.

- How long have they been a Girl Scout?
- What part of their Girl Scout journey has inspired you?

## Show Their Impact:

Explain how their work benefited others—whether it's Girl Scouts, troops, communities, or the broader movement. Include meaningful details such as events organized, girls mentored, or funds raised.

- ◆ What activities have you observed or worked on with the Nominee?
- What are the results of their efforts?

## Align the Award Criteria:

Ensure your nomination reflects the specific criteria for the award. Demonstrate how the Nominee meets or surpasses these standards.

- What award are they being nominated for, and what awards have they already won?
- ♥ What is unique about their contribution?

## Enlist Support for Endorsements:

Enlist others who have worked closely with the Nominee to write and submit endorsements. These additional perspectives can help strengthen your nomination.

# Standard Format for a Strong Endorsement

When writing your endorsement letter, consider following this format:

## 1. Introduction

Introduce yourself, your relationship to the Nominee, and how long you've known them.

## 2. Example of Action

Share a detailed story or example that demonstrates the Nominee's leadership, creativity, or initiative.

## 3. Alignment with the Award

Connect the Nominee's efforts to the mission of Girl Scouts and explain how they meet the criteria for the award.

## 4. Closing Statement

End with a strong statement of support that helps summarize how the shared examples exemplify the volunteer going above and beyond in their role and/or meets the criteria of the award.

## Strong Example: Endorsement for the Volunteer of Excellence Award

I am thrilled to endorse Theresa Trefoil, who I've had the privilege of working alongside for the past four years as a fellow troop leader in Community 1. Theresa has been a shining light in our community, consistently going above and beyond to deliver the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to every girl in her troop—and beyond.

One standout moment came during last year's Bridging and Court of Awards ceremony. Theresa organized the entire event, creating a meaningful and memorable experience for over 60 Girl Scouts and their families. She worked with the girls to help them lead the ceremony themselves, reinforcing public speaking and leadership skills. She even coordinated a service project during the event where girls collected books for local shelters—demonstrating Girl Scout values in action.

Theresa has been a registered Girl Scout volunteer for over 7 years and currently serves as a troop leader, troop product manager, and day camp co-chair. What sets her apart is her constant commitment to helping girls grow in confidence. One of her shyest Daisies is now leading songs at community meetings—thanks to Theresa's patient mentorship and creative troop activities.

Theresa exemplifies the criteria for the Volunteer of Excellence Award through her consistent delivery of impactful programming, her mentorship of new leaders, and her service that extends well beyond her troop. Her actions truly reflect the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character.

I strongly recommend Theresa for this recognition. Her leadership, passion, and dedication to girls' growth make her an outstanding candidate.

## Weak Example: Endorsement for the Volunteer of Excellence Award

I'd like to nominate Jen because she's a really nice person and always shows up. She's been a leader for a while now and the girls like her. She helps out when she can and is very friendly. She also worked cookie booths and went to a campout once. I think she would be happy to get this award.

### Why this one misses the mark:

- ✦ Lacks detail and specific examples
- ◆ Doesn't explain the impact of Jen's work
- ✖ Doesn't align with the award criteria
- Offers no clear connection to the Girl Scout mission
- ♡ Sounds more like a casual compliment than a thoughtful endorsement

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who can nominate?

Any registered adult member of Girl Scouts can nominate another registered adult member for a GSUSA award. These awards are specifically intended to recognize the service and impact of adult volunteers.

While actively registered girl members aren't eligible for these particular awards, we encourage them to explore the variety of Girl Scout awards and recognitions available just for them—from badges and journeys to Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards. There are so many ways for girls to be celebrated for their leadership and achievements!

### How do I know which award to choose?

Review the descriptions in this guide along with your Nominee's acts of service to match your them to the best award. The awards are designed to recognize service at different levels of impact. For example, the Volunteer of Excellence award is for a volunteer who has impacted girls at a troop level; whereas the Appreciation Pin is more appropriate for a volunteer who has impacted an entire community or region. In all cases, the volunteer should demonstrate going above and beyond while serving in that role.

### Are the awards given in progression?

Yes, the GSUSA awards are designed to follow a progression. The intention is to recognize volunteers as they grow in their roles and deepen their impact within the Girl Scout Movement. The progression typically begins with the Volunteer of Excellence award, which honors those who have contributed outstanding service in delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience directly to girls or in supporting the council's mission in a meaningful way.



The progression isn't strictly linear, but the idea is to align recognition with the scope and sustainability of a volunteer's impact. This approach not only honors volunteers appropriately but also encourages continued growth and leadership within the organization.

### **Can I nominate more than one person?**

Yes, but a separate nomination form is required for each nominee, along with separate letters of endorsement.

### **When are nominations due?**

The nomination form is open from May 1st through June 30th.

### **Who should write letters of endorsement?**

Anyone not related or married to the nominated volunteer and who supports and can verify the nomination with a personal statement of their own. Also, girls who have directly benefitted from the nominated volunteer's contributions (i.e., troop members) can endorse volunteer nominations.

### **Should I have all letters of endorsement prior to starting the nomination?**

Yes—ideally! Having all your letters of endorsement ready before starting the nomination helps make the process smoother and ensures a strong, complete submission. It also helps respect everyone's time, including the reviewers. However, we understand that sometimes timing doesn't line up perfectly. You can submit the nomination form first and follow up with endorsement forms later. Just keep in mind that all parts of the nomination—including endorsements—must be submitted by June 30th in order to be considered.

### **Are all nominations approved if submitted by the deadline?**

Not necessarily. While we're grateful for every nomination submitted, all nominations are carefully reviewed and may not always be approved. Some common reasons a nomination might not move forward include:

- Missing the required number of endorsements
- Incomplete or vague nomination responses
- The volunteer previously received the same award for the same role or service

We also rely on guidance from our Volunteer Recognitions Committee to thoughtfully determine awardees each year. Their insight ensures that recognitions are meaningful, consistent, and reflects the spirit of the award criteria. If you are interested in learning more about the Volunteer Recognitions Committee, please reach out to Volunteer Experience via Customer Care.

### **Can someone win the same award again?**

As these awards are intended to build on each other in progression, it's unlikely that a volunteer would be eligible to receive the same award more than once. Each award is designed to recognize a new or deeper level of impact within the Girl Scout Movement.

That said, if a volunteer's service significantly evolves or expands in a way that demonstrates a renewed and substantial impact at the same level, their eligibility can be reviewed— but in most cases, the focus should be on nominating them for the next award in the progression.

# Create a Year-Round Culture of Appreciation

You don't have to wait for formal awards to say thank you- some of the most meaningful moments of recognition happen in the everyday.

Whether you're a troop leader, co-leader, cookie coordinator, or a supportive parent who's always ready to lend a hand, **everyone deserves to feel seen and appreciated** for the role they play in making the Girl Scout experience possible.

Here are a few simple, heartfelt ways to show your appreciation all year long:

## ■ Send a Thoughtful E-Card

Use our free Girl Scout e-cards to thank someone for their time, their energy, or just their positive attitude. It only takes a minute, but it can make someone's whole day. [View E-cards HERE.](#)

## ■ Say Thank You- Directly and Sincerely

A one-on-one thank you goes a long way. A quick message, text, or in-person shout-out like, "Thanks for helping with carpool today- it made things so much easier!" makes people feel valued.

## ■ Give a Shout-Out in Front of Others

Recognition doesn't have to be formal. Celebrate volunteers and parents during troop meetings, in your troop emails, on Rallyhood, or even in your group chat. Public appreciation helps build a positive, connected community.

## ■ Celebrate the Small Wins

Did someone step up to lead an activity, pick up extra snacks, or brave the rain at camp pickup? Let them know it mattered. Gratitude for everyday contributions keeps people feeling motivated and connected.

## ■ Invite Others to Show Appreciation Too

Encourage girls to thank the adults in their lives who make Girl Scouts possible. A handmade card or kind word from a girl can be incredibly powerful.

Creating a culture of appreciation isn't just about awards- it's about building a community where everyone feels like their contributions matter. A little thank you can go a long way toward keeping spirits high and volunteers engaged.