



# Girl Scout Gold Award Ceremony



**June 4, 2023**

10:30am-12:00pm: Girl Scouts Change the World Expo

12:45pm-2:00pm: Gold Award Ceremony

**Courtyard by Marriott Waterbury Downtown**

63 Grand Street

Waterbury, CT 06702



# Gold Award Girl Scouts Change the World

Gold Award Girl Scouts are change-makers. They have changed the world, changed their lives, and earned the most prestigious award in Girl Scouting.

To achieve the Gold Award, a Girl Scout identifies an issue in their community, drafts a plan to address a root cause, and leads a team of volunteers to implement it. When complete, the Gold Award Girl Scout and their team have made a sustainable impact on the world that continues to last beyond their involvement.

It's a huge accomplishment that also impacts the Gold Award Girl Scout as a person. How they see the world—and how the world sees them—is forever changed. It's also a credential that will be with them for the rest of their life; having the Girl Scout Gold Award on a high school transcript or resumé can make a Girl Scout stand out when it comes to college admissions, scholarship applications, internships, and job interviews.

# Gold Award Ceremony

**10:30-12:15:** Girl Scouts Change the World Expo

**12:00-12:45:** Lunch

**12:45:** Gold Award Ceremony

**1:00:** Remarks and Presentation of Gold Award  
Certificates, Letters, and Proclamations  
Diana Mahoney & Pamela Scagliarini

**1:30:** Keynote, Representative Jillian Gilchrest

**1:40:** Presentation of Gold Award Scholarships,  
Diana Mahoney & Pamela Scagliarini

**1:50:** Ceremony close

# We Are Girl Scouts



Girl Scouts bring their dreams to life as they work together to build a better world. Through programs from coast to coast, Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges—whether they want to climb to the top of a tree or the top of their class, lace up their boots for a hike or advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends. Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors, and millions of alums, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and make changes that affect the issues most important to them.



## Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.



## Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:  
To serve God\* and my country,  
To help people at all times,  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.



## Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be  
honest and fair,  
friendly and helpful,  
considerate and caring,  
courageous and strong,  
and responsible for what I say and  
do, and to respect myself and others,  
respect authority,  
use resources wisely,  
make the world a better place,  
and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

\*Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.

# Gold Award Girl Scouts



**Samira Ayoub**  
HOPE Squad  
Wilton, CT

Samira addressed the critical issue of mental health and suicide prevention by creating a HOPE Squad at her high school. The United Way provided a grant to cover the club's initial training costs—training student leaders to recognize warning signs of suicide and support those peers in need. As an established club, it will continue with school district funding.



**Jocelyn Bazuro**  
Using Fidgets to Deal with Anxiety  
Sandy Hook, CT

Jocelyn learned about the need for children and teens to have ways to deal with their anxiety. She decided to make a video and hold a workshop on how to make fidget objects that help ease anxiety. Her video, with over 100 views, was posted on a number of websites and sent to several mental health workers to use in their work.



**Alyssa Bredefeld**  
Student Promises  
Higganum, CT

After recognizing the need for activities that promote inclusivity and diversity, Alyssa purchased the book: *I Promise*, by LeBron James for each grade at her local elementary school. She developed lesson plans and videos for students and teachers and painted a mural with the words “We Are Family” at her school. Students’ promises of kindness and hard work were written on their handprints and hung on the mural. The school is happy to continue the project by adding to the existing 281 student handprints.



**Sofia Calzone**  
Diversity Libraries  
Stratford, CT

Sofia learned that systemic racism impacted who has equitable access to diverse literature. She then teamed up with her school administration to provide free access to more diverse novels for the elementary and high school student body. The school board has agreed to help continue stocking and promoting diversified reading materials.





## **Kayleigh Carson**

Revitalization of Veterans of Foreign Wars Park  
Seymour, CT

Kayleigh wanted to address mental health during these stressful times in the world. She created a labyrinth for people to explore, relax, and destress. The Seymour Land Trust has added the park to their spring cleaning list and the local police have added it to their daily drive.



## **Gisella Castagna**

Monitoring Mercury Pollution in Dragonfly Larvae  
Redding, CT

Gisella learned there was a lack of awareness about how mercury pollution in Connecticut's waterways, lakes, rivers, and ponds harms the environment and wildlife. She addressed this knowledge gap by working with Weir Farm National Historical Park to make an informative video, design an educational handout, and develop Junior Ranger activity sheets that included ways to protect the environment. Gisella prepared and conducted a public outreach at the Friends of Weir Farm Family Fun Day. She also held a webinar for Weir Farm National Historical Park staff and volunteers with a question and answer session. The Friends of Weir Farm National Historical Park has agreed to continue engaging visitors with the activity sheets and handouts. The park will use the video and handouts for new staff and volunteers.



## **Brianna Chasse**

**#YouReflect**  
Coventry, CT

Brianna's Gold Award project was conceived during the 2019 pandemic, with a focus on isolation. She targeted bringing positivity to her community. At her school, Edwin O. Smith High School, she created monthly displays related to positivity and created a website for both digital and in-person outreach. Her project will be sustained by various student-led organizations at E. O. Smith (e.g., Sunshine Club, Deliberation and Discourse, and GSA).



## **Catherine Chester**

**Open Spaces Trail Management**  
Hebron, CT

Catherine learned that the public was unaware of her hometown of Hebron's many beautiful Open Spaces. She teamed up with community volunteers to mark trails, advertise in the town's local newspaper, and hold "Walk, Talk, and Cut" events. Volunteers as well as the town's Parks and Recreation agreed to lead her Trail Rangers program to help keep these trails clean and useable.



**Jillian Daly**  
Connecting a Community  
Naugatuck, CT

Jillian joined an Air Force Junior ROTC program at her local high school and quickly learned about the need for more connection between the school and the town. She teamed up with her local leaders, retired Air Force Veteran instructors, and the unit's members to create an online platform that educates, inspires, and connects all its visitors. The website is consistently updated and shared.



**Anna Flaherty**  
Discovering Nature with Anna  
New Fairfield, CT

Anna observed that there was an increase in elderly loneliness and isolation in her town's senior center, as well as a decline in programming. In order to revitalize this community and encourage new friendships, she partnered with the senior center to create a six-week workshop focused on the outdoors. This inspired other Girl Scout troops to join in—creating their own programs for this senior center.



**Cora Huff**  
Girls in STEM Program  
Wilton, CT

Cora experienced challenges as a girl enthusiastic about STEM, leading her to research the gender gap in STEM fields. She teamed up with her local teen center—creating a program, creating a curriculum outline, and publishing a website to support girls in STEM online. Cora’s curriculum is available at her local teen center to help encourage future girls in STEM.



**Stephanie Iwinski**  
Take Charge of Your Teeth  
Ridgefield, CT

Stephanie learned of the limited knowledge of, and access to, dental care in her community. So she worked with the Connecticut Dental Hygiene Association to compile information about accessible teeth care and caring for your teeth. The association will continue updating Stephanie’s curated information on its website and offer flyers throughout its several locations.



**Margo Katz**  
The Catholic Connection  
Branford, CT

Margo realized that her parish (St. John Bosco in Branford, CT) didn't have summer enrichment activities for their over 300 students in the Faith Formation program. So, she created a fun activity book featuring 92 unique activities—one for every day of their summer break. Margo will provide printed copies for the students at the end of the coming school year. She provided the church with digital copies and shared them online. The parish will be using this activity book for many years to come.



**Molly Landis**  
History Matters: A Lesson on the Local  
Abolitionist History of Brooklyn CT  
Brooklyn, CT

Molly knew she wanted her project to focus specifically on the history of Brooklyn, Connecticut. After researching, she devised a lesson plan about her small town's abolitionist history. Molly then worked with her town's 8th grade U.S. history teacher to implement her lesson plan into the curriculum. Molly taught the lesson herself and saw positive results from the work students turned in.



**Arwen LaPlant**  
Friends Not Foes  
Milford, CT

Arwen was fascinated with bats and snakes from an early age and wanted to educate people—especially children—on the importance of these animals to the environment, as the number of certain species has been dwindling. Arwen wrote and illustrated children’s books to bring awareness to the animals’ contributions to nature and society, crafted homemade puppets based on their original designs, and worked with a team to create ten bat houses. The local Audubon Society, library, and local Girl Scout troops have agreed to help maintain the bat houses and learning materials.



**Madelyn Lazzara**  
Love of Reading: Elementary Students  
Kensington, CT

Madelyn set out to promote reading in her community. She partnered with a local elementary school, her high school, and a national club to create a website promoting reading. This website is accessible to any person with her town’s Google account.



**Rhaili Lowe**  
Project Dive B  
Hartford, CT

Rhaili recognized the need for more diverse books in Hartford's school libraries. So she teamed up with local organizations such as SHOPBLACKCT, FOX61, HOT 93.7, and a black-owned bookstore called the Key Bookstore. Together they fostered book donations by authors of color ages 8-12 to the students of Hartford. She then created a website about Project Dive B's mission, the need for diverse books, how to create a project like this and links to further resources. A participating school will oversee the website, allowing students to edit and update information.



**Alexis Lyons**  
Darien Heritage Trail Podcast  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Alexis wanted to raise awareness about her local heritage trail. So she teamed up with the Darien Bicentennial Committee to create a podcast about the history of Darien. Her podcast was published on the town's website.



**Aditi Malpure**  
Recycle Right  
South Windsor, CT

Aditi recognized a need for guidance on properly recycling in her community. With regulations regularly changing, keeping up is difficult—leading to contaminated recycling. She addressed this problem by taking advantage of educational opportunities. She gave presentations at her town hall and elementary schools in surrounding towns. She also hosted booths at the local farmers market, apple festival, and concerts. Aditi handed out stickers with a QR code leading to Connecticut’s recycling website. These stickers will be distributed for years to come.



**Auden Masotta**  
Why Music?  
Ridgefield, CT

Auden addressed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on music programs in her community. In partnership with the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra, Auden created a Buddy Program and a welcome video for new orchestra members, fostering community through music. With the help of research from the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation, she also created an informational presentation and flyer highlighting the benefits of music education. Both resources are featured in various newsletters and websites.





## **Samara Negrin**

### **Create a Tidal Wave**

### **Trumbull, CT**

Samara sought to address the exponential human trafficking crisis by raising the ripple of awareness through her Create a Tidal Wave campaign. She connected with organizations, Exodus Road & Love 146. She began her quest to educate people on a local and global scale by giving ten lectures, holding her First Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Walk, distributing over 1,100 awareness pamphlets in multiple locations, her Create a Tidal Wave YouTube video, making 615 beaded awareness bracelets with teammates and 250 beaded key chains, as well as passing out 551 embossed campaign bracelets. Samara passed out heart-shaped Post-Its to people at lectures and throughout her campaign, asking them to write encouraging messages for the trafficked victims receiving care at Love 146. She collected 512 heart messages and displayed them in a beautiful frame, now hanging at Love 146. Throughout her campaign, Samara has reached thousands of people. She prays her ripples of awareness to continue and will create a tidal wave to crush this heinous crisis.



**Jamie Paige**  
Bethlehem Elementary School  
Garden Club  
Woodbury, CT

Jamie applied her passion for gardening to establish a gardening club to give elementary school students a hands-on experience learning about agriculture. Her after-school club met once a week to plant and maintain the garden. Those parents who assisted Jamie have agreed to host the club moving forward.



**Ella Palladino**  
Helping Paws  
Middlebury, CT

Ella recognized an opportunity to increase adoption rates by lowering stress while volunteering at the Brass City Rescue Alliance (BCRA). She strategized with the BCRA director and reviewed their marketing efforts. They worked together to renovate the dogs' spaces, and she developed a maintenance schedule. They also created a social media campaign to provide updates on dogs in need of adoption.



## **Sasha Peck**

**Encouraging Healthy Relationships  
for Everyone  
Ridgefield, CT**

Sasha learned how a lack of understanding regarding boundaries and consent links to issues like abusive relationships and sexual assault. So she focused on social learning to combat such issues. Sasha collaborated with The Center for Empowerment and Education (The Center), connecting them with Norwalk's Winston Preparatory School Connecticut (Winston Prep) to create ongoing presentation resources. These resources include an anonymous feedback form and self-paced mini-lessons, so the social learning journey started by The Center continues beyond the classroom.



## **Melody Royae**

**Shift the Focus  
Ridgefield, CT**

Melody recognized a need for legislation to limit the emissions of 'big polluters' (i.e., industrial corporations). So she conducted research and developed [shiftthefocus.org](https://www.shiftthefocus.org) to raise awareness—garnering hundreds of visits as of 2022. The Climate Accountability Institute has agreed to maintain the website for the foreseeable future.



**Elizabeth Schlein**  
Teen Mental Health Support  
Darien, CT

Elizabeth recognized the importance of increasing mental health awareness for teenagers. She developed a workshop on mental health. The curriculum helps youth understand that they are not alone, how to feel more comfortable asking for help, and how to help support friends who may be struggling. A local non-profit will continue to use her curriculum. Elizabeth also successfully advocated for a Teen Talk counselor at her high school. The Board of Education will fund the addition of a Teen Talk counselor in her school this fall.



**Lila Schlissel**  
Coping Creatively: Promoting Mental  
Health Through the Arts and Literature  
Danbury, CT

Lila recognized growing mental health concerns among her peers due to the COVID-19 crisis. So she collaborated with her high school's administration to create a club that provided materials and a space for students to cope with stress through creative expression. She put on an art show to showcase their work and raise awareness about mental health issues. Teachers and staff are committed to continuing the club and student art show.



**Elizabeth Schretzenmayer**  
Richter Park Trailhead Kiosk  
Danbury, CT

Elizabeth recognized the risks of people often hiking off the trails at Richter Park. She collaborated with the Richter Park Authority to build a trailhead kiosk. Hikers now have access to information about trails as well as how to hike safely. The Richter Park Authority will maintain the kiosk.



**Briony Sekelsky**  
Safe Spaces  
Ridgefield, CT

Briony recognized an opportunity to make her town of Ridgefield even safer. She teamed up with her local Boys & Girls Club and police department to establish Safe Spaces: places youth can go if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe while in town alone. She shared this initiative and participating locations with the community through a social media campaign—reaching an audience of over 20,000. The Boys & Girls Club of Ridgefield has agreed to sustain the project for the future.



**Kayleen Smith**  
Scoliosis Awareness and Detection  
Ridgefield, CT

Kayleen learned that early signs of scoliosis are often not detected. She collaborated with local schools to improve scoliosis awareness and increase early detection. These schools will continue to use her educational tools with students and parents.



**Jamie Spagnolo**  
Healthy Eating and Food Allergy  
Awareness  
Brookfield, CT

Jaime recognized the importance of learning healthy eating and the severity of food allergies. She built a website to educate people on these topics and share healthful, allergen-free recipes. Local teachers have agreed to use the website in classroom activities and discussions.



**Emily Strilowich**  
Autism Awareness and Acceptance  
Bethel, CT

Emily's Autism Awareness and Acceptance project focuses on sharing the point of view of an autistic female. Emily collaborated with a school art teacher and special education teacher to create a brochure, presentation, and activities to help students learn more about autism and hopefully share their knowledge with others. She presented to 3rd, 4th, and 5th-grade students and created engaging activities about her journey of being autistic. Her materials will continue to be used in classrooms to teach about autism and share an autistic person's point of view.



**Ava Tassmer**  
HK High School Trail Revamp  
Higganum, CT

Ava discovered opportunities to improve the safety of her local high school trail system. She created a team to fill in holes on the trail and worked to ensure proper water flow throughout the trails. Ava also added trail and mile markers along paths, and created a trail map. Her school has agreed to maintain the trails, add the map to its website, and provide it to the cross-country team.



## **Kristen Thebeau**

Aqua Patrol  
Haddam, CT

Kristen's experience as a lifeguard and swim instructor informed her decision to design a project that would help increase water safety awareness and knowledge in her town. To achieve this, she worked with Haddam's Department of Parks and Recreation to create a resource for hiring a local lifeguard for private pool parties. This included an educational video on water safety techniques. Additionally, Kristen developed a lesson plan for her high school about the importance of water safety, along with skills and techniques that they can use to stay safe around the water.



## **Samantha Thomas**

Trails for Teens and Tweens  
Ridgefield, CT

Samantha recognized an opportunity to encourage youth to spend more time outdoors instead of online. She partnered with The Ridgefield Conservation Commission to add a webpage she created to their website. This page lists trails around Ridgefield, describing their difficulty level and the mental health benefits of going outdoors more often. She partnered with The Ridgefield Conservation Commission to add a webpage she created to their website.





**Aaroahi Tolat**  
**Hygiene For All**  
**West Hartford, CT**

Aaroahi recognized a need for improved accessibility to personal care and hygiene products over her years of volunteering at her local community health fair. In response, she constructed a hygiene booth at the fair and distributed hygiene kits. She also developed a website with resources for properly using hygiene products as well as government-based insurance plans for those who may not be able to afford insurance.



**Cayleigh Trainor**  
**Loving Our Differences**  
**Canton, CT**

Cayleigh's Loving Our Differences project is an annual event-for kids in her community to celebrate multiculturalism. She accomplished this in partnership with the Canton Public Library.



## **Emma Tremblay**

**You Matter  
Tolland, CT**

You Matter is a remarkable initiative to help children and families as they transition into foster care. Emma's mission is to inspire donations of duffel bags and other necessities for children in new foster homes. The program can easily be replicated and expanded by local girl scout troops, church groups, and extracurricular clubs via an Amazon gift registry. Pamphlets placed in community centers and social media posts also widen its reach.



## **Caitlin Trotto**

**Go Gaga for Har-Bur  
New Hartford, CT**

Caitlin recognized a need for more recess activities at a local school. So she collaborated with the school's principal and Parent Teacher Organization to build a gaga ball pit to encourage students to be more active. They also developed a curriculum to teach the benefits of staying active. The school agreed to maintain the ball pit moving forward.



**Greyson Walker**  
**You Are Never Alone Project**  
**Newington, CT**

Recognizing the stigmas of mental health that many people face, Greyson worked to educate and take action in their school community. They teamed up with teachers and students to develop a website and social media campaign to spread positivity and educate. As a result, 85% of polled visitors found the website helpful. They also produced a video and initiated activities during classes. Greyson's school committed to continuing spirit weeks during mental health awareness week.



**Grace Wentland**  
**The Starfish Project**  
**West Hartford, CT**

Grace developed The Starfish Project to allow elementary school students to address the root causes of bullying within their school community. She collaborated with teachers and students to match small groups of elementary students with teams of high school mentors. Each group worked to create projects that targeted bullying from the unique perspective of elementary students, resulting in substantial and visible changes. The participating schools have agreed to continue this project moving forward.



## **Julia Wilkinson**

**Project Purple**  
Shelton, CT

Julia's Project Purple addresses the increase in domestic violence and the depletion of domestic violence shelters since the COVID-19 crisis. To address this problem, Julia collected and donated 100 purple totes filled with hygiene and personal care items to the Center for Family Justice in Bridgeport, CT. She created an educational pamphlet distributed throughout her local community, addressing the signs of domestic violence and how to seek help safely. The National English Honor Society at Trumbull High School has committed to maintaining Project Purple—running recurring donation drives during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month.



## **Katherine (Grace) Wright-Goodison**

**Project CHANGE**  
West Hartford, CT

After recognizing a need for students at her school to share their opinions, Grace founded the Student Equity and Diversity Council (SEDC). The SEDC allows those interested in social justice, equity, and inclusion to address issues through discussion and creating projects. Grace focused on sharing leadership skills with the community. The SEDC will continue its community impact with a new leader during the next school year.



## **Natalia Yamka**

**Get to Know the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit  
Trumbull, CT**

Natalia learned that pandemic restrictions prevented siblings from visiting their newborn siblings in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). She collaborated with members of her local hospital to develop a website for these siblings full of activities to help them learn about the NICU. Michelle Gray, a NICU staff, committed to continuing to distribute pamphlets about this site and inform other child life specialists.



## **Sophie Zezula**

**Bridging the Gap: Bringing Innovation and Inventing Opportunities to All Students  
Ridgefield, CT**

Sophie recognized a need for support and resources in bringing inventing opportunities to Ridgefield students. As a self-identified student inventor, she's passionate about providing opportunities for students who love invention and STEM. Sophie partnered with the Ridgefield Library to establish the Invention Convention program, benefitting and providing students with engineering and innovation opportunities. The library has agreed to continue to offer the Invention Convention program and annual competition.



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