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GIRL SCOUTS AS AN EDUCATIONAL
FORCE

By

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GIRL SCOUTS AS AN EDUCATIONAL FORCE.

By JULIETTE LOW,
President, Girl Scouts.

So closely is learning interwoven with doing that to the Girl Scout herself all the scout activities are "just play." To the observant educator, the fundamentals of citizenship, good health, and community spirit are implanted through the natural ambition of the Girl Scout to strive for proficiency badges and scout honors. Subtler, but by no means less important, is the morale established by the Girl Scout promise and laws. The tests for scout rank and the system of merit and proficiency badges are planned with the four essentials for wholesome living in mind—headwork, handwork, health, and helpfulness.

The declared purpose of the Girl Scout organization is "to promote the virtues of womanhood by training girls to recognize their obligations to God and country, to prepare for duties devolving upon women in the home, in society and the State, and to guide them in ways conducive to personal honor and the public good"; in other words, to train girls for citizenship in the broadest sense. This is the undeclared desire in every adolescent girl's heart. Girl Scout troops are her laboratory courses in the school of living. Thus, the educational program of Girl Scouts supplements and strengthens the educational efforts of both the home and the school.

The average home is evolved by the parents for their own comfort and convenience. The schoolroom atmosphere and environment are created by the personality of the teacher. The adolescent girl longs for a place of her very own, where she can be herself, and where she can do the things she wants to do. The Girl Scout troop fulfills this need, because it is the girl's own creation, founded and managed by her in cooperation with comrades of her own age.

The scope of Girl Scout work is national; troops are organized in every State except Utah, and they are active in the Territory of Hawaii. Girl Scout troops are affiliated with the work of schools, churches, settlement houses, civic councils, community welfare organizations, women's clubs, etc., but the Girl Scouts' organizations are nonsectarian and nonpolitical. A girl may belong to other organizations at the same time.

On March 1, 1919, 41,225 girls between the ages of 10 and 18 were enrolled as Girl Scouts in the United States. Registrations were made at the rate of about 150 per day since January 1, 1919. This refers to the number of girls who have passed their "tenderfoot tests." There is also a great number of girls preparing for the test.

derfoot examinations who are striving to reach the scout ideal. Statistics of October, 1917, show an enrollment at that time of about 9,000. The movement started with a small group of girls in Savannah, Ga., in March, 1912. The Girl Scouts were incorporated as a national organization on June 10, 1915. The number of second-class and first-class scouts has not been compiled, but the accomplishments of the organization indicate that large numbers have qualified for higher rank.

The form of the laws, promise, and the tests for scout rank were revised by the National Council in January, 1919. At the opening of every Girl Scout troop meeting, there is a simple ceremony. After the scouts salute the flag of the United States and pledge their allegiance, the captain gives the crisp command:

"Scouts, give your promise."

They reply as follows:

"On my honor, I will try to be true to God and my country; to help others at all times; to obey the Scout laws."

"Scouts, repeat the laws," is the next command.

The scouts answer:

"A Girl Scout is trustworthy; a Girl Scout is loyal; a Girl Scout is helpful; a Girl Scout is kind; a Girl Scout is clean; a Girl Scout is courteous; a Girl Scout is persevering; a Girl Scout is obedient; a Girl Scout is cheerful; a Girl Scout is thrifty."

"Scouts, give the motto," is the final order.

The girls answer, "Be prepared."

There are three classes of scouts—tenderfoot scouts, at least 10 years old; second-class scouts; first-class scouts, up to 18 years of age.

No girl may wear the Girl Scout pin, insignia, or uniform until she is formally accepted as a tenderfoot scout. To arrive at this distinction she must be at least 10 years old and she must pass the following test to the satisfaction of the Girl Scout officer in charge:

For headwork she must first of all know the Scout promise and laws, and the Girl Scout motto, "Be prepared," and the Girl Scout slogan, "Do a good turn daily"; she must also know by heart the first and last verses of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the full name of the President of the United States, the governor of her State, and the head of her city or town government.

For handwork she must be able to tie four sailor knots in approved fashion—the reef, bowline, clove hitch, and sheepshank.

For health knowledge she learns the simple setting-up exercises and tenderfoot drill.

For helpfulness she promises to try to do a good turn daily to her troop, her school, her home, or her community.

The tests which must be passed for rank as a second-class scout carry on to more advanced stages the development of headwork, handwork, hygiene, and general helpfulness begun in tenderfoot scouthood.

The second-class scout, for *headwork*, learns the history and meaning of the flag; knows her own measurements and how to record them; can recognize six animals, six birds, six flowers, six trees, and describe them so that another person may recognize them on sight; she learns the 16 points of the compass; how to prevent fire and how to stop it if fire starts; she is capable of using both the general-service code and the semaphore code. The second-class scout trains her powers of observation by playing games that require quick eye and dependable memory, such as noting at a glance the contents of a shop window, the appearance of passers-by in the street, or the game of tracking and stalking in the open. For *handwork*, the second-class scout learns to lay and light a fire in a stove, in a gas stove, or in the open, using not more than two matches. Having made her fire, she learns to cook simple dishes such as cereals, vegetables, meats, fish, or eggs. She learns to set a table properly for two courses. She learns to make and air a bed properly, and she learns to make a bed for an invalid. The second-class scout also learns to sew a seam, hem, darn, either knit or crochet, and she must present a garment made by herself which demonstrates her skill as a needlewoman. She must also press out a scout uniform. For *health knowledge*, the second-class scout demonstrates her ability to stop bleeding, to remove grit from the eye, to treat ivy poisoning, to bandage a sprained ankle, to remove a splinter, and she must know the scout laws of health. For *helpfulness*, she is required to apply what she learns for the benefit of others, in service rendered to the troop, school, home, church, or community. *Thrift* is encouraged in the second-class scout test, inasmuch as the girl is required to earn or save enough to purchase some personal or troop equipment. Scouts of the second class take pride in drilling with snap and precision.

The first-class scout is almost a grown-up woman, capable of bearing the responsibilities that will come to her in her own home and in the community. The tests require that she be trained to higher efficiency in headwork, handwork, health knowledge, and helpfulness. It is the ambition of every Girl Scout to reach the rank of a first-class scout, when she may work for the highest honor of all, the Golden Eaglet badge, for which the requirements have been raised from 14 points for proficiency badges to 21 points. Twenty-six scouts in the United States have won the Golden Eaglet under the 14-point ruling.

For *headwork*, her judgment is called into play to make a rough sketch of the district around the troop meeting place; she is required to judge height, weight, numbers, and distance, according to the rules in the Girl Scout Handbook.

The first-class scout can demonstrate how to find the points of the compass by the sun and stars; she can send and receive messages

in general service code and in semaphore code, at 30 letters per minute. The first-class scout test requires that she be skilled in *handcraft* and *housewifery*, demonstrating her knowledge of home nursing, first aid (Red Cross standards), child care, housekeeping, and that she also earn at least one of the following proficiency badges—laundress, cook, needlewoman, or gardener.

She must also do one or more of the following things: Take an overnight hike in the open, carrying all equipment and rations, or be one of four to construct a practicable lean-to, or be able to do the outer edge on skates, skate backward, and stop suddenly, or show her acquaintance from personal observation of the habits of four animals or birds, or organize a daytime hike for younger girls, arranging the food, transportation, occupations, etc.

For *health knowledge*, in addition to earning the first-aid badge, she must earn one other merit badge. For *helpfulness* she must present a tenderfoot scout trained by herself, present to the scout officers proof of some definite service to her community. For *thrift* she must earn at least \$1 and start a savings account. Second-class scouts may earn all merit badges except the Golden Eaglet, which may be awarded to first-class scouts.

The value of Girl Scout training is shown in the war work they accomplished in connection with the Red Cross, the War Garden Commission, the Food Administration, the Liberty loans and the Thrift campaigns, the Americanization work, and the labor replacement work by which these young girls released older women from home duties for war work of various kinds. None of these activities were new to the Girl Scouts, for there are scout merit badges to be won for first aid, artist, athletics, automobile driving, aviation, bird study, seamanship, child care, clerk, civics, cook, invalid cookery, cyclist, dairy, electricity, farmer, gardener, personal health, laundress, marksmanship, music, naturalist, needlewomen, horsemanship, home nursing, housekeeper, interpreter, pathfinder, pioneer, photography, scribe, signaling, swimmer, telegraphy. All second-class scouts may compete for any or all of them; most second-class scouts are working for some of them.

All these activities are voluntary, and progress in scout rank comes solely from the girl's own initiative. The result is the development of the undefinable something in Girl Scouts, which we call the scouting spirit, the esprit de corps, and an insistence on fair play, generous dealing, team work, coupled with individual development, which can all be summed up in the one word "character." Girl Scouts of to-day are the women of to-morrow. Even as young girls they are eager to do their share of the world's work.

The record of the Girl Scouts of Washington, D. C., during the influenza epidemic was typical of how Girl Scouts meet emergencies as they arise. Conditions were especially bad in Washington, and

through their initiative and skilled labor the Girl Scouts were able to save many lives. They made soups and broths and special dishes, which were delivered on doctor's prescriptions to more than 500 patients daily during the weeks of the epidemic. At the request of the commissioner of public playgrounds in Washington, they prepared 5 gallons of soup daily for the luncheons of the poor children under his care, helping to prevent illness through supplying proper nourishment.

Girl Scouts throughout the United States kept their knitting needles busy and knitted into Red Cross garments more than 2,550 pounds of wool. Thousands of surgical dressings were made for the Army hospitals. In Minneapolis Girl Scouts picked oakum in the Red Cross workrooms for thousands of the pads needed for the hospitals in the war zone.

During 1918, while the United States was actively at war, all of our people had an opportunity to put forth all their force for the Nation's good. Those who were best trained were the most useful. For the Department of Agriculture and the War Garden Commissions, the Girl Scouts took up their spades and hoes and cultivated acres of war gardens, at a profit, too, as is shown by the records from New York City scouts and others, who cleared an average profit of about two cents per square foot over all expenses. After their crops matured, the Girl Scouts went to work for the Food Administration and canned vegetables, fruits, jellies, jams, and pickles.

In the munition works and the aeroplane factories Girl Scouts, trained to obedience, trustworthiness, and perseverance, made themselves useful. Girl Scouts were employed as messengers by Government departments. Others kept house and cared for younger children so that older folk could do other work needed for the war.

Girl Scout troops sold Liberty bonds amounting to \$3,151,100 in the third loan campaign, and they doubled that amount selling fourth loan bonds to the amount of \$6,023,550. Troops also bought bonds from their own treasuries, helped the Women's Liberty Loan Committees by pasting posters and by acting as messengers. Girl Scouts also saved and earned money to buy \$5,305 worth of Thrift and War Savings Stamps—this is the minimum amount, because not all troops report their local activities to headquarters. So far, troops have reported the sale to other people of \$12,370 worth of Thrift Stamps.

During the war we realized more keenly the number of foreign-born people in our midst, who, while not actively against us, were not actively "for us," because they did not know much about America or the language, customs, thoughts, and ideals of Americans. Most of the foreign people have children, and, like all parents, their first thought and consideration is for the welfare of their children. If

America proves kind to their children, they will cheerfully live and die for America. Girl Scouts found a very special patriotic service in teaching through Girl Scout troop work the ideals of American citizenship to the children of foreign parents. Older scouts took great pride in starting troops in foreign settlements, training the tenderfoot scouts and teaching them about American citizenship. Special commendation was given by the America First Committee to New York City for their work in teaching English to foreign women and girls.

At the present moment the most effective public-service work that Girl Scout troops are doing is this Americanization work. Not only in big cities but wherever there is a mill, a factory, or a mine, where foreign laborers live apart from the life of the American community around them, Girl Scouts are finding that they can be of service in bridging over the gulf of ignorance and misunderstanding.

The real test of an educational system is in how well the students use the knowledge acquired. The following three instances of how scouts are turning back to the community the benefits derived from their home, their school, and their scout training deserve thoughtful consideration:

In New Bedford, Mass., foreign labor in the mills threatened to fall a prey to the epidemic of Bolshevism and industrial unrest. The city government, cooperating with the chamber of commerce, the school department, the Y. M. C. A., fraternal societies, and manufacturers' associations launched an aggressive campaign of Americanization. Girl Scout troops and Boy Scout troops were used to give the patriotic instruction to foreign workers in each mill.

In Cincinnati, Ohio, at the American House, where every opportunity is given to foreign men and women to become acquainted with American customs, habits, ideals, and the language we speak, Girl Scout troops have been formed to give patriotic instruction to foreign women and girls. These troops are officered by foreign-born girls who want to repay in some measure the benefits they have received from American institutions. The lieutenants of these troops are Girl Scouts of high-school age who want to pass on the scout training to others.

In New York City the local American First Committee formally commended the service rendered by Girl Scouts in teaching English to foreign women and girls.

It is by furnishing wholesome outdoor and indoor activities under influences that tend to build sturdy character as well as sturdy bodies that Girl Scouts are valuable in the educational work of the Nation, which we depend upon to develop the girls of to-day into sane, responsible women who will be capable of bearing intelligently the personal and social responsibilities that will come to them only a few years hence.