



Building girls of  
courage, confidence,  
and character,  
who make the world  
a better place.

# history of the girl scouts

The Girl Scouts of the United States of America was founded on March 12, 1912, by Juliette Gordon Low. The organization was started after Low met Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the youth scouting movement, in 1911 in London. Low envisioned an organization that would bring girls out of their homes to serve their communities, experience the outdoors, and develop self-reliance and resourcefulness. Originally called the Girl Guides of America, the organization changed its name to the Girl Scouts of the United States in 1913, and relocated its headquarters from Savannah, Georgia to Washington, D.C. The headquarters were moved again in 1915 to New York City.

By 1920, the Girl Scouts had nearly 70,000 members. Three years later, the organization boasted branches in every state of the union, as well as Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico. By 1930, the Girl Scout membership exceeded 200,000.

During the late 1910s and 1920s, the Girl Scouts began to offer girls numerous opportunities to build skills and earn badges.

In the 1930s, as the Great Depression permeated all facets of American life, Girl Scouts led community relief efforts throughout the country. This included collecting clothing, making quilts, carving wooden toys, gathering food for the poor, assisting in hospitals, participating in canning programs, and providing meals to undernourished children. The Golden Eagle of Merit (precursor to today's Gold Award) was first offered in 1916. Some of the earliest badges available to girls included Electrician, Laundress, Economist, Automobiling, and Business Woman. Some of the programming offered to girls during this period focused on natural sciences and flight, in addition to electricity, inspiring many girls to pursue what were non-traditional careers at the time.

Another highlight of the 1930s was the development of the cookie program. Previously, girls across the country had baked cookies at home and sold them in their communities to raise money. But in 1934, Girl Scouts in Philadelphia became the first council to conduct a sale of

commercially baked cookies across the entire council. By 1936, this was quickly becoming the practice nationwide.

When World War II broke out in the early 1940s, Girl Scouts continued their tradition of helping those in need. Girl Scouts operated bicycle courier services, volunteered in hospitals, collected fat and scrap metal, and grew Victory Gardens. Girl Scouts sponsored Defense Institutes, which taught more than 10,000 women survival skills and techniques for comforting children during blackouts and air raids. Girls also collected 1.5 million articles of clothing that were shipped overseas for both children and adults who were victims of war.

At the start of the 1950s, the Girl Scouts boasted a membership of 1.5 million girls and adult volunteers. The decade also started with a re-incorporation of the organization under a Congressional Charter. During the 1950s, Girl Scouts led initiatives and held events across the country to support civil rights and overcome prejudice. In 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr. described Girl Scouts as

“a force for desegregation.” That same year, the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah, Georgia was opened as a house museum and national program center for girls.

In the 1960s, the Girl Scouts continued to advocate for civil rights, and the National Board went on record in strong favor of reform. Senior Girl Scout Speakout conferences were held around the country and the “Action 70” project was launched in 1969. Both of these programs were nationwide initiatives to overcome prejudice. During the same decade, actress Debbie Reynolds (who was a troop leader) headed the Piper Project, which was aimed at retaining more girls to participate in the full range of age level offerings, as well as recruiting more girls from under-served communities to participate.

At the start of the 1970s, the Girl Scouts broadly implemented a new program called Eco Action, which was the first Girl Scout environmental education program. In 1975, the national organization elected its first African American President, Gloria

D. Scott. Girls continued their tradition of service by helping Vietnamese refugee children adapt to new homes in the U.S.

In the 1980s, the Girl Scouts Movement remained strong and continued to evolve with the changing needs of girls. The Contemporary Issues series was developed to help girls and their families deal with serious social issues. The first, Tune In to Well Being, Say No to Drugs, was introduced in collaboration with a project initiated by First Lady Nancy Reagan. Subsequent publications dealt with such issues as child abuse, youth suicide, literacy, and pluralism.

The 1990s saw the Girl Scouts increase their focus on healthy living and literacy. During this period, Be Your Best, a nationwide health and fitness service project, was inaugurated. Also, close to 4 million Girl Scout members participated in the Right to Read service project, addressing illiteracy with First Lady Barbara Bush.

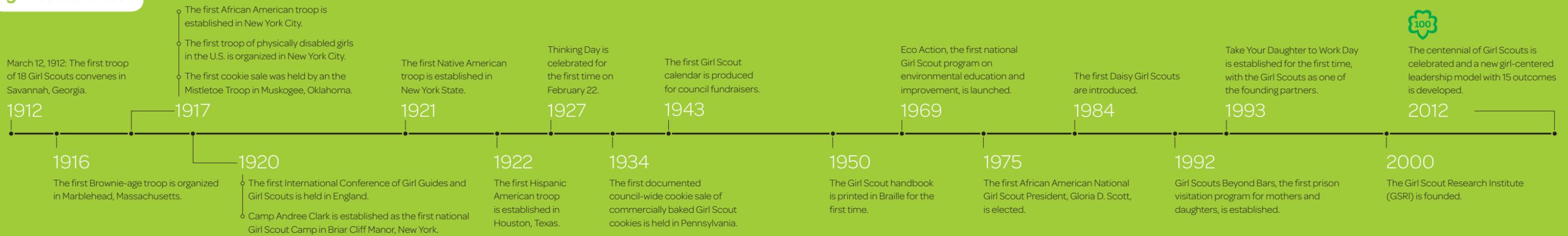
In the 21st century, the Girl Scout Movement remains strong. In 2000, the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI)

was founded, and its work has not only informed program design, but has shed light on a wide array of topics and issues affecting girls today. In 2006 and 2007, the organization realigned the existing councils, reducing the total number from 312 to 112. Despite logistical challenges at the beginning, this realignment has created a more agile, cohesive network of Girl Scout councils that are better able to serve the needs of girls.

In 2012, the Girl Scouts celebrated 100 years of developing leadership skills in girls.



## girl scout firsts



# numbers worth knowing

OVER **100** YEARS  
OF GIRL SCOUTING

FOUNDED IN  
**1912**

GIRL SCOUTS OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
CHARTERED IN **2007**



BERKS, BUCKS, CARBON,  
CHESTER, DELAWARE, LEHIGH,  
MONTGOMERY, NORTHAMPTON  
& PHILADELPHIA

## MISSION

GIRL SCOUTS BUILDS  
GIRLS OF **COURAGE,**  
**CONFIDENCE,**  
AND **CHARACTER**  
WHO MAKE THE WORLD  
A BETTER PLACE.

MORE THAN  
**40,000** GIRLS



APPROXIMATELY  
**9,000**

GIRLS SERVED THROUGH  
**OUTREACH**  
**PROGRAMS**

APPROXIMATELY  
**15,000**



GIRL CAMPERS

NEARLY  
**15,000**  
VOLUNTEERS  
& ADULT MEMBERS

**6** SERVICE  
CENTERS



**6** CAMPING  
EXPERIENCES



**100+** FULL-TIME  
& **350+** SEASONAL  
EMPLOYEES



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