

Service Unit Recognition Event Planning Guide



Event Summary

Girl Scouts Dakota Horizons (GSDH) annual recognition events are hosted by service units (SU) to recognize the achievements of Girl Scout award recipients in local communities. By allowing each service unit to host its own event, it can be attended by all girls, paired with bridging or other ceremonies, be girl led, and more meaningful to the girls. Local Gold Award, Silver Award, and Bronze Award recipients will be honored and have the opportunity to inspire other girls with their projects. With this we can empower, inspire, and excite girls to achieve more through Girl Scouts.

Each SU can host their own event or join a neighboring SU to celebrate a greater sisterhood. Consult your Member Engagement Manager if interested in partnering with a nearby service unit.

The recognition event should be held before the end of the current membership year (September 30). Traditionally, recognition events have been held in the spring, but the service unit may select the best fit for the greatest member and community involvement.

GSDH is dedicated to ensuring that each service unit has the support and resources needed to host a successful event. Your Member Engagement Manager will provide support as you are planning your event.

Event Objectives

- Recognize and celebrate the achievements of girls and volunteers throughout the Girl Scout year.
- Inspire others to strive for higher levels of personal achievement and excite girls and volunteers to continue in Girl Scouts.
- Include girls as active participants from the planning to execution to make it more meaningful.

Event Components

It is important to incorporate our traditions and ceremonies while also having girl led elements within the event.

Traditions: Girl Scout traditions tie us to our sisterhood - to the girls that came before us and to the girls that will lead us into our future. Some ideas to incorporate traditions into the event include:

- Open with a flag ceremony and recite the Girl Scout Promise

- Encourage girls and leaders to wear full uniforms.
- Sing traditional songs.
- Use the Girl Scout handshake when presenting awards.
- Close with a friendship circle.

Ceremonies: Girl Scout ceremonies offer a rich tradition and reinforce the values of Girl Scouting. The award presentation component of the ceremony highlights the accomplishments of the girls and volunteers in the SU, and additional ceremonies can be incorporated into your event. Consider incorporating bridging, investiture and/or re-dedication ceremony into your event.

View the [Bridging Guide](#) and visit girlscouts.org for more information about Traditions, Bridging and Ceremonies.

Reception: Providing a time for girls to meet and greet one another is a great way to share sisterhood and celebrate together. Consider having a reception after the ceremony with cake and punch, desserts provided by troops, or even a potluck.

Council – Service Unit Partnership Roles

Council Support

- Provide list of the service unit's award recipients
- Provide event templates on website for download.
- Provide girl and adult award pins and certificates per chart in **Appendix A**
- Provide event planning support from Member Engagement Specialist
- Provide a Pop-Up Shop upon request.
- Attend events whenever possible upon request.
- Provide financial support.
 - All service units are eligible for the Recognition Event allocation from council, provided a current year service unit Bank Account Confirmation / ACH Form is on file.
 - The amount is based on current year girl membership.
 - Refer to the email sent in March to the SU Manager regarding Recognition Events for your allocation amount. Funds are disbursed via ACH to service unit accounts in mid-April.

Service Unit Team

- Plan and execute the event with an event coordinator and event planning committee.
- Submit [Recognition Event Plan and Award Request Form](#) at least 3 weeks prior to your event or by June 15. If the request form is not received by June 15, awards will be mailed to each individual recipient.
- Invite award recipients.
- Invite all members of the service unit. Use [Looker](#) for the current membership contact list.
- Invite media to cover your event (press release template provided).
- Distribute awards to all recipients at the event or after if not in attendance.
- Submit [Event Recap Form](#) after the event to the council.

Girl Members

Get Girl Scouts involved in the event! Examples of ways girls can participate:

- Help set up and decorate.
- Serve refreshments.
- Greet guests.
- Hand out programs.
- Conduct Flag Ceremony.
- Lead songs.
- Gold Award Girl Scouts, Silver and Bronze Award Recipients can present and/or set up displays to share their project.
- Lead a volunteer appreciation ceremony and/or present awards to volunteers.
- Present service unit or troop year in review.

Event Planning Timeline

Follow the timeline below to plan an outstanding recognition event! Council provided resources and templates can be found at gsdakotahorizons.org under [Service Unit Resources](#).

| 12 Weeks Prior to Event | | |
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| WHAT | HOW | SUPPORT/RESOURCES |
| Assemble an event committee and set an event date | The Service Unit Manager or Event Coordinator should form a committee of volunteers and older girls to work together to plan and execute the event. Let your Member Engagement Specialist know about your planning meetings so they can support you. Brainstorm ideas and gather inspiration from girl input. Set the event date. | |
| Submit Service Unit Event Plan form | <p>Submit the Recognition Event Plan and Award Request form at least 3 weeks prior to event or by June 15.</p> <p>Form requires basic event and contact info:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event coordinator name and contact information. • Estimated date of event • Name and address of volunteer to receive pins and certificates in the mail. <p>This form must be received for council to mail the council provided pins and certificates to the service unit. If the form is not received by June 15th, we will mail awards to individual award recipients.</p> | Recognition Event Plan and Award Request Form |
| Create basic event outline | Create a basic outline of the event including a tentative schedule, supply list, and other information that will help you build a budget. You can change or add details later. | |
| Create budget | <p>Use the Budget Template to create a budget for the event. The template includes some fees that you may not incur. Remove and add to fit your event. The budget template will also help you determine cost per person and if you will need to charge a fee for attendees.</p> <p>Council Funds: All service units are eligible for the Recognition Event allocation from council, as long as</p> | <p>Sample Budget (pdf)</p> <p>Blank Budget Template (excel)</p> |

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| | the service unit has an open bank account. The amount is based on girl membership. Refer to the email sent to the SU Manager in March for amount. Funds are disbursed via ACH to service unit bank accounts in mid-April. | |
| Secure location | Once you determine the event date and time you will need to find and secure a location. Ensure that the location has everything you may need for the event (tables, chairs, kitchen, Wi-Fi, etc.). A contract is recommended to ensure a mutual agreement. | |
| Determine registration/RSVP deadline and process | Determine if RSVP's or registrations are needed based on whether a fee is being collected, location space limitations, food and supply amounts, and the needs of the planning committee. Set a deadline and determine how and who will take registrations/RSVP's and collect payments for the event, if applicable. | |
| 6-8 Weeks Prior to Event | | |
| Create event script | Create your event script. Consider introducing each category of award regardless of whether there are recipients in your service unit to inspire adults and girls to earn them! | Sample Scripts |
| Invite presenters | <p>Will you have a keynote/inspirational speaker? Maybe a former Gold Award Girl Scout or a prominent female in the community? Who will present the awards?</p> <p>Involve troop volunteers in the presentation of awards to the girls. Be sure to let them know in advance what to expect so they can prepare themselves and their girls.</p> <p>It's recommended you have someone designated to present/pin awards to the recipients as they come on stage. It is also helpful to have someone on stage to help provide pins/certificates to the presenter.</p> <p>Start contacting your desired presenters so they have plenty of time to prepare. Council staff members can also attend upon request and availability.</p> | |
| Create invitation | Use the invitation template provided on our website under Service Unit Resources or design your own. If creating your own please follow the guidelines found in Branding 101 for Volunteers . | Invitation Template |

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| Invite award recipients | <p>You are welcome to use the girl award and adult award letter template on our website under Service Unit Resources to invite your award recipients. Include details about the event and how they should RSVP.</p> <p>Mail these letters to the recipients. Follow up award recipients who have not submitted an RSVP.</p> | <p>Girl and Adult Award Recipient Letter Templates</p> <p>List of Award recipients emailed to SU Manager</p> |
| Invite members and guests | <p>Invite members of the service unit including volunteers, girls, families, community supporters and local media. SU Managers can use Looker for current membership roster and contact information.</p> <p>Here are some suggested ways to get the word out. Email: To all members in your service unit. Mail: If included in your budget, mail invitations out to all guests. Online: Facebook groups, SU websites, and other SU communication tools (keep in mind not all members are on social media)</p> | <p>Looker Volunteer Guide</p> |
| 3 Weeks Prior to Event | | |
| Finalize guest list | <p>Finalize your list of registrants if registrations/RSVP were collected. Compile a list for easy check-in.</p> <p>Be sure to have a list of your award recipients at check in so you know who is present at the event to call up on stage.</p> <p><i>TIP: Use a program at check-in and highlight award recipients as they arrive so you know who is present.</i></p> | |
| Confirm location | <p>Confirm event day logistics with the location. Ask for specific details (what door to use, where to park, room number to meet in, etc.) and a contact number for day of event issues or emergencies.</p> | |
| Confirm speakers & presenters | <p>Check in with your presenters - emcee, speakers, girl presenters, and troop volunteers – to be sure they have all the information they need including location address, details, event schedule, time to arrive, who to check in with, and contact information for the day of the event.</p> | |

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| | <p>Be sure presenters and troop leaders know what is expected for their presentation.</p> <p>Have presenters arrive early and do a run-through of the ceremony to ensure it runs smoothly.</p> | |
| Send event details to recipients and attendees | Email event details and expectations to award recipients so they know what to prepare. | |
| Order and/or shop for supplies | Order supplies online early to have plenty of time for shipping. Visit GSDH Retail Services to order awards not supplied by council (See Appendix A.) | GSDH Retail Services |
| Create event program | Use the event program template provided or design your own. If creating your own please follow the guidelines found in Branding 101 for Volunteers . | Program Template Branding 101 for Volunteers |
| Plan for safety & risk management | <p>A Certificate of Liability is often requested by the event location. If this is needed, please contact your Member Engagement Manager or Member Services at least 2 weeks in advance.</p> <p>Safety Activity Checkpoints & Volunteer Essentials: Review the activities at the event to see what safety measures/ratios are required.</p> | Safety Activity Checkpoints Volunteer Essentials |
| Involve local media | Invite local media (newspaper, radio, television, etc.) to attend the event. Use the press release template and submit to the local newspaper. | Press release template |

| 10 Days Prior to Event | | |
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| Send event details to recipients and attendees | Email event confirmation details to all attendees. Be sure to include specific details for the recipients so they know what to expect. | |
| Confirm volunteers | Confirm event details with volunteers adding in any special things they need to know, like how early to come and what job they may be doing. | |
| Prepare award certificates & pins | Organize certificates and pins provided by the council. Print and complete other certificates as desired. <i>Please note: Council provided certificates & pins are mailed when the SU submits the Recognition Event Plan and Award Request Form. Please be sure to check pins and certificates when received and contact us right away if anything is missing.</i> | See Appendix A (pg. 9-10) |
| Week of Event | | |
| Gather supplies | Gather/sort all supplies needed and organize them for event. Purchase any last minute supplies. | |
| Confirm | If needed, contact location and presenters one last time. | |
| Event Day | | |
| Set up | Depending on amount of set up time needed, generally arrive at event location 1½ hours early - - one hour for set up and half an hour for the check in time. Make sure to allow ample time to set up and drive time in case of unforeseen circumstances like bad weather, site not unlocked, etc. | |
| Capture event | Capture the event with pictures and stories! Consider designating 1 or 2 people as event photographers. | |

| After Event | | |
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| Thank volunteers and presenters | Take the time to thank the people who made the event a success! Send a handwritten thank you to volunteers, presenters, community members, etc. | |
| Share your story with the public and GSDH | Send or post stories, pictures, or quotes from the event to social media, local papers, etc. Share your event story and pictures to council with the Girl Scout Story Submission Form . | Girl Scout Story Submission Form |
| Evaluate the event and submit the Event Recap Form | Take the time to evaluate the event with the committee and record the notes in your Service Unit Planning Guide. Consider what went well and what could be done differently next year? Take notes in your Service Unit Planning Guide so you can refer to them next year or pass them on to the next event coordinator/committee. Complete the Service Unit Event Recap Form to tell council all about your great recognition event! | Service Unit Event Recap Form |

Appendix A

| Girl Award | Certificate | Pin/Award Provided by |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Gold Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Silver Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Bronze Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Program Aide | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Counselor-in-Training I (CIT I) | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Counselor-in-Training II (CIT II) | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Volunteer-in-Training | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Torch Award | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Community Service Bar | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Service to Girl Scouting Bar | Yes | Service Unit, Troop or Parent to purchase in Girl Scout Shop |
| Graduating Senior | Yes | n/a (Girl Scout Graduation Regalia is available) |
| 10 Year Girl Member Pin | Yes | Council provides to the service unit to present. |

| Adult Award | Certificate | Pin/Award Provided by |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Leading the Way Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Man Enough to be a Girl Scout Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Unsung Hero Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Rising Star Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Trefoil Award | No | Council provides to the nominator to present to recipient. |
| Global Voices Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Heritage Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Firestarter Award | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Centennial Award | No | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Volunteer of Excellence | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Appreciation Pin | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Honor Pin | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Thanks Badge | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| Thanks Badge II | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |
| The Juliette Gordon Low World Friendship Medal | Yes | Council awarded at GSDH Honoring Excellence Event* |

*If the recipient cannot attend, the award is either provided to service unit or mailed directly to recipient.