

# 2015–16 Gold Girl Scouts



**Katherine Anderson:** Take a book, leave a book. That's the guiding principle behind Katherine's project,



*LifeWorks Lending Library*, which benefits Austin LifeWorks' housing facility, a non-profit organization

dedicated to supporting youth and adults as they work toward self-sufficiency. The library system allows residents to check out books by simply leaving a book, which ultimately offers more accessibility to a valuable resource.

**Claire Blakely:** Claire *chartered a First League Lego team* at Summitt Elementary. She created



the program to give students – particularly girls – the opportunity to participate in a robotics program

that she lacked in elementary school, in hopes of ultimately eliminating gender stereotypes surrounding STEM.

**Ashley Bruno:** For her project, Ashley produced a *short film focused on the life of Dr. Joseph Pound*, a



key figure in Central Texas history, and his family's farmstead in Dripping Springs. Her goal was to inspire her

community to learn more about its rich history. She hosted screenings for the community, and the film was added to the catalogs of five local libraries.

**Hannah Buffington:** Soldiers at Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio received kind notes



of gratitude and encouragement from students at Blackland Prairie Elementary School thanks to Hannah's

project, *Letters to Soldiers*. She held classes on how to write letters for second graders and made sure the notes were delivered to soldiers.

**Kayla Chichester:** Kayla put her creativity in motion and *decorated the new nursery and toddler room*



*for the Grace Presbyterian Church.*

She gathered a team of volunteers to paint walls, add window coverings,

create a reading corner, and install hooks for diaper bags.

**Teresa Contreras-O'Reilly:** For her project, *New House, New Photos!*, Teresa helped first-time



homeowners turn their houses into homes by partnering with Habitat for Humanity to provide stunning

photography for residents to hang on their walls. In total, she helped nine families decorate their new homes with customized photos.

**Jaycie Cornett:** Jaycie gathered her Girl Scout sisters and together they implemented *Project Picnic*. Jaycie



and her team of volunteers created two kid-sized picnic tables for the Westside Church of Christ preschool

program. She also created a pamphlet with instructions on how to maintain the table for generations to come.

**Sydney Criswell:** The Uncommon Space art gallery at Westlake High School looks better than ever



thanks to Sydney's Gold Award project. She built *nine pedestals for the school's artists to display their work*

and enlisted help from two of the school's biggest clubs, the National Honor Society and Student Council, to ensure regular maintenance.

**Brittney Cullhane:** As a passionate animal lover, Brittney wanted to *raise awareness and share the importance of microchipping pets.*



She organized a seminar for her community and received support

from the Stephenville Chamber of Commerce. She also created two tri-fold brochures to hand out at veterinary clinics and adoption agencies.

**Kylie Dugan:** Tapping into a national conversation about lack of funding for education, Kylie's project,



*Sharing Supplies*, connects retiring teachers with recent college grads who are about to begin their teaching

career and allows the retiring teachers to share supplies with the new generation of educators following in their footsteps, which

helps cut down on expenses for the new teachers.

**Rachel Dunnam:** Rachel's project, *Prom Palace*, helped create a magical experience for girls who



otherwise may not have had the opportunity to attend prom. She collected dress donations and set up a "shop" where girls could pick out their very own prom dress free of charge. Two local organizations, AVANCE and the National Charity League, will continue to collect donations for girls.

**Mary Margaret Fair:** Mary Margaret's project, *Mimi's Basement*, involved renovating the



basement of the Methodist Children's Home Family Outreach Building. Now, foster parents and caregivers can find new and gently worn clothes, toys, and everyday necessities.

**Taylor Gonzales:** Inspired by her great-grandmother, Taylor created *Crumb Catchers*, adult bibs for



the elderly, stroke victims, and others working to manage conditions that may cause them to spill food and drink on their clothes. Her goal was to help

these individuals maintain their dignity and keep their clothes clean.

**Taylor Hemby:** Taylor decided to create the *Define Your Beauty* project after she noticed a trend of



low self-esteem in her female classmates. She created curriculum and a special presentation focused on beauty, self-esteem, and the media.

**Hannah Heydinger:** Hannah's project, *A Safer Trail Crossing for St. Stephens*, provided a trail and



built a crosswalk to increase visibility for joggers and cars passing by St. Stephen's Episcopal School, cutting

down on traffic accidents and giving her community a safer way to exercise outdoors.

**Mackenzie Johnson:** For her Gold Award project, *Keeping Kids Clothed*, Mackenzie created a clothes closet



for school-aged children in need, working with the Llano High School Student Council to launch the project.

She also set up drop boxes at several LISD schools for others to donate. She plans to hold at least two clothing drives each year to continue supplying the closet and helping others.

**Sydney Jones:** Dedicated to helping fellow high school students make the transition to college life,



Sydney created the *Steps to College Success* project. It included an event featuring advice on budgeting, healthy diet, and study habits. The program will continue each year with a new student leading the program.

**Gwen Kruse:** A passionate Girl Scout, Gwen set out to increase visibility for Girl Scouts and women



leaders with her project, *Brenham Service Unit Web and Exhibit*. She partnered with the Brenham Heritage

Museum to showcase Girl Scout history and artifacts in an online exhibit designed to promote Girl Scouts in her area. The project also included designing a website meant to unify her service unit and create a space for leaders to connect, find important files and documents, and build stronger relationships.

**Jacqueline Kukol:** Jacqueline has spent her whole life caring for and riding horses. For her project,



*Horse Whisperer*, she created a special equestrian camp for children with hearing impairments. In its

first year, 12 children attended the

camp, and Jacqueline has plans to continue the camp in the future.

**Claire Kurio:** Claire created a *high school youth volunteer component to the Interfaith Hospitality Network*



(IHN). IHN includes more than 30 churches, temples, synagogues, and other religious institutions in the

Austin area that shelter homeless families for 4-5 weeks while helping them find steady work in order to provide for their families. The youth became tutors, friends, and mentors to younger children being served by IHN.

**Angel Lawrence:** Angel's project, *Stitches of Love*, gave members of her community a useful new skill



while meeting a critical need for women more than 9,000 miles away. Angel held community-wide lessons

on how to sew and embellish dresses for women in Mozambique, a southern African country.

**Robyn Lawrence:** Using her own experience as guide, Robyn created *Project Warm Hugs* as a



way to comfort kids under the age of 18 who have a loved one battling a life-threatening or terminal illness.

She held classes at church, Girl Scout meetings, and Boy Scout meetings to teach others how to make blankets to donate to kids and created a website where others could find instructions to make their own blankets and share with someone in need of comfort. The project will be sustained as a GSCTX patch program.

**Larisa Liberty:** Larisa's Gold Award project, *GraceMusic*, is music to the ears of residents at the Gracy



Woods Nursing Center. She implemented a volunteer music program that encourages her community to play

for the nursing home residents. To ensure the program's success, Larisa created a binder of musical arrangements to be kept at the facility permanently.

**Lindsey Martinez:** Thanks to Lindsey's project, *Project Feed the Roots*, the sustainable farm



Urban Roots can provide more fresh produce to low-resource Austin communities. A key component of

Lindsey's project included planting a perennial herb garden to help the farm harvest more food. She also presented her project at the first-ever Youth Food and Farming Summit in 2015.

**Avery Misenhimer:** As a future forensic pathologist, Avery wanted to raise awareness about the



importance of organ donation and decrease the time patients wait to receive a life-saving donation. So she

created *One End, Eight Beginnings*, a project comprised of educational videos she produced to be played at high schools along with supplementary pamphlets. The videos and pamphlets feature information about becoming an organ donor and were distributed at local high schools and the DMV during National Donate Life Month.

**Julie Morales:** For her Gold Award project, *Keep Austin Native*, Julie built 30 Mason bee houses to help



curb the rapid decline of the bee population in Central Texas. She partnered with the City of Austin,

community gardens, and schools to install the bee houses across the city. She also created curriculum for elementary students with the objective of teaching them about bees and included instructions for them on how to make their own bee houses.

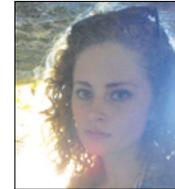
**Sarika Mullapudi:** Joining forces with her school's Haiti Outreach Program, Sarika's project, *Helping*



*Kids in Haiti*, combats poverty and creates a better environment for Haitian students through a collection

of books, maps, and posters for the students to use as learning resources.

**Claire Nissen:** After reading a news article about bats in the Hill Country being affected by urbanization,



Claire got to work on her project, *Bat Houses*, and began building homes for them in the Steiner Ranch

community. Because recent construction has encroached into natural bat habitats, the animals need a sustainable place to live in Central Texas during their migratory cycle. Each bat house holds close to a thousand bats and can last well over 15 years.

**Rachel Ogle:** Rachel's Gold Award project, *Coats for Kids and Coins for Coats*, brought awareness to the



Round Rock Area Serving Center. She led knitting classes for friends, community groups, and younger Girl

Scouts in addition to creating online tutorials. The project ultimately led

to the creation of hats and scarves to be passed out to families in need.

**Solana Oliver:** Solana's project, *Knights in Need*, serves students at McCallum High School and their



families by offering support in the form of bus passes, clothing, and toiletries. The project is aimed at helping

these students – whose families are in crisis or who have little to no financial support – to focus more on their academic success.

**Deborah Ott:** Noting the lack of fine arts programs for special-needs students at her high school,



Deborah created the *Functional Academic Classroom Fine Arts Course* to provide nearly 60 adapted

arts-and-crafts projects to students with special needs. The class fulfills the school's Fine Arts graduation requirement for students who are unable to attend regular art or music classes.

**Isaree Pitaktong:** A nature lover, Isaree used her project, *An Arbor Bench and Many Flower Presses*, as



an opportunity to empower younger kids in her community to contribute to nature by teaching

them how to build their own flower presses. She also extended the Adelphi Acre Community Garden by building an arbor bench for other nature lovers to take in the beauty around them.

**Lily Powell:** Lily's *Project Encouraging Words* addressed the large gender gap in education in Zambia,



a country in southern Africa. Lily paired women from the Philanthropic Education Organization with 12 girls in Global Samaritans Orphanage into life-long, pen-pal relationships to encourage the girls to stay in school and get an education in spite of cultural and societal pressures.

**Sondra Rahmeh:** Putting a new spin on the classic Shakespeare play, *Taming of the Shrew*, Sondra's



project, *The Taming of the Closet of Costumes*, led her to tackle the severely unorganized theater costume department at Vandegrift High School. She washed more than 1,000 costumes and catalogued more than 500 other items, giving the school a reliable new inventory system.

**Brielle Read:** Seeking to serve the global community, Brielle designed her project, *Impacting Lives of Little*



*Ones in Peru*, to provide a variety of developmental toys for babies and toddlers in South America. Brielle also created educational brochures that can be used long after the toys have worn out.

**Amber Rios:** To raise awareness about a no-kill shelter in her community, Amber



*created signs and a website for the H.O.P.E. Animal Shelter* in Hearne, the sole animal shelter of its kind in the Brazos Valley.

She held fundraisers to pay for the signs to be professionally made. The website is designed to help curb the issue of abandoned and homeless domestic animals locally and globally.

**Charlotta Robinson:** Wanting to *restore community pride in an old, dilapidated cemetery*, Charlotta



conducted research on each person buried there and tracked down contact information of family members

in case visitors wanted to know more about the person's life. She also trimmed bushes and mowed

the cemetery grounds to beautify the area.

**Claire Rowan:** Aimed at shattering STEM stereotypes and encouraging more girls to pursue STEM-related



classes, Claire's *Girls CAN do Tech* project consists of a video she produced to highlight STEM and robotics and an online community she created where girls can find resources, support, and encouragement.

**Sara Sheehan:** Sara created *Heart and Soul*, an expressive art group, for Starry Emergency shelter. The



project aimed to provide a safe place free of ridicule and judgment for self-expression through art. Sara

hopes to enable people to address their feelings in a positive way and work out their issues safely.

**Heather Sieger:** Heather's project, *Plastic Awareness and Cutback*, offered members of her community

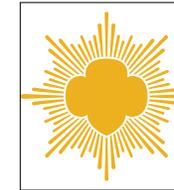


an alternative to plastic bags. Heather collected old t-shirts, turned them into reusable produce bags, and

handed them out at the Lakeline Farmer's Market for people to use instead of plastic produce bags. Her project helped her community learn

how to reduce waste and created a sustainable, cheap alternative to plastic bags.

**Mary Kevan Smith:** Over the course of five months, Mary completed several smaller projects



to create the *Trail Enhancement for Steiner Ranch Community* project, which benefits people looking for

a safe, beautiful place to exercise outdoors. She researched and gathered information to create an educational pamphlet for visitors. Then, using money from her Girl Scout Cookie business, she bought a bench for a young troop to paint that is now being used as a resting place for visitors.

**Moriah Smith:** Bastrop residents now have a peaceful place to meditate and reflect thanks to



Moriah's *Community Peace-Prayer Garden*, which provides a gazebo, peace pole, and picnic table. Moriah

assembled a team of volunteers to help build the garden on the grounds of the First United Method Church of Bastrop.

**Sarah Smith:** Sarah turned her love of physics into an opportunity to teach girls about the Bernoulli and



Coanda effects. For her project, *Wonders of Water*, she constructed an interactive water table for

Girlstart and created an educational program to teach other girls about physics and inspire girls to pursue STEM fields.

**Abigail Stanfield:** Abigail created a free online resource for students who want to learn more



about music and participate in their school's band. The project, *Music For All; Big or Small*, includes interviews

with mentors and band directors. She was inspired after realizing a younger Girl Scout troop that she mentors knew very little about the musical opportunities available to them in high school.

**Savannah Sullivan:** The *Be A.W.A.R.E. (Advocating Wisdom Acceptance Respect and Empathy)*



project, is changing the way Lago Vista High School students view classmates with differing abilities.

Now part of the high school's health curriculum, the project raises awareness and understanding

through interactive stimulation activities focused on hearing, visual, and physical disabilities using a workbook Savannah created.

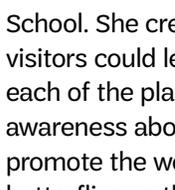
**Shelby Sult:** For her project, *Students in DiSTRESS*, Shelby combined art and photography to



raise awareness about the mounting pressures high school students face and the negative side

effects of stress. She gathered research online and conducted surveys with students to inspire positive changes to relieve stress. She also taught art classes as an outlet for fellow students to relieve tension and relax.

**Lauren Tharp:** Along with one of her elementary school teachers, Lauren created a *database that identifies and gives information about 20 native plants* located on the campus of Redeemer Lutheran



School. She created QR codes so visitors could learn more about each of the plants in order to raise awareness about the plants and to promote the well-being of Monarch butterflies as they migrate to and from Mexico.

**Jenny Vasicek:** In an effort to get her church's youth group healthy and active, Jenny created the



*Wellness Challenge* project to motivate her peers to get moving and embrace healthy eating. Her project

included creating a "Couch to 5K" program, daily healthy reminder cards, and motivational prints. She also created a blog with motivational messages from the Bible and weekly inspirational messages.

**Emma Vollentine:** Emma worked with the City of Hutto, local architects, and community volunteers to



create a dog park in her community. She led discussions on concepts and ideas for the park with committee

members and worked on three separate designs before landing on a *Hutto Dog Park and Agility Course*, which includes agility courses. Hutto residents can now skip a 20- to 45-minute drive to the nearest dog park and spend more time with their pets.

**Sandra Weber:** After rallying members of her community, Sandra built *two picnic tables to be*



*used by youth at the Adelphi Gardens Community.* Her work continued long after the tables

were built. Sandra led painting classes in different locations for younger children so they could paint their own tables one day.

**Delaney White:** Strong in her spiritual faith, Delaney wanted to *provide Christian education*



*resources and activities for children in Costa Rica.* She led 100 children and approximately

75 women in Bible studies, crafts, and English lessons in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, and in surrounding villages.

**Caroline Wills:** Caroline's Gold Award project, *Ready, Set, Read!*, provides a library for the Talitha



Koum Nurture Center, which offers safe, educational, pre- and after-school care for low-income

families. Her thorough research on the negative and lasting effects of inadequate reading materials served as the impetus for the project. She raised money for books, bookcases, bean bags, and other materials.