

Volunteer Appreciation Guide

*A guide recognizing Girl Scout
volunteers in your life—including our
Volunteer Appreciation calendar and an
overview of our Volunteer Recognitions.*

girlscouts 
of greater chicago
and northwest
indiana

You are s'more appreciated than you know!

Volunteers are critical to the success of Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana (GCNWI). Like the graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallow in a perfect s'more, the sweet combination of your time, energy, and dedication helps us achieve our mission. We aspire to create a culture of appreciation where all volunteers feel respected and valued for their contributions.

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month. We want to celebrate YOU!

Check out our [Volunteer Appreciation](#) page for messages, videos, updates, and more.

April is all about YOU!

Join us for camp style fun, and definitely s'mores, at our Volunteer Appreciation Events:

Sunday, April 6

Camp Greene Wood

(In conjunction with Camp Open House)

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 12

Joliet Gathering Place

10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 13

Camp Butternut Springs

(In conjunction with Camp Open House)

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 3

Vernon Hills Gathering Place

2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 4

Camp Palos

(In conjunction with Camp Open House)

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.



Shops will be open at each event, including pop-up shops at our camp locations!

Please RSVP for our events by clicking [here](#) or scanning the QR code.

This guide is full of ways to recognize volunteers, ranging from quick, easy ways to show gratitude, to fun events and activities you can invite volunteers to attend, to our formal adult recognition program. The guide even includes a patch program for girls to explore volunteer appreciation. We hope it offers you some sweet ideas to celebrate everyone who makes Girl Scouts happen!



*Point your
camera here
to RSVP*

Volunteer Appreciation

Every day, Girl Scout volunteers encourage girls as they explore their true potential. Volunteers provide experiences that allow girls to pursue their interests, passions, causes they care about, and leadership roles.

We appreciate our Girl Scout volunteers s'more than you know!

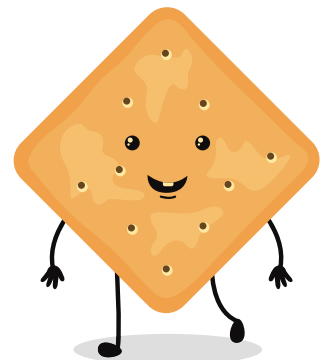
Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, girls are standing up, standing out, and standing tall. We encourage girls, families, and other volunteers to do something sweet to thank volunteers for all they do.

Here are some ways to show your gratitude:

- ▶ Explore the meaning of appreciation and giving back by completing the Attitude of Gratitude Patch Program. Girls can earn the patch and order them through our shop (see details on pages 4-5).
- ▶ There is no better way to say “thank you” than by nominating someone for a formal volunteer recognition. Nominations are open now! Board Approved Awards will close on April 30 (see details on pages 6-15).
- ▶ Treat that special volunteer to lunch and tell them how much they mean to you.
- ▶ Write a song praising your awesome volunteer and sing it at your next meeting.
- ▶ Create a photo album of your troop's activities and give it to your volunteer.
- ▶ Celebrate your favorite volunteer by emailing a personalized eCard.
- ▶ Plant a tree in their honor for a lasting sign of gratitude.
- ▶ A hug, high five or fist bump, and a “thank you” go a long way in showing volunteers how much you appreciate them.
- ▶ Get a bucket of chalk and write notes of thanks and appreciation outside of your meeting place.
- ▶ Make a volunteer appreciation video thanking your troop volunteers for all they do.
- ▶ Volunteer “me” time. Volunteers dedicate considerable amounts of personal time to their troop. Repay them by giving them “me” time, such as a free night of babysitting.
- ▶ Create a thank you box. Have troop members write special messages on index cards, put them in the box, and give them to your volunteer.
- ▶ Create a s'mores kit with traditional or nontraditional s'mores ingredients, like graham crackers, chocolate, and marshmallows, with a fun note about the ways volunteers sweeten your Girl Scout experience!

When is the best time to appreciate your Girl Scout volunteers?

ALL THE TIME! Anytime is a good time to let volunteers know the impact they make. However, we officially celebrate **Volunteer Appreciation Month** every April, and **April 22** is **National Girl Scout Leader's Day!**





Attitude of Gratitude Patch Program

Gratitude is the process of giving thanks or appreciation for things you already have. Expressing gratitude often inspires a person to return kindness by showing appreciation. Showing appreciation is important to build positive relationships, especially with those who volunteer their time. Being appreciative is also good for the one who shows thanks! Thankfulness can reduce depression, lessen anxiety, support heart health, relieve stress, and even improve sleep*.

This patch program will teach girls what appreciation is, what helpers do, and how to show gratitude in large and small ways through the Three Leadership Keys of **Discover**, **Connect**, and **Take Action**.

Daisy, Brownie, and Junior Requirements

Discover

Complete required activities 1 and 2. Then choose one more activity from 3-5.

1. Discuss the question: What is appreciation?
2. Discuss the question: What is a volunteer?
3. Think about the people who volunteer with Girl Scouts (the Fall Product Manager, the Cookie Manager, parents or other adults who drive you to activities, or anyone else who may help make meetings or events happen). What makes these volunteers special? How can you show them your appreciation and make them feel special for their help?
4. Think about people who volunteer in other areas of your life. Maybe there are people in your faith community, at a local animal shelter, food pantry, or other local organizations. Why do you think people give their time to help in those places? How do you think they might like to be thanked for their service?
5. Research or ask someone: What is Volunteer Appreciation Month? When is it? Can you think of ways to celebrate it?

Connect

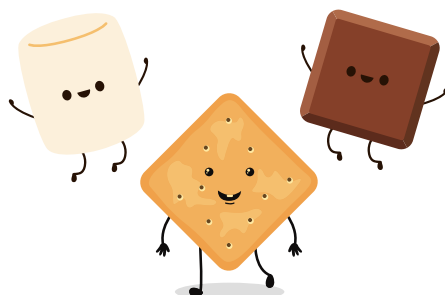
Complete required activities 1 and 2. Then choose one more activity from 3-5.

1. Discuss the question: Why is it important to show appreciation to people who help us?
2. Identify a person in your life who is a volunteer. Who is this person? What volunteer work do they do?
3. Brainstorm two or three creative ways you can thank a volunteer you know, that would be meaningful to them. Then pick one and do it.
4. Create a card, poster, or banner that shows how much you appreciate a volunteer in your life and give it to them.
5. Brainstorm some ways you could celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Month in your community.

Take Action

Choose any two activities.

1. With the help of an adult, look up and learn to say "thank you" in three different languages. Make a short video using your new "thanks yous" to thank a volunteer in your life.
2. Make "thank you" swaps and give them out to volunteers in your community.
3. Perform a random act of kindness in honor of a volunteer in your life. Take a photo or draw a picture to represent what you did and share your story with that volunteer.
4. Find a local organization that is supported by volunteers (maybe one you have worked with already on a badge or community service project, or one that lets Girl Scouts use space for your meetings). Learn how you could help with an appreciation activity in their honor.
5. Learn about the ways that Girl Scout volunteers can be appreciated through council awards. Fill out a **"Just Say Thanks" form** ([girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition](https://www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition)) for at least one adult who helps support Girl Scouts in some way.



Patches are available for purchase at the
Girl Scouts GCNWI shop.

Visit **shop.girlscoutsgcnwi.org**
and search “Attitude of Gratitude”

Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Requirements

Discover

Complete required activity

1. Then choose two activities from 2-4.

1. Research organizations in your community that rely on volunteers and learn why volunteers are so important to supporting their work.

2. Research what types of appreciation is most effective and the appropriate (or right) time to recognize.
3. Learn about what Volunteer Appreciation Month is and brainstorm some ways that you might celebrate it.
4. Brainstorm a list of ways that volunteers could be appreciated that do not cost anything.



Connect

Complete required activity 1.

Then choose two activities from 2-5.

1. Chat with a volunteer in your life and find out what they like best about volunteering. Find out: Why did they become a volunteer? Are there any challenges to being a volunteer?

2. Write a letter, poem, song, or create a piece of art to show how volunteers have made an impact on you personally. Share it with at least one volunteer in your life.
3. Create a word cloud (WordClouds.com) with positive words that describe one of your volunteers and present it to them.
4. Brainstorm two or three creative ways you can show appreciation to volunteers in your life. Pick your favorite and do it.
5. Make a special effort to thank and show appreciation to a variety of volunteers in your life at least once or twice a week during the month of April (Volunteer Appreciation Month) – or some other specified amount of time.

Take Action

Complete required activity 1. Then choose two activities from 2-5.

1. Find a quote about gratitude that speaks to you. Post it where you will see it for daily inspiration and in at least one place where it will also inspire others.

2. Plan a service project in honor of a volunteer in your life. What are ways to incorporate things they like – or work on a cause or with an organization that is special to them?
3. Celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Month by hosting an appreciation event for a local organization.
4. Work with younger Girl Scouts to teach them about appreciation for the volunteers that impact their lives.
5. Learn about volunteer awards given in your community. Nominate someone you know for a local volunteer award or recognition.
6. Learn about Girl Scout Volunteer Recognitions by visiting girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition. Are there individuals that you might be able to nominate, such as someone who volunteers with your Girl Scout activities? Maybe the Cookie Manager, Fall Product Manager, any adults who may have helped you with the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards, parents or other adults who drive you to activities, or anyone else who may help make your meetings or activities happen. Is there someone that volunteers their time with Girl Scouts or another organization that should be recognized? Select one person and nominate them for an award.



Adult Recognition

Each year, we formally recognize Girl Scout adult members, volunteers, service units, staff, and community members for their service to the movement through a variety of awards. Awards include those specific to Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana and national Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA).

We cannot recognize these amazing Girl Scout supporters without your help! Please consider recognizing those who go above and beyond by nominating them for an award.

All forms can be found at www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition. Questions can be directed to adultrecognition@girlscoutsgcnwi.org.

Service Unit Info Sessions

The Adult Recognition Team is happy to speak to service units about awards and the nomination process! If you would like to request a member of the Adult Recognition Team to come to your meeting, whether virtual or in-person, please reach out to adultrecognition@girlscoutsgcnwi.org to request a visit!

Office Hours

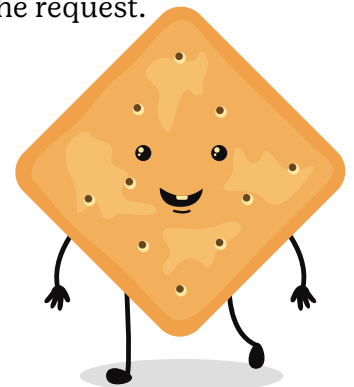
The Adult Recognition Team will be hosting virtual office hours in February, March, and April to support anyone who has questions about Adult Recognitions. Please visit www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition for more information.

Informal Recognition

Just Say Thanks

Help us recognize and say thanks to all the amazing individuals who make Girl Scouting happen in our communities! The Just Say Thanks initiative allows you to identify outstanding individuals who should receive an expression of appreciation from Girl Scouts GCNWI CEO, Nancy Wright. A card will be sent to individuals within several weeks of submitting the request.

- Fill out the **“Just Say Thanks” form** (girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition)
- Requests are open year-round



Formal Awards

Formal Awards recognize volunteers, community partners, and staff for outstanding service that makes a significant impact on Girl Scouts and our council. Each award has specific requirements and approval processes.

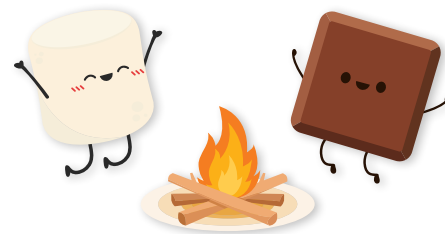
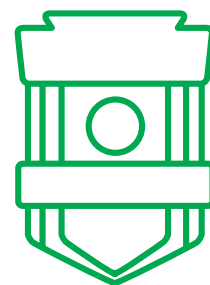
FAQ: Formal Awards

- Who can submit a nomination or endorsement? Anyone! The only exception to this rule is that family members may not submit a nomination or endorsement for someone they are related to.
- How many times can someone earn an award? Nominated awards should only be received once.
- Does someone need to receive certain awards before they can receive others? No, they do not (except in the case of the Thanks Badge 1 and 2). While it is not required, the awards are created in a progression to allow for continued recognition as a volunteer's involvement grows and expands.
- How do I know if someone has received a nominated award? Service units may have records, or you can reach out to adultrecognition@girlscoutsgcnwi.org

Years of Service Award

Presented to adult members, recognizing their years of service to Girl Scouts.

- Awardees are registered adult Girl Scouts with five years of active adult membership.
- Presented every five years thereafter (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, etc.).
- Years of Service are tracked automatically through the registration system. This record is how we know who is eligible each year for an award.
- Years of Service may be updated using the **Years of Service Modification form** (girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition).
- This award may be presented by the service unit to members or at our council-wide Adult Recognition Events which are typically held in the Fall.
- Service Unit Managers will receive a copy of the Years of Service records for their service unit in early spring.
- Service units may request free Years of Service Pins by filling out the **SU Award Request & Reporting Form** (girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition).
- Awardees with records indicating they are in an award year will receive an email invite to the council-wide recognition event.
- Awardees whose records may be incorrect and did not receive an invite are welcome to submit a Modification Form and register for the event of their choice.



How to check your Years of Service Record

- Go to www.girlscoutsgcnwi.org and click **MyGS**.
- Login to your account and click **My Account**.
- Click **My Household**.
- Click **Edit Profile** of the person you wish to view. Years of Service will be listed on the page it directs you to.

Please note: GCNWI uses the Adult Years for Years of Service tracking.

Service Unit Approved Awards



The next three awards are approved and presented by the service unit to local volunteers and are typically earned in the order they appear in this booklet. The nomination process is as follows:

- Nominators fill out the **Service Unit Approved Awards Nomination Form**. The form is submitted to the service unit for approval.
- The service unit team, or designated volunteers within the service unit, accept, review, and approve nominations.
- Once approved, the service unit will report awardees to the council and can request pins using the **SU Award Request & Reporting Form**. Pins and customizable PDF certificates are provided at no cost to the service unit. Service units are responsible for notifying and presenting awards to awardees.
- **Deadline:** Submission Deadline is set by the service unit, typically in the spring.

New Found Treasure



Recognizes a Girl Scout adult who has been registered for less than two years and has hit the ground running. This person has made a positive impact on Girl Scouting and their performance is so outstanding that it merits recognition.

- Nominee must be a registered adult member who has served as a volunteer for **two years or less**.
- **Nomination form required.**

Shining Star (previously Hidden Hero)



Recognizes a Girl Scout adult who embodies the Girl Scout principle “to help where I am needed”. This volunteer has gone above and beyond assisting in special projects, ongoing tasks, and support of Girl Scout programs in this person’s service unit, troop, or other program delivery group. They continually accept new assignments to keep Girl Scouts thriving.

- Nominee must be a registered adult member.
- **Nomination form required.**

Volunteer of Excellence



Recognizes adult members who have contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with Girl Scouts in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through use of the national program portfolio, or who have contributed outstanding service in support of the council’s mission delivery to members.

- Nominee must be a registered adult member.
- **Nomination form required plus ONE letter of endorsement from two different people required.**

Board Approved Awards

These awards are approved and presented at the council level. The GCNWI Adult Recognition Team reviews nominations to ensure all criteria are met and all awards are approved by the Board of Directors. Nominators and approved awardees will be notified in summer and invited to the council-wide recognition events held in the fall. Awards for individual volunteers are typically earned in the order in which they appear in this booklet. The nomination process is as follows:



- Family members of nominees may not submit nomination or endorsements.
- Nominators use the **Board Approved Nomination form** (girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition) to nominate an awardee.
- Awards may require additional **Letters of Endorsement** (girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition). Please note, nominators are not allowed to submit letters of endorsement for nominations they submit.
- Deadline for Nominations: April 30, 2025
- Deadline for Letters of Endorsement: May 7, 2025

President's Award

Recognizes the efforts of a service unit to enhance Girl Scouting in its community during the membership year. Their exemplary service in support of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience led them to surpassing team goals and resulted in significant, measurable impact towards achieving the council's overall goals.



- All service unit team members are currently registered Girl Scouts.
- All service unit team members have met all requirements and expectations of the position held.
- Service unit has shown growth and met at least one service unit goal this membership year.
- Service unit has demonstrated that they are actively trying to engage volunteers and members through meetings, trainings, and events and have held a minimum of three of these activities (outside of normal service unit meetings). These events can serve volunteers, girl members, families, or be used to recruit new members.
- The service unit has significantly contributed to community improvement of the geographic area they serve through a service project or Girl Scout Leadership Experience "Take Action" project.
- Service unit is committed to reflecting the diversity of the area it serves.
- Service unit actively recognizes, understands, and practices the values of inclusive behavior.
- **Nomination form required.** Submission should come from a service unit team member, or an individual tasked by the service unit to submit the nomination.
- Nominations will be reviewed to ensure criteria is met by both representatives of Adult Recognition and staff members familiar with the service unit's work and goals.



Appreciation Pin

Recognizes a Girl Scout adult who has provided outstanding service to at least **one** service unit or program delivery audience, helping reach and surpass the area and council's goals.

- Registered adult Girl Scout member.
- Service goes above and beyond the expectation of their role(s), impacting at least **one** audience.
- Service expands beyond the troop level.
- **Nomination form** plus **TWO letters of endorsement from three different people required.**

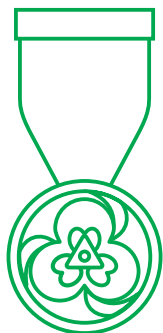
Honor Pin



Recognizes a Girl Scout adult who has provided outstanding service to at least **two** service unit or program delivery audiences, helping reach and surpass the area and council's goals.

- Registered adult Girl Scout member.
- Service goes above and beyond the expectation of their role(s), impacting at least **two** audiences.
- Service expands beyond the troop level.
- **Nomination form** plus **THREE letters of endorsement from four different people required.**

Thanks Badge



Recognizes an individual who has provided exceptional, outstanding service that benefits the **total council or entire movement**. The service is so significantly above and beyond the call of duty that no other award would be appropriate.

- Registered adult Girl Scout member.
- Service benefits the total council or entire movement.
- **Nomination form** plus **FOUR letters of endorsement from five different people required.**

Thanks Badge II



Recognizes an individual who has previously received the Thanks Badge. This person's work has continued to expand and provide exceptional, outstanding service to the **total council or entire Girl Scout movement**.

- Registered adult Girl Scout member.
- **Has received the Thanks Badge.**
- Service has expanded since receiving the Thanks Badge and benefits the total council or entire Girl Scout movement.
- **Nomination form** plus **FOUR letters of endorsement from five different people required.**

Hall of Fame

Recognizes individuals who have been an adult member for ***at least 25 years***, has delivered service that far exceeds the expectation of any position, and has had a lasting impact on the Girl Scout organization. This award will be presented to a maximum of 10 people per year and may be awarded posthumously.

- Individual is a current or former registered adult Girl Scout member for at least ***25 years***.
- Candidate must be in good standing with the council.
- Service exceeds expectations of any role.
- Has provided service that has left a long-lasting impact on the ***total council or the entire Girl Scout organization***.
- **Nomination form** plus **FOUR** letters of endorsement from five different people required.



D.A.I.S.Y. (Dynamic and Incredible Staff of the Year)

This award recognizes the outstanding service by a staff member that goes far beyond the expectations of the employee's job description. This award can be presented to a maximum of three people per year.

- Their work has resulted in the development of partnerships with volunteers/community leaders in at least one service unit or program delivery audience.
- Their service goes far beyond the expectations of the position and will benefit the entire council beyond the staff members tenure.
- Their work supports the achievements of the council's goals.
- Registered adult Girl Scout member.
- Employed by Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana with a minimum of three (3) years in the staff position.
- **Nomination form** plus **TWO** letters of endorsement required from at least three different people. At least one letter must be from a volunteer and at least one letter must be from a staff member.



GCNWI Community Awards

These awards recognize community partners who support Girl Scouting in a variety of ways. These awards may be presented to an individual, group, business, or organization.

- **Requires Community Award Nomination Form.**
(girlscoutsgcnwi.org/recognition)
- Nominations are accepted year-round and are reviewed quarterly.
- Girl Scout membership is not required.
- **Please Note:** Nominations looking to recognize Girl Scout staff or volunteers for their work within those roles will not be accepted. Nominators will be directed to resubmit for other awards.



Girl Scout Enthusiast

Recognizes an individual, group, business, or organization that has given meaningful, outstanding service at the **local/community level**.

- **Nomination form required.**
- Reviewed and approved quarterly by the Adult Recognition Team.
- Nominator will be contacted on the status of the nomination and next steps. If approved, a framed certificate will be provided at no cost. Nominators will have the option of receiving the certificate directly so they can inform and present the award locally or the award can be mailed directly to the awardee.



Girl Scout Hero

Recognizes an individual, group, business, or organization that has given meaningful, outstanding service at the **council level**.

- **Nomination form required.**
- Reviewed by the Adult Recognition Team to ensure nomination meets criteria. Approved by the Board of Directors in cadence with yearly Board Meeting schedule.
- Nominator will be contacted on the status of the nomination and next steps. A framed certificate will be provided at no cost. Nominators will have the option of receiving the certificate directly so they can inform and present the award locally or the award can be mailed directly to the awardee. Hero Awards can also be presented at the council-wide recognition events.

Tips for Submitting Great Award Nominations and Endorsements

You know how amazing your nominees are and we want to know too! Nomination and Endorsement Forms are how the Adult Recognition Team gets to know the candidate. Being thoughtful and specific will help create a strong submission and an easier approval process!

When writing a nomination, be sure to include:

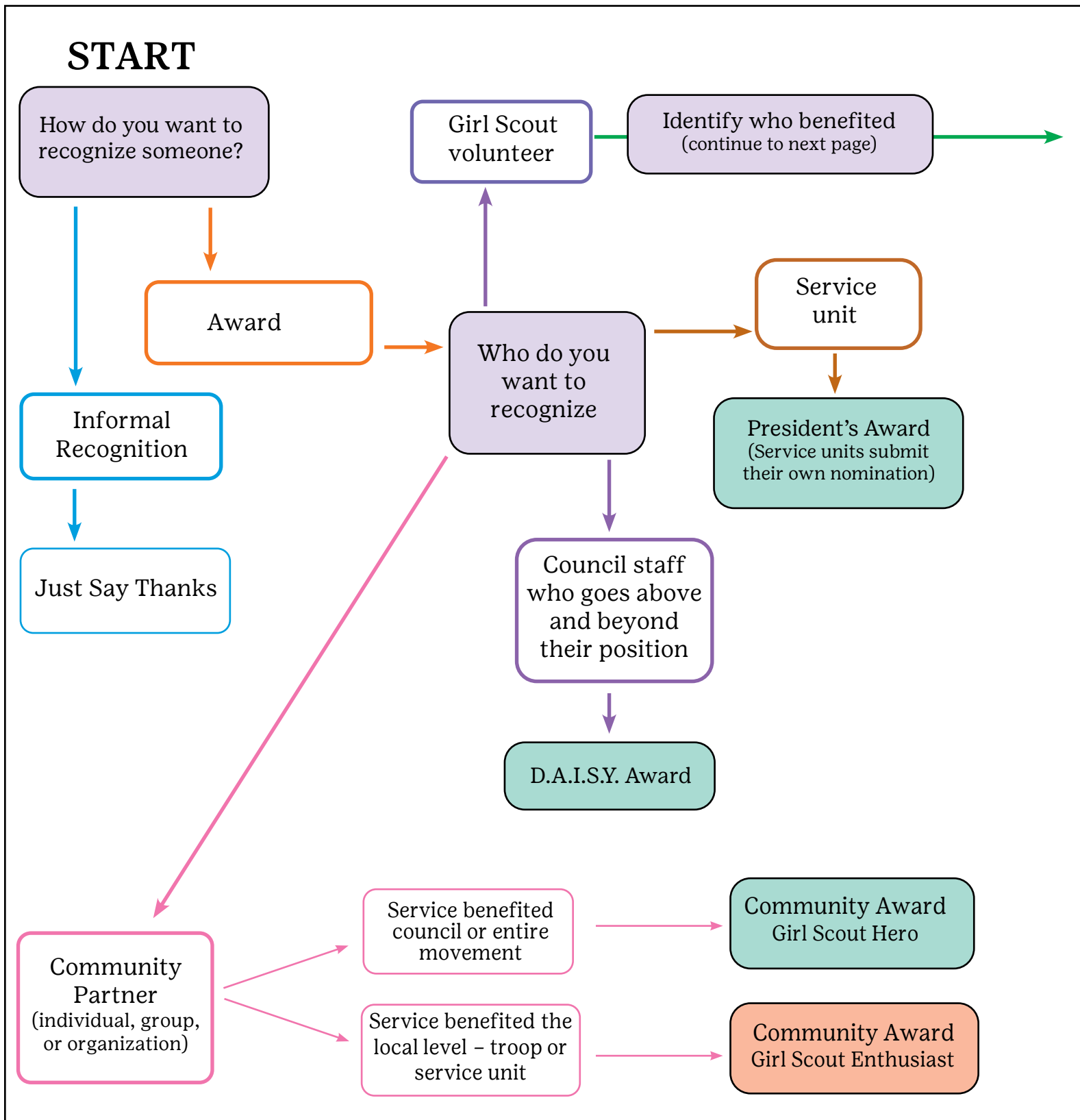
- How the nominee met the award criteria and why this award is appropriate.
- How they have exceeded expectations of their role or involvement.
- What impact they have had and on who.
- Specific examples of their work.

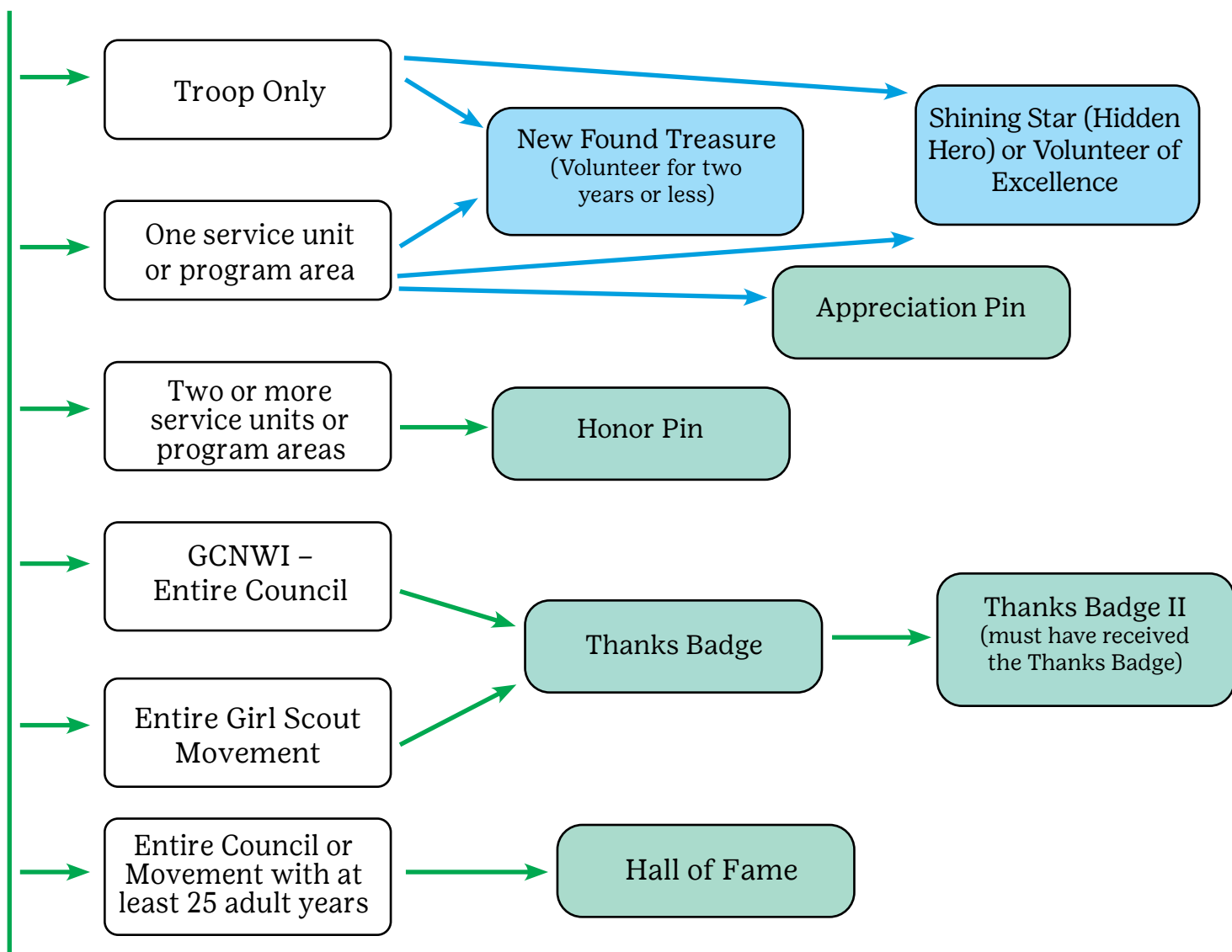
INITIAL STATEMENT	THOUGHTFULLY CONSIDER	STRONG NOMINATION STATEMENT
<i>"She has been a leader for a long time."</i>	How many years? Through which levels? What impact has that had?	<i>"For 11 years, she has led a large troop that started as Daisies and persevered through the difficult middle school years, when many drop out. Her Girl Scouts are now Ambassadors and have recently welcomed three new members from other troops that have disbanded. She never turns a girl away!"</i>
<i>"He is a great leader."</i>	What kind of leadership qualities does he bring? What makes him stand out?	<i>"He continually brings leadership opportunities to the troop. He encourages a girl-led approach by allowing the troop to help plan and research their activities. They also vote and take on leadership roles when implementing their activities. His approach has allowed girls to learn budgeting, project management, and overseas travel planning."</i>
<i>"She always goes above and beyond."</i>	Be specific – tell a story about the great benefits those around her receive due to her efforts.	<i>"Her troop voted to start the aMuse Journey. Because she has never considered herself a "creative soul" when it came to artistic endeavors, she recruited troop parents, artists, and actors as resources for her troop to draw from. As a result, they have had a great time meeting community experts and discovering parent talent in their own troop! They now have several opportunities for Take Action projects because of these connections."</i>
<i>"He is a dad who helps whenever needed."</i>	Be specific – tell a story about the support given and how Girl Scouts benefited.	<i>"When he found out we wanted to start camping, he volunteered to get fully outdoor and first aid trained for the troop. He came to the rescue during a troop camp-out when the troops discovered a nest of baby rattlesnakes in camp! He kept both the girls and leaders calm as he assisted in striking camp, all the while educating the girls about snakes and safety. The girls felt save, and in control, thanks to the good guidance he offered."</i>
<i>"Ms. Smith supports our service unit"</i>	How? What impact did that have on Girl Scouting? How does it go above and beyond?	<i>"Ms. Smith has kept our service unit going! When she found out we lost our meeting space, she welcomed us into her space, waving rental fees. Once we started meeting at her venue, she took an interest in the events we were planning and invited us to host them in her sister location for free. She has also connected us to other community partners to assist in our event planning."</i>

Questions about Adult Recognition? Email adultrecognition@girlscoutsgcnwi.org.

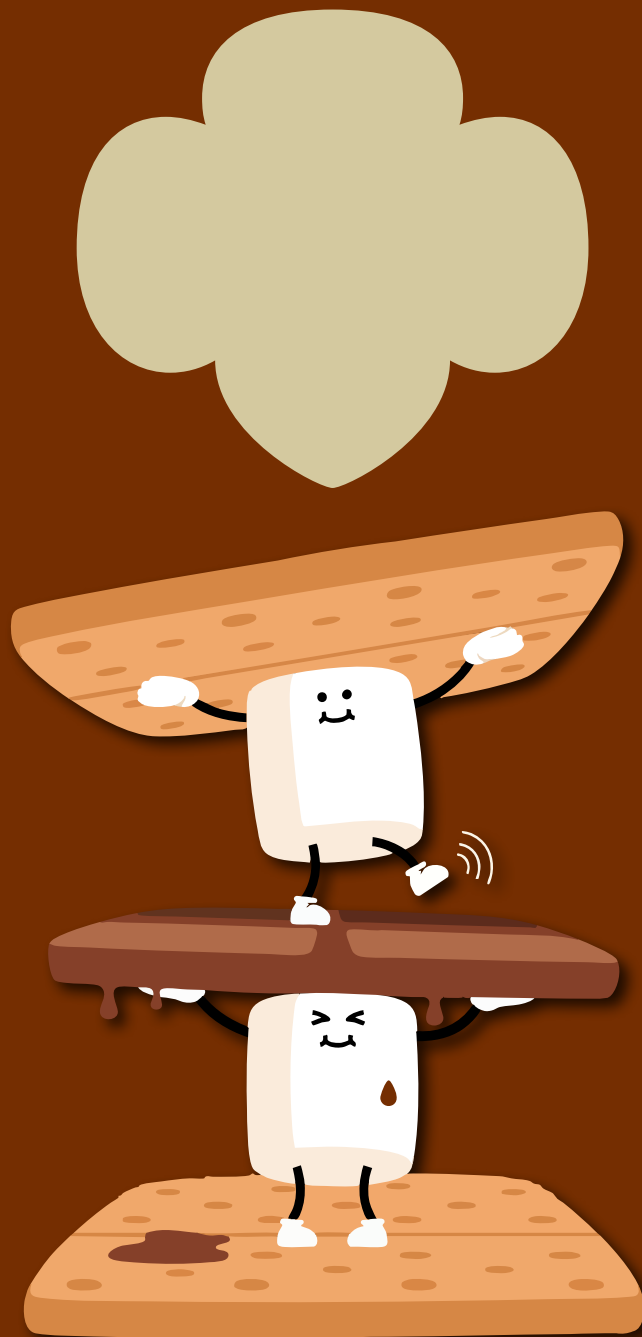
Which Award is Right?

Do you know a great volunteer who you would like to nominate for an award? Use the chart below to help you find the right award for the service they provide to girls, the community, or a service unit.





- = Service Unit Approve Award
- = Board Approved Awards
- = Adult Recognition Team Approved



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