

We are history makers. We are Girl Scouts.

2019–2020 Girl Scouts Of Northern Illinois Annual Report



“The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers.”

JULIETTE GORDON LOW

Since our founding in 1912, Girl Scouts has been at the forefront of history.

We have grown and guided countless generations of leaders from our ranks over the past century. When we began to understand more about the devastating pandemic sweeping our world, we knew it was time to prepare for the challenges we would be facing. History would be made during this time, and Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois would do what we always do—lead with courage, confidence, and character.

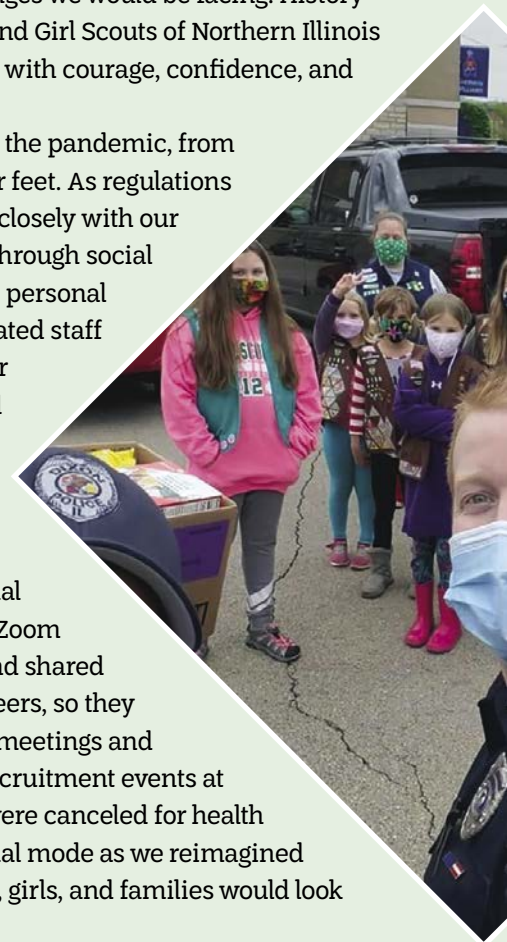
We spent the first six months of the pandemic, from March–September, learning on our feet. As regulations changed daily, we communicated closely with our volunteers and member families through social media and our website, along with personal phone calls and emails. Our dedicated staff worked around the clock to answer questions, reassuring our girls and their families that we would still be there for them with quality connections and continuity in an uncertain time.

Staff members took on additional responsibilities as they navigated Zoom meetings and online gatherings and shared their new-found skills with volunteers, so they could host their own virtual troop meetings and activities. Our typical in-person recruitment events at schools and community centers were canceled for health and safety, so we pivoted to a virtual mode as we reimagined how reaching potential volunteers, girls, and families would look in this new world.

Like many other non-profits, we had to adjust to a dramatic drop in revenue. The pandemic negatively affected our cookie program, our largest revenue stream. The cancellation of our Over the Edge 4 Girl Scouts fundraising event saw us lose even more ground financially. Our committed Board of Directors supported us as we worked to reduce our expenses as much as possible.

As we moved into our 2021 fiscal year, our staff who had given selflessly of their time were required to reduce their work hours and salary by 20% from October 2020 through March 2021. Sadly, we were forced to eliminate nine full time positions, either temporarily or permanently. Fortunately, we received two loans through the Payroll Protection Program and applied for employment tax credits which allowed us to bring staff back to full time hours and pay as of April 2021.

There were many moments of Girl Scout joy this year as we saw how our innovative spin on virtual programs provided many girls with a safe place to land—among their friends and Girl Scout sisters. Our virtual recruitment events, nicknamed SnapShots, saw us reaching local girls and families who had long been searching for a place to belong.



The Bridging photo wrapping around the cover feature the girls of Troop 933/940: (left to right) Maggie Z., Vivian T., Yamina S., Faith B., Melly R., Lilli M., Connie A., Emily M., and Katelyn M.



We were one of the very few councils in the nation to see an increase in our older Girl Scout membership in 2020! Our virtual programs included many of our own members and Girl Scouts from across the country, earning rave reviews from participants. In a time of increased family togetherness, we were able to open our camp properties for Girl Scout families to safely spend time together in the great outdoors with top-notch accommodations.

Looking forward in 2021, we're excited to announce our council applied for and received a Restore, Reinvest, Renew (R3) Grant in the amount of nearly \$250,000 from The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority! The R3 program provides grants to support communities impacted by horrible violence and concentrated disinvestment, identified by high rates of gun injuries, child poverty, unemployment, and incarceration. We will join other grantees who will offer evidence-based, promising, and innovative practices within the priority areas of civil legal aid, economic development, community re-entry from the criminal justice system, violence prevention, and youth development.

There were many of these events shaping our culture during this year. This made us take a hard, searching look at our past, present, and future. As an organization, we owned up to mistakes and missteps in our history. We began the long, intentional work on educating ourselves on

inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and racial justice. Our staff is currently partaking in a 21-week equity challenge with one of our non-profit partners and hoping to bring what they've learned to volunteers, girls, and families in this upcoming year.

We are hopefully watching the pandemic come to a close and eagerly positioning ourselves for growth in this new membership year. We are anticipating a full return to in-person meetings, activities, and community service. Our members stood by us, and their loyalty and strength have filled us with hope. Our donors stepped forward in a time of great need and invested generously in tomorrow's leaders. Our volunteers have proven themselves again as the unbending, unbreaking backbone of the Girl Scout Movement, and we are humbled by their Girl Scout pride.

As we look back on this remarkable year, we are proud to say we stood together to meet the challenge—our girls, volunteers, families, donors, and supporters.



We are history makers. We are Girl Scouts.

Sincerely,

Fiona Cummings, GSNI CEO

Scott McCleary, GSNI Board Chair



Our Vision

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois will be every girl's first choice for developing her own leadership potential through meaningful opportunities and relationships.



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GSNI Highlights

Outdoor Program

The health and safety of our campers is always our top priority at GSNI. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resident camp and day camp at all our camp properties were cancelled for summer 2020. Our committed Outdoor Program team had to pivot quickly to re-imagine how Girl Scout camp would look and feel in this new world, while holding to the same high quality camp standards Girl Scouts always provides. Thanks to our dedicated staff, GSNI was able to deliver exceptional Virtual Outdoor Experiences for our own members and for Girl Scouts all over the country.

Each week our team faithfully packed kits with supplies for girls to participate in Virtual Outdoor Experiences. Kits were shipped to homes in time for each camper to participate. During the six weeks of Virtual Outdoor Experiences, girls:

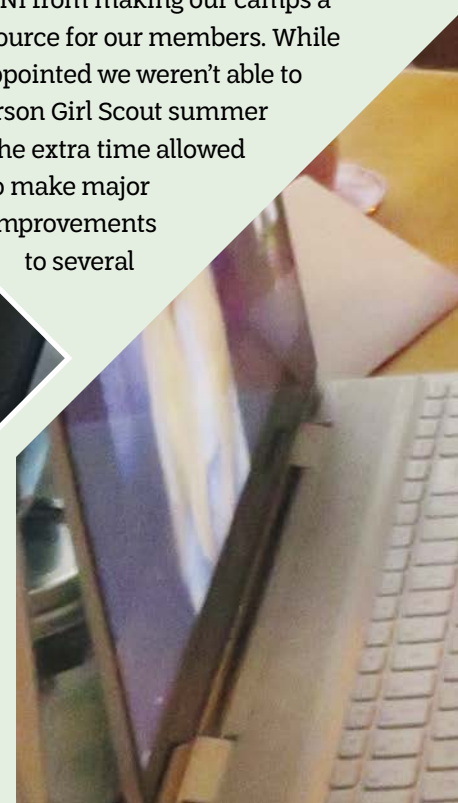
- ◆ Connected with astronomers and learned to use an app to locate constellations and planets.
- ◆ Learned how to make art in nature
- ◆ Dressed up for a tea party with a princess
- ◆ Engaged with a GSNI volunteer on her experiences at space camp
- ◆ Made and launched film canister rockets
- ◆ Observed clouds and trees and shared data with NASA through apps to become citizen scientists

At the end of each week, families were able to join a virtual campfire and sing along.

Overall a total of 155 girls participated in our first ever Virtual Outdoor Experience with 28 girls participating from other councils throughout the country! These girls were able to fully experience sisterhood throughout the Girl Scout Movement.

Property

COVID-19 was especially difficult for camps worldwide, but it did not stop GSNI from making our camps a great outdoor resource for our members. While we were disappointed we weren't able to hold in-person Girl Scout summer camp, the extra time allowed us to make major improvements to several



buildings and camp activity areas during the spring and summer months at all our camps.

The biggest additions in 2019-2020 were the McCleary Shaff Lodge and Pond Side Lodge at Camp Dean. The new all-season cabins are part of GSNI's ongoing Long Range Property Plan and include quality heating and air conditioning. Each cabin also provides comfortable sleeping quarters and feature two flushing toilets.

Significant remodeling also took place inside Whispering Oaks at Camp Dean, along with Greenwood at Camp McCormick. A new archery range and tube slides were installed at Camp Far Horizons. The zip line tower at Mary Ann Beebe Center was updated with a new landing deck and an aerator added to the pond to keep the water from becoming stagnant. We also installed a new slack line course. Most of the projects were funded all or in part by grants and individual donors! We are truly grateful to everyone who has supported our camp projects, making our camps so much more enjoyable for members and guests.

Special thanks to Scott and Kelly McCleary who made a significant, multi-year funding commitment in support of the McCleary Shaff Lodge at Camp Dean. Their contribution provided needed funding to help make the cabins a reality and to furnish them.

“Before Girl Scouts, I was a shy third grader and too quiet for my own good. There was no way I would be comfortable talking to new people, let alone several at once. Working on my Gold Award and with my community, it allowed my character to grow. It takes courage to stand up and make positive change, showing the world how uniting our differences makes us stronger. I am so proud to be a Girl Scout, and I cannot wait to continue leading in the future!” ELIZABETH MONTANO





Dozens of other donors contributed to the Buy-A-Bunk, Fund-A-Fridge, and Fill the Cabins campaigns, ensuring the cabins are complete and ready to accommodate Girl Scouts!

Our camp properties continue to be a haven for Girl Scout families seeking outdoor recreation and safe accommodation. We also offer our properties for rental, so families can stay overnight and participate in facilitated activities such as canoeing, archery, zip lining, and tomahawk throwing!

Girl Leadership

Over 100 people attended *Aspire: Women and the Power of Change*—our second annual teen leadership conference—on November 9, 2019, at Elgin Community College. Attendees were welcomed by Dr. Sam, President of Elgin Community College, and Elgin Chief of Police Ana Lalley gave an inspiring and engaging keynote speech to girls and adults attending the conference.

Throughout various sessions, girls learned how to have an entrepreneurial mindset, received first-hand experience on pursuing the Girl Scout Gold Award, created a vision for their future,

and fulfilled partial badge requirements relating to Finding Common Ground, Truth Seeker, and Public Policy. The event also hosted special guests including then-GSUSA CEO Sylvia Acevedo and GSUSA Director of National Entrepreneurship Strategy Chris Salley-Davis who both shared Girl Scout pride and spirit with all attendees. GSNI was especially grateful for financial support from the Hoffer Foundation which made the event more affordable for girls and their families.

GSNI was also one of only six councils awarded a \$20,000 grant for participation in the National Entrepreneurship Badge Pilot Program—a

grant made possible by Susan Bulkeley Butler. From November 1–December 16, 2019, 30 GSNI Kindergarten–grade 12 troops participated in the pilot research for GSUSA’s entrepreneurship program.

Each troop tested new badge content for their assigned grade level and completed experience documentation. GSNI Girl Scouts were among the first to try these new entrepreneurship badge activities and helped develop national entrepreneurship program by providing valuable feedback. Participating troops earned a \$100 gift card to support troop-related program expenses!

On August 8, 2020, GSNI hosted our 2020 Girl Recognition Gala, YouTube Premiere event, featuring:

- ◆ 16 Girl Scouts who completed their Girl Scout Gold Awards between March 16, 2019–March 15, 2020
- ◆ 6 Girl Scout who were selected to receive 2020 GSNI scholarships
- ◆ 86 Girl Scouts who earned the Girl Scout Silver Award
- ◆ 195 Girl Scouts who earned the Girl Scout Bronze Award

Combined, GSNI’s Gold, Silver, and Bronze Award Girl Scouts contributed over 8,000 hours of Take Action in their communities!

Member Experience

GSNI recognized the impact COVID-19 could have on our Girl Scout families as soon as the first shut down was announced in March 2020. As we were poised to enter our Early Renewal Campaign for 2021, we made the bold decision to give Girl Scout families hope that their girls could continue in Girl Scouts—to have consistency and valuable connection with their peers and adult mentors during this challenging time. Through Our Girl

Scout Gift, GSNI paid membership fees for any girl or adult who renewed their membership between April 15–June 30, 2020.

Though we knew it would be a rough road ahead of us with COVID-19, Our Girl Scout Gift encouraged Girl Scouts throughout our council to continue their Girl Scout experience at home. By the end of our Early Renewal Campaign, we had 66% of our membership renewed, thanks to Our Girl Scout Gift. This provided a strong base for solid member retention for 2021!

At the beginning of the shutdown, GSNI created a cross-departmental committee to develop virtual Girl Scout programming support for troops, families, and girls throughout the council. One highlight was the GSNI at Home webpage on our website. GSNI at Home became the vital hub for girls, families, and volunteers to find national and local virtual resources for badges, Girl Scout programming, family resources, and volunteer assistance.

Resources developed for GSNI at Home went through a rigorous approval process to ensure all activities followed current health and safety guidelines at local and federal levels. The safety of our members was the top priority when customizing badge and patch activities for girls and families.

Shortly after we launched our GSNI at Home page, Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) launched a national Girl Scouts at Home website. The two websites were then connected to ensure GSNI families were aware of all virtual activities and programs GSUSA and councils across the nation were creating for girls, volunteers, and families during this time.



In July 2020, GSNI launched gsLearn to our members. gsLearn is GSUSA's online learning system to house trainings and courses for Girl Scout adult members, volunteers, council staff, and girls, ages 13–18. GSUSA launched new volunteer trainings in the system in early 2020, and we revamped our required trainings for all new leaders for 2021.

Due to COVID-19, required trainings which were typically done in a classroom setting were now done through gsLearn as a virtual Live Session course or webinar. gsLearn allowed us to bring trainings and courses to volunteer homes to be done in comfort at their convenience.

After rolling out New Leader Training in July 2020, GSNI launched Fall Product Program Training in gsLearn in August 2020. This allowed our Volunteer Resources Team to work closely with our Product Program Team to ensure all new system and processes worked seamlessly for our volunteers.

150 volunteers took the Fall Product Program Training, and 25 new leaders completed the New Leader Training path by September 30, 2020!

GSUSA and GSNI have an extensive roadmap of trainings that are in development for the next few years as we continue to learn more about gsLearn and how it can fulfill member needs. Upcoming trainings will include Highest Awards, Service Unit Roles, Mental Health, Level Trainings, GSNI's Flourish program, and more!

AmeriCorps & Alternative Program Delivery

In 2019–20, 1,385 girls participated in facilitator-led troops across seven northern Illinois communities, including Aurora, Boone County, Carpentersville, DeKalb, Elgin (U-46 School District), McHenry,

and Rockford! Girls completed a range of skill-builder badges, with hands-on activities including practicing how to keep themselves organized, building independence, developing ideas to start their own businesses, and exploring the science of outer space.

As COVID-19 cut short in-person meetings in the spring, our facilitators found ways to ensure girls still had access to Girl Scout programming—from hosting virtual meetings to developing at-home badge activities girls could easily complete on their own. Dedicated facilitators recorded videos to guide families through activities and assembled kits of program supplies to drop off directly to girls and families at home, along with schools, community centers, mobile food pantries, and other neighborhood sites.

Girl Experience

In 2019, GSNI was selected as a Girl Scouts of the USA Global Roundtable Hosting Team! We were excited to partner with a team from St. Lucia that would also be attending the Global Roundtable in October 2020 at G.I.R.L. 2020.

GSNI Girl Scouts Tatum and Brianna applied and were selected, along with Girl Scout adults Jane and Rachel, to represent GSNI at this event. The group met with the team of two Girl Guides and two adults from St. Lucia via several Zoom sessions where the girls worked to earn their Global Action Award together.

The two groups were to meet in person in Orlando at G.I.R.L. 2020 but concerns over the worldwide pandemic prevented the event from taking place in-person. Instead, the team took part in the virtual wrap-up of the Global Roundtable. They learned about other cultures and engaged in an inspiring conversation about the value of all-girl spaces!

In response to local COVID-19 health and safety guidelines for in-person events, GSNI also worked tirelessly to change in-person programs into valuable virtual events. A fan favorite program-turned-virtual event was the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The program used innovative tech and hands-on ways to educate girls on the history of women working to get the right to vote, why it is important to vote, and how to protect the right to vote.



“I can not imagine how different my life would be without Girl Scouts. I strongly feel Girl Scouts has given me so many unique skills that make me stand out. Going through the process of the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Award has taught me leadership in a way that only actually doing a project like that could. It has made me independent, hardworking, and passionate, and I will be forever grateful to this organization for all it has done for me.” TRISTAN KEENE

Recruitment

Our traditional Girl Scout recruitment events looked very different this year! GSNI's committed recruitment team would typically travel extensively throughout the council's service area to schools, fairs, expos, and other large in-person community events. In response to COVID-19 gathering guidelines, they turned to user-friendly technology and online local social groups to innovate and reach families with the lifetime benefits of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience!

Recruiters created, produced, and hosted virtual Girl Scout Snapshots—quick 20-minute activities to introduce new girls to Girl Scouting, while answering any family questions.

Girls learned basic Girl Scout skills through activities like building a fairy house, preparing for the outdoors, making an edible campfire, and

exploring STEM by creating homemade volcanoes.

The switch to virtual recruitment opened new doors for GSNI! Using modern online meeting options, GSNI created three council-wide virtual troops for new Girl Scouts who may not be able to fit a traditional troop in their schedule or may not have a troop at their age level in their area. Girls meet virtually twice a month and work on badges with other girls in their age level. Even though these meetings may look a little different than a traditional, in-person troop, the connections the girls have made with one another are just as strong!

Adversity made us work harder to reach girls and their families where they are, and we're proud to continue to provide this virtual opportunity for girls for many years to come!





Product Program

We were poised on the brink of a truly great 2020 Girl Scout Cookie Program when the first ordered pandemic shutdown began. For the safety of our girls, families, and communities, we made the financially difficult but correct choice to end our 2020 Cookie Booths early.

Immediately, we created a Cookie Program Update response page on our website. With guidelines and protocols changing daily, we worked hard to constantly communicate with leaders, volunteers, and families by answering emails, social media requests, and posting the most current information and frequently asked questions to our website.

As Girl Scouts, we have always known we are part of something larger than ourselves. While we faced this massive shift to our cookie program and our financial future, the unity and strength of

the Girl Scout Movement was clearly evident. We reached out to our sister councils and Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) to brainstorm, engage, encourage, and creatively support one another. In that moment, we confirmed that Girl Scouts working together can accomplish anything!

As we rallied around what we knew and how GSUSA and our baker partner could help with our disrupted cookie season, we opted to extend our online cookie program method. This gave girls the ability to still participate on the Digital Cookie platform for direct ship and donated purchases. GSNI also joined the Eat. Care. Share. national GSUSA campaign. This campaign allowed councils to continue participation on the digital platform for direct ship and donated purchases. We then rolled out a similar option to GSNI troops that wanted to participate!

Our proudest moments were seeing our Girl Scouts in action. Girls provided Girl Scout Cookie donations in creative and contactless ways to essential workers such as hospital personnel, truck drivers, fire departments, police departments, and military organizations through our Gift of Caring initiative. We even partnered with several local truck stops to donate cookies to truck drivers while providing awareness about human trafficking.

In the end, our 2020 Girl Scout Cookie Program was a great cookie season, because it proved the dedication, commitment, and compassion of our girls, their families, and our volunteers!

Fund Development

Tough times were no match for the Tough Cookies who signed up for GSNI's first-ever virtual Thin Mint Sprint! When the pandemic forced GSNI to change our plans for an in-person race, there were serious concerns about whether the Thin Mint Sprint could go on.

Our Thin Mint Sprint Committee, volunteers, girls, and sponsors quickly made their voices heard advocating to keep the Thin Mint Sprint as part of GSNI's mission to support girls facing financial barriers to Girl Scout participation.

Nearly 300 people signed up online to choose their own course, set their own pace, and win their own race. Girl Scout alums from as far as New York and Arizona joined in the virtual fun!



"Girl Scouting has taught me how to be a leader, innovator, entrepreneur, and goal setter. Being in Girl Scouts has helped me to build friendships, learn skills, share my talents, and practice these skills while serving my community with integrity and commitment. Understanding and recommitting to the Girl Scout Law every time I recite the promise helps me to keep those commitments in the forefront of my mind." AUDREY PACK

Donors

GSNI is deeply grateful to those individuals, families, and companies for all financial donations made October 1, 2019–September 30, 2020.

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*All or partial in-kind donation



Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois

Juliette Gordon Low Society

The Juliette Gordon Low Society was established to thank and honor friends of Girl Scouting who choose to make Girl Scouts part of their legacies and a beneficiary of their estate plans.

Mark and Carol Ackerman
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*Girl Scout Movement-wide
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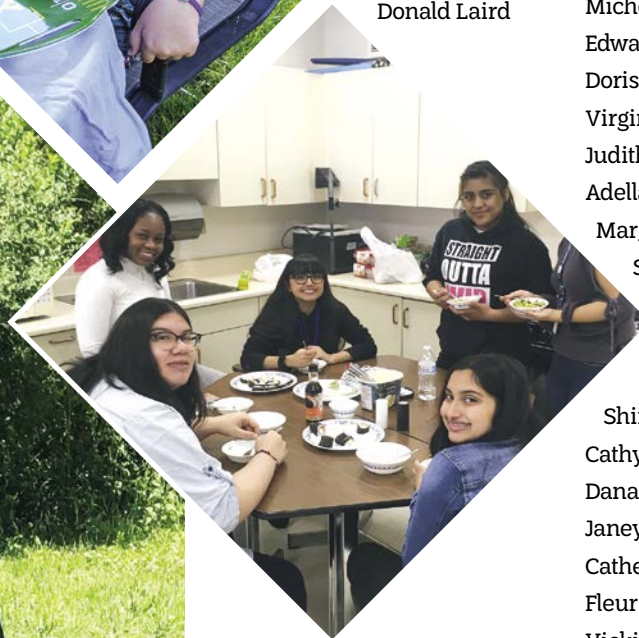
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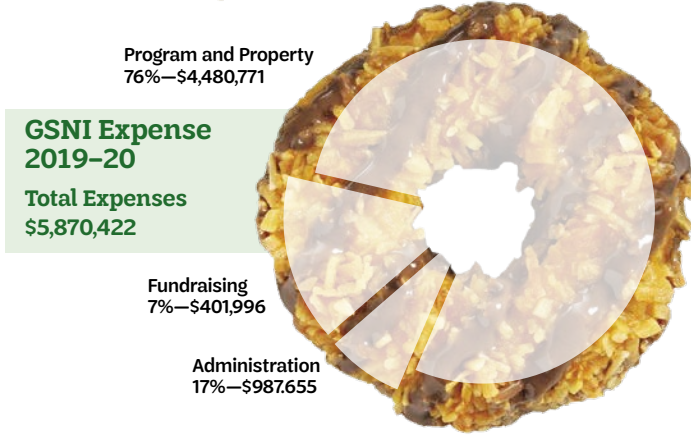


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 Program Fees—1%—\$48,268
 Retail—3%—\$168,992
 Other—5%—\$256,734

Product Programs
 82%—\$4,296,950

**GSNI Income
 2019-20**

Total Income \$5,267,927



**GSNI Expense
 2019-20**

**Total Expenses
 \$5,870,422**

Program and Property
 76%—\$4,480,771

Fundraising
 7%—\$401,996

Administration
 17%—\$987,655

GSNI Statement of Financial Position 2019-2020

Current Assets	\$3,312,802
Non-Current Assets	6,003,823
Total Assets	\$9,316,625
Liabilities	\$1,536,039
Net Assets	7,780,586
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$9,316,625

*GSNI's complete
 audit report and
 990 tax filing
 are available by
 request, or online at
girlscoutsni.org.*



**12,249 Girls
 + 4,519 Adults
 = 16,768 Total**

Membership

Ambassadors 1%

Seniors 3%

Cadettes 8%

Junior 18%

Brownies 24%

Daisies 19%

Adult 27%



Girl Scouts is proven to help girls thrive in five key ways as they:



Develop a strong sense of self.



Seek challenges and learn from setbacks.



Display positive values.



Form and maintain healthy relationships.



Identify and solve problems in the community.



girl scouts
of northern illinois

South Elgin Resource Center

353 Randall Road, South Elgin, IL 60177

Freeport Resource Center

1834 S West Avenue, Suite 21, Freeport, IL 61032

Lake Zurich Resource Center

499 Ela Road, Lake Zurich, IL 60047

Rockford Resource Center

1886 Daimler Road, Rockford, IL 61112

Oswego Resource Center

3425 Orchard Road, Oswego, IL 60543

844-GSNI-4-ME

www.girlscoutsni.org

