

Girl Scouts break national norm by earning 8 Gold Awards

By **KRISTIE CAVANAUGH**

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CRANFORD — This spring, a phenomenal 8 out of 11 members of Girl Scout Troop 387 earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can achieve. Nationwide, just 5.4% of eligible Girl Scouts received the award last year.

The accomplishment is “pretty staggering,” according to Troop Leader Anne Jacquin. The girls who earned the prestigious award were: Erika Baumann, Mary Grace DeCotiis, Jennifer Handy, Amanda Jacquin, Rachel Jacquin, Hannah McHugh, Chelsea Nigro and Deanna Stirk. They were guided by Troop Leaders Mary Baumann, Delores Handy and Ms. Jacquin.

In order to earn their Gold Awards, each girl had to earn at least six prerequisite badges, act in various leadership roles, perform ample community service, participate in numerous college visits and career shadowing experiences, and spend at least 65 hours plan-

‘It helped me grow into a better person.’

—Amanda Jacquin

ning and implementing a project designed to benefit the community. All of the girls in Troop 387 carried out their projects at either the Home First homeless shelter in Plainfield or at the YWCA Art Therapy House for Domestic Violence. Projects included creating a children’s media center at the two locations, a play area for children at Home First, homework guides to assist children at the YWCA, brochures to instruct victims of domestic violence on the use of art therapy, brochures to raise awareness about domestic and teen dating violence, a day room at Home First, and a garden at the YWCA.

The number of Gold Award winners was due to

the fact that the girls in Troop 387 had been in the same troop — with the same three leaders — since kindergarten, according to three of the award winners, Mary Baumann, Anne Jacquin and Dolores Handy.

According to Ms. Handy, the leaders had always attempted to make community service enjoyable by “doing badge work that was very pertinent to the girls and that matched their interests.”

This was not the first time the girls of Troop 387 have excelled. Most of the eight girls who received the Gold Award this year also earned Bronze Awards as Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4-5) and Silver Awards as Girl Scout Cadets (ages 11-14). Both awards are the highest Girl Scouting awards achievable in those respective age groups.

The girls shared Rachel Jacquin’s sentiment on what motivated them to earn Girl Scouting’s highest Gold Award. “We already got our Bronze and Silver Awards. Once we got those, why stop now?” she said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE JACQUIN AND MARY BAUMANN

GOING FOR THE GOLD—Marygrace DeCotiis, Hannah McHugh, Deanna Stirk, Amanda Jacquin, Sarah O’Donnell (Girl Scout Award Program Manager), Jennifer Handy, Erika Baumann, Rachel Jacquin, Chelsea Nigro.

Ms. Jacquin explained that once the girls set this goal, the troop leaders “felt a duty to help the girls get the Gold Award they wanted.”

The Gold Award’s underlying value for community

service will stay with the girls throughout their lifetimes, Ms. Baumann predicted. “The community service component of Girl Scouts and the girls’ Gold Award projects will cause them to

continue to be involved in community service forever and to always make it a part of their lives,” she said.

Amanda Jacquin agreed. “It helped me grow into a better person,” she reflected.