A Girl Scouts of Central Illinois Publication

Fall 2026

The Sash

Messages from the Movement



girl scouts of central illinois

A Message from the CEO



What a summer it was for Girl Scouting in central Illinois. Of all the moments I carried home with me, one of the most memorable came from Twilight Camp at Camp Tapawingo.

There was so much to love there - the fantastic adult leaders who planned every detail, structured activities like swimming and cooking over an open fire, the girls proudly showing off skills they'd learned only hours before. But what stayed with me most was watching the girls simply have fun.

I came upon a group playing in the woods, shouting and laughing, sticks in their hands, completely immersed in a game they had created together. No one was telling them to be quiet. No one was telling them they couldn't get dirty or that they needed to sit still. They had been given the freedom and the space to explore, to imagine, to take appropriate risks, and to simply be themselves.

That is one of the things I love most about Girl Scouts. We give girls both the physical and emotional space to be who they are - and to unabashedly have fun. In a world that can place so many expectations on girls, there is something incredibly powerful about giving them a place where they can laugh, get dirty, use their imaginations and just be girls.

It is also where courage, confidence and character actually take root. Not in a lesson plan, but in the middle of a game nobody organized - when a girl decides to climb a little higher, settle a disagreement over the rules, try something she has never tried, or walk over to the girl standing alone at the edge of the group. A girl who learns she can build her own game learns, in time, that she can build her own future.

None of it happens on its own. Behind every girl at Twilight Camp was an adult who took time off work, packed the car, learned the fire safety protocol, remembered the sunscreen - and then did the hardest part of all, which was stepping back and letting the girls figure it out. Knowing when to guide and when to get out of the way is the real art of leadership in Girl Scouting, and our volunteers in the Peoria area did it beautifully this summer.

As we begin a new Girl Scout year, I hope you'll remember the impact of your generosity. When you give, you help us provide girls with the space to lead meetings, plan adventures, take healthy risks, learn from their mistakes in a safe and supportive environment, and play in the woods! You make it possible for girls to be curious, confident, creative, and entirely themselves as they discover their potential and grow into tomorrow's leaders.

Because of you, girls have that room. Because of you, girls find the extraordinary within themselves.

Thank you for helping build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. I can't wait to see what this year holds.

Jennifer Sedbrook
Chief Executive Officer
Girl Scouts of Central Illinois

For Girls, By Girls:
Empowering Teen Girls' Voices Through the Girl Advisory Committee

Keeping our girls' voices at the heart of decision-making isn't just a goal - it's how we operate. Formed each April, our Girl Advisory Committee brings together GSCI's Girl Board Members and emerging leaders ages 14+ from across our 38-county council.

Following an in-person retreat at Camp Tapawingo in May, these bright young leaders meet monthly to advise on council strategy, weigh in on national GSUSA initiatives, and provide vital feedback on potential new offerings like healthy relationship programming.



Members of the Girl Advisory Committee at their May retreat

Now, the committee is putting girl-led leadership into action by designing an exciting, day-long spring event at Camp Tapawingo created specifically by older Girl Scouts, for older Girl Scouts in grades 6–12. Girl Scout Shake Out, will be held Saturday, April 17, from 10 am–3 pm at Camp Tapawingo and is:

- 100% Girl-Designed: Committee members are driving every element - from curriculum development and badge alignment to event naming and program outcomes.
- Connection & Outdoor Fun: The drop-off event will feature guided hiking, creative crafts, traditional SWAPs, specialty drink creation, and meaningful peer connection.
- Real-World Leadership: Working directly alongside GSCI staff, members are gaining hands-on event management, budgeting, and program execution skills.

By surrounding our young leaders with a strong, supportive council community, GSCI ensures older Girl Scouts don't just participate in leadership—they own it, shape it, and inspire the next generation!

Breaking Down Barriers:
Bringing the Magic of Overnight Camp to Every Girl

In December 2025, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois received a three-year grant from GSUSA to launch a pilot program in partnership with the Peoria Dream Center. Designed to make resident camp accessible to first-generation campers from underrepresented backgrounds, the initiative eliminates barriers by covering full camp scholarships, family transportation, and essential gear kits.

This past summer, the pilot officially launched at Camp Tapawingo, our 640-acre camp located just north of Peoria. The girls who attended experienced a transformative week of outdoor adventure, skill-building, and newfound confidence, with many eager to return next summer.

We have a lot of girls in our community that want to be a part of Girl Scouts, but might not have the means to do so. This program allows them to have that Girl Scout camp experience, learn new things and feel like they're really part of the Girl Scout community.

- Sara Tate, Director of Program Events & Camp

Next year, we plan to expand to serve even more girls by:

- Hosting Pre-Camp Info Sessions: Meeting in person with prospective families to review logistics, address safety, and emphasize that the program is fully funded.
- Leveraging Peer Storytelling & On-Site Tours: Inviting a Year One camper to share her firsthand experience and hosting preview visits at Camp Tapawingo so families can view the cabins and property.
- Expanding Community Reach: Partnering with another local outreach organization to open the door for even more youth.

Thanks to GSUSA and our generous donors, we are ensuring **every girl in Central Illinois has a place around our campfire.**

Inspiring the Next Generation of Nursing Leaders

Dr. Nancy Ridenour has spent her career making an impact on nursing - as a nursing leader, researcher, policymaker, teacher, administrator, philanthropist and mentor. Now, she is investing in the next generation of nurses through a new scholarship for Girl Scouts pursuing a career in nursing.

Inspired by her desire to bring more talented, compassionate people into the nursing profession, Dr. Ridenour believes Girl Scouts possess many of the qualities that make exceptional nurses: the ability to solve problems, work collaboratively, demonstrate courage and confidence, and a commitment to making the world a better place.



Dr. Nancy Ridenour

Growing up in rural Colorado, Dr. Ridenour did not have the opportunity to be a Girl Scout herself. She nevertheless believes deeply in the Girl Scout mission of empowering girls and young women and, through her connection with Girl Scouts of Central Illinois, saw an opportunity to help Girl Scouts pursue careers in a profession she believes desperately needs strong leaders.

Dr. Ridenour's own career demonstrates the possibilities available to nurses who combine clinical expertise with leadership, education, research and public service. She served as the inaugural dean of Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing, beginning in 1999, and later held leadership positions at the University of New Mexico and Barnes-Jewish College Goldfarb School of Nursing. She also served as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellow in Washington, D.C., working as staffer on House Ways and Means Committee.

Her vision for the scholarship goes far beyond helping one student pay for college. Dr. Ridenour's dream is that the scholarship recipient will become a leader in nursing - and perhaps one day serve as the U.S. Surgeon General or in another national health leadership role. She hopes the recipient will use her career to influence the health and well-being of communities across the country.

Just as important, Dr. Ridenour hopes the scholarship creates a cycle of giving. She wants the recipient to eventually "pay it forward" by establishing her own nursing scholarship and giving another young person the opportunity to pursue a career in nursing.

"I hope this scholarship will not end with the recipient," Dr. Ridenour said. "I hope she will someday create an opportunity for someone else."

Dr. Ridenour recognizes something we see every day in Girl Scouts - the leadership, resilience, curiosity and compassion that girls develop through their experiences can prepare them to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

- Jennifer Sedbrook, CEO

Dr. Ridenour selected Illinois State University's Mennonite College of Nursing because of its strong reputation for nursing education and its commitment to preparing students for successful careers. The college reports a 94% NCLEX pass rate for 2025 and has a long history of preparing nurses who go on to serve their communities and lead in the profession.

The scholarship will be available to eligible Girl Scouts pursuing nursing at Illinois State University. Applications open November 15, 2026 and must be submitted by March 1, 2027.



More information about the Dr. Nancy Ridenour Nursing Scholarship, eligibility and application process and is available at bit.ly/NancyRidenourISUScholarship.



Celebrating the Past, Building the Future at Camp Tapawingo

For nearly 70 years, Camp Tapawingo has been a place where girls build confidence, develop leadership skills, and create memories that last a lifetime. Nestled on 640 acres near Metamora, the camp has welcomed generations of Girl Scouts who have discovered adventure, friendship, and personal growth in the outdoors.

Today, we are excited to celebrate an important milestone for the future of Camp Tapawingo.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters across our community, a major infrastructure improvement project has been completed, helping to strengthen the camp for generations of future Girl Scouts. While much of this work may happen behind the scenes, its impact will be felt throughout the camp experience for years to come.

This achievement was made possible in large part through the extraordinary support of the Gilmore Foundation, which provided a $175,000 matching grant to inspire additional community investment in the project. The matching challenge galvanized donors throughout the region, demonstrating the community's shared commitment to preserving and enhancing one of central Illinois' most treasured outdoor spaces. We are deeply grateful to the Gilmore Foundation and to every donor who helped make this project a reality.

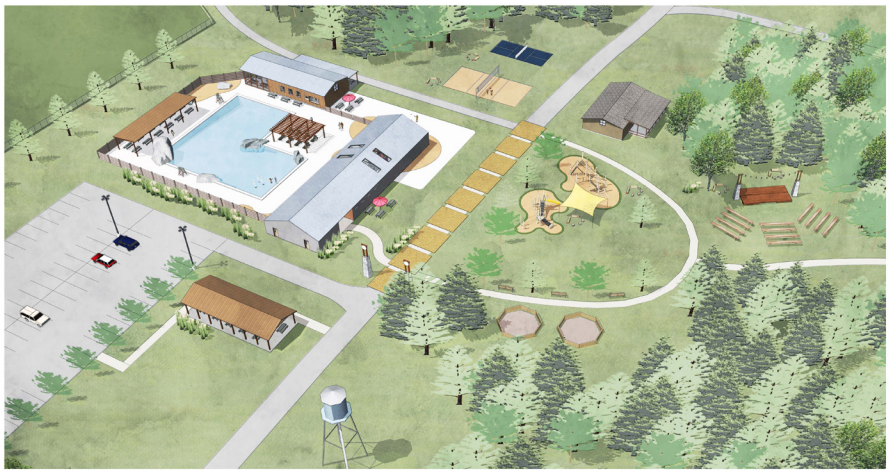
Even more exciting, this completed improvement represents the first step in a broader vision for Camp Tapawingo's future. Guided by a newly completed master plan, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois is exploring opportunities to enhance and expand the camp experience while preserving the traditions and natural beauty that have defined Tapawingo for decades.

Future plans include potential enhancements to the aquatic center, upgraded overnight accommodations, expanded gathering spaces that create a welcoming heart of camp, and additional opportunities for outdoor adventure and leadership programming. Together, these improvements will help ensure that Camp Tapawingo remains a premier destination where girls can challenge themselves, connect with nature, and discover their potential.

Most importantly, these investments are about the girls we serve. They are about creating opportunities for future campers to experience the same confidence, independence, and sense of belonging that generations of Girl Scouts have found at camp.

As we look ahead, we are energized by what is possible. This completed project has provided the foundation for future growth and has allowed us to dream bigger about what Camp Tapawingo can become. With continued support from donors, volunteers, and community partners, we can build on nearly 70 years of impact while creating new opportunities for girls across Central Illinois.

Heart of Camp Looking Northwest



Together, we are honoring Camp Tapawingo's past while investing in an even brighter future.

To learn more about Camp Tapawingo and future improvement initiatives, please contact Jennifer Sedbrook at 309-229-0328 or jsedbrook@girlscouts-gsci.org.



Unlocking Hope & Resilience

Introducing the Central Illinois Girl Report



Growing up today looks very different than it used to. Across central Illinois, from our bustling cities to our quiet rural towns, young women are navigating a fast-paced world filled with social media pressure, complex peer dynamics, and everyday stress. Yet, girlhood shouldn't be defined by the hurdles girls face. Girls are naturally creative, resilient, adventurous and eager to lead; they simply need supportive places where they can unplug, be themselves, try new things and build real-world connections.

To champion their potential, Girl Scouts of Central Illinois (GSCI) is excited to announce the upcoming release of the Central Illinois Girl Report. This study offers an honest, localized look at the complex realities facing area youth while charting a clear, uplifting path forward:

- Economic & Digital Realities: In our region, 4 in 10 households struggle to afford basic necessities, while over **83% of high school girls engage with social media multiple times daily.**
- Mental & Physical Well-Being: **Over 51% of local high school girls report persistent sadness or hopelessness,** and 82.6% fail to get adequate sleep amid constant digital performance demands.
- The GSCI Advantage: Through hands-on STEM, outdoor adventure at our camp properties, and supportive troop environments, GSCI serves as a preventative shield, equipping girls with positive coping strategies, self-advocacy skills, and lasting resilience. **Girls are nearly twice as likely as non-Girl Scouts to pursue STEM majors and careers.**

Girls are telling us what they need to thrive - and we have a responsibility to listen. This report gives our community a clearer picture of both the challenges girls are facing and the tremendous potential they hold.

- Kaitlin Bostick,
Vice President of Strategy

The full report will be publicly available in November, offering invaluable insights for educators, community partners, and donors alike. Stay tuned for the public release to discover how we can work together to ensure every girl in central Illinois claims her voice and thrives!

For more information about the report or to schedule a presentation, please contact Kaitlin Bostick, Vice President of Strategy at kbostick@girlscouts-gsci.org or 217-241-3740.

25 Years of Partnership, Purpose and Impact

For more than a quarter of a century, INB and Girl Scouts of Central Illinois have been partners in building girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

Since 1999, INB has supported Girl Scouts - initially through the former Land of Lincoln Council - through generous financial support and dedicated service leadership. An INB leader has almost always served on our Board of Directors, helping guide our Council and strengthen our impact across Central Illinois.

Most recently, INB has served as the presenting sponsor of two of our largest signature events: our Volunteer Awards Celebration and Girl Scout Day at the Capitol. This past May, Cayla Keyes, Vice President of Business Solutions at INB and a Girl Scout alum, spoke from the Capitol steps in Springfield as part of Girl Scout Day at the Capitol. She shared:

Today, I'm a banker at INB. And there, we help people make big decisions about their lives - buying homes, starting businesses, planning for their future. And I can tell you, I use the same skills I started learning as a Girl Scout every single day.

- Cayla Keyes, Vice President of Business Solutions at INB

Cayla went on to highlight the skills that continue to serve her:

Confidence.
Communication.
Problem-solving.
And the courage to try something even when you're not 100% sure how it will turn out.

Cayla's words capture so beautifully the lasting impact of Girl Scouts - and the role that strong community partners like INB play in helping girls develop the skills and confidence they carry throughout their lives and careers.

We are extremely proud of our partnership with INB and deeply grateful for their longstanding commitment to girls, our volunteers and the Girl Scout Movement across Central Illinois.



Cayla Keyes speaking at Girl Scout Day at the Capitol

Thank You Grant Funders and United Way Partners!

Funding received 4/1/2026 – 8/31/2026

Community Foundation of East Central Illinois
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Prairieland United Way
United Community Fund of Paxton & Vicinity
United Way of Adams County
United Way of Champaign County
United Way of Decatur & Mid-Illinois

Adopt-A-Horse

We would like to thank and recognize the families and troops who took part in our Adopt-A-Horse program this year.

The Acosta Talbot Family
Troop 4992
The Reid Family

To meet our adoptable herd members and find out how you can get involved, visit bit.ly/AdoptaHorse.

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