

# Local Girls Scouts Are Active Again

Six years ago, there were no active Girl Scout troops in Vernonia. That's when Kinnell Stewart decided to get involved and do something about it. And now there are four separate, age-specific troops with forty-eight girls participating.

"My son was going to be finished with Cub Scouts and I had been involved with that for four years and I didn't want to move on to Boy Scouts with him," said Stewart. "I had some parents approach me and ask me to start a Girl Scout troop."



The Daisy Girl Scouts got dressed up for a Tea Party.



Leader Susan Ely talks with her Brownie Troop about an upcoming tree planting service project.



The Cadettes hard at work on posters for the upcoming Girl Scout Cookie sale.



Daisies get ready for cookie sales.

Stewart started working on putting something together and got an overwhelming response from the community. "We had fifty-two girls who responded and signed up," explains Stewart. "To me, that said this is clearly something Vernonia needs."

Currently there are four active troops in Vernonia: the Daisies (Kindergarten and 1st graders) meet at Leader Andrea Grant's house. Jennifer Moloney is her co-leader. The Brownies (2nd and 3rd graders) meet right after school in the cafeteria-- Susan Ely & Katie Poetter co-lead that troop. Stewart leads the Juniors (4th & 5th graders) along with Camyrin Eyrrick, and meet at the Community Church. The Cadettes (6th - 8th graders) are led by Tori Fallau and Dawn Schirmeister and also meet at the Community Church.

Citizenship and responsibility are a big part of what Girl Scout leaders try to teach the girls in the troop. But it's much more than that. "For me, it's about building self-esteem," says Stewart. "In my troop, the girls are responsible to go through the badge book and choose which badge they would like to work on. It's their responsibility to work with me and their parents to come up with a plan of action about how they will accomplish each goal. They get to take charge of it."

Stewart says the girls gain self-confidence by speaking in front of groups. They also learn about community and citizenship through service projects.

Recent service projects Vernonia Girl Scouts have completed include: making blankets and delivering them to sick babies and young children at Emmanuel Hospital; making dog and cat toys and delivering them the Columbia County Humane Society shelter in St. Helens; visited and organized activities with senior citizens at the Jennings McCall Assisted Living Center in Forest Grove; and tree plantings with the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council in the Vernonia area.

Of course, what the Girl Scouts are best known for are cookies. Girl Scout Cookie sales begin this year on February 19th. The girls use the sales to fund different trips and excursions. This past year, the Juniors went to a "Build a Bear" workshop and an overnight trip to the Winston Safari with the money raised from cookie sales. The Cadettes went to the West Coast Game Park in Bandon. The Brownies had a swimming party. This year is the first year the Daisies will be participating in cookie sales. This year, the Juniors are planning to go to The Heathman Hotel for a high tea luncheon and then to see the Lion King on Broadway in Portland.

The past few years, all the Vernonia troops have spent time at Camp Mountaintale, which, according to Stewart, is always a special treat. Stewart has really enjoyed helping re-start Girl Scouts in Vernonia. "I am so pleased to have four troops of strong girl and parent involvement in only six years!" she says. "Starting this program up again in Vernonia was a wonderful thing."



The Juniors and Cadettes visited Salem (above) and went camping (below).



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