



Adult Volunteer Awards Frequently Asked Questions 2011–2012

What are adult volunteer awards?

These are formal awards designed by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) or Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys to be used to recognize exemplary volunteer service that goes above and beyond what is expected in a volunteer role.

When should adult volunteer awards be used?

An effective recognition program is made up of informal and formal recognition. Formal adult volunteer awards are not intended to be used to honor or recognize annual service or good performance. Informal recognition should be used for recognition in these cases. Formal awards are to recognize exemplary service not to recognize longevity. Nominate someone for a formal award when they have completed a project or year of service where they have made significant **measurable** contributions.

Who can nominate a volunteer for an award?

All Girl Scout volunteers, girl members and/or their families can submit a nomination. River Valleys' staff may also nominate a volunteer but we strongly encourage Girl Scout members to nominate peers. Note to service units: It is helpful if you designate a contact person in your service unit and instruct volunteers and families to include that person's name on the nomination application under the "designated contact person" field.

Are there any awards being retired?

Yes. A committee of GSUSA staff and volunteers spent this past year carefully reviewing the GSUSA awards and has made changes to the awards that will be offered. Retiring immediately and no longer available for nomination are the S.T.A.R. (Short Term as Requested) award and the Progressive Volunteer Award (Volunteer Development pin and keys). Retiring as of June 2012 are the Outstanding Volunteer and Outstanding Leader pins.

Are there any new awards this year?

Yes. GSUSA has added the Volunteer of Excellence award that recognizes volunteers who have contributed outstanding service while partnering directly with girls in any pathway to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience through use of the national program portfolio. For more information on specific awards visit GirlScoutRV.org/volunteer/recognition/. Nomination applications will be available after November 1, 2011.

Why did GSUSA make changes to their award offerings?

The GSUSA awards program needed to be reviewed to ensure it was still relevant, that it met the needs of our volunteers and that it was in alignment with the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Feedback was collected from councils all over the country and it was discovered that the formal adult awards were being used in situations where informal recognition was more appropriate. The research process also showed that the award was overshadowing the focus on the actual service. The review committee made up of GSUSA and council staff and volunteers recommend a balance of informal and formal recognition. Formal awards are intended to recognize exemplary service resulting in specific **measurable impact** and should not be used to honor longevity. If service is not "above and beyond" or hasn't had measurable impact that doesn't mean it's not valued. In these cases informal recognition would be more appropriate. Visit River Valleys' recognition website page for informal recognition ideas.

Why did GSUSA retire the Outstanding Leader pin?

Since volunteers can participate in various pathways, GSUSA did not want awards that were specific to only one pathway. River Valleys has chosen to offer the Outstanding Leader pin this year but in future years, exemplary performance as a troop leader can be recognized with the new Volunteer of Excellence pin. The Volunteer of Excellence pin can be used to recognize service in all Girl Scout pathways.

How are pins distributed?

All awards will be distributed at a local event established by each service unit or another venue as determined by the nominator and/or award recipient. Council-level recognition events will no longer be held.

Why won't there be council-level recognition events?

Attendance at council-level recognition events has been declining over the years. Our data indicates volunteers prefer to receive formal honors at the local level. If your service unit needs assistance in establishing a local event contact your membership specialist for ideas.

When are nominations due?

There are four GSUSA awards that have a deadline of January 31 because board confirmation is needed. Those are: Appreciation pin, Honor pin, Thanks Badge and Thanks Badge II. The due date for all other award nominations is dependent **on the date of the local recognition event**. For April events the due date is March 15; for May events the due date is April 15; and for June events the due date is May 15.

Can adult volunteer awards only be earned once during someone's Girl Scout volunteer career?

No. One shift GSUSA is trying to make in the area of recognition is that volunteers receive these specific high awards for the **contribution that they did** (exemplary service) and **not** as a way to recognize the longevity of their service. As a movement, we have a large number of volunteers who continue to contribute for decades which can lead to many outstanding contributions. In GSUSA's revised adult awards program there is nothing stating that a volunteer can not receive the same high award more than once; however, the adult awards and recognition committee will review each nomination very carefully to ensure that it effectively demonstrates that the applicant met the award criteria specific to the nomination. If you are not sure whether a formal award is appropriate ask yourself if you want to acknowledge the individual because they work hard, have a great attitude and/or have been volunteering a long time or if you want to recognize specific contributions the individual made that resulted in measurable impact. If you answered that you want to acknowledge hard work then an informal recognition is appropriate. If you answered that you want to acknowledge specific measurable contributions then a formal award nomination would be appropriate.

In the past I sent in a nomination but was told the individual didn't qualify because the service was in the current membership year. Are there any awards that can be used to honor service in the current membership year?

Yes. Nominations should focus on service in the previous membership year when the individual is being nominated for service in a specific volunteer position such as organizer/recruiter, leader or service unit manager. If nominating an individual for service provided on a specific project/event or short-term volunteer role the project/event needs to have been completed prior to submitting a nomination application. Heart in Hand-SU and Council level, Commitment to Inclusiveness and Extraordinary Event awards could be used to honor service provided in the current membership year as long as the service being nominated has been completed.

I should be receiving my 30 Years of Service pin this year. Do I need to do anything?

Our data is dependent on the number of girl and adult years a member puts on their annual registration form or annual lifetime member update. Annually we run a report and send a letter to those qualifying for a 20+ Years of Service pin and 25+Years of Membership numeral with instructions on how to request your pin. Since there will no longer be a council-level recognition event you may choose to have the pin mailed or provide an alternative venue for recognition such as a local service unit recognition event, leader meeting or alumnae group event. If you want to make sure you are on the list, please contact Wendy Walton, Volunteer Development manager, at wendy.walton@girlscoutsv.org or 800-845-0787.

Where can I find detailed information on adult volunteer awards?

For more information on specific awards visit GirlScoutsRV.org/volunteer/recognition/. Nomination applications will be available after November 1, 2011. Each application includes the specific requirements for the particular award so please review the nomination application carefully.

What help is available?

Contact Wendy Walton, Volunteer Development manager, at wendy.walton@girlscoutsv.org or 800-845-0787 with questions or to discuss an individual's service to see which, if any, award would be most appropriate. The adult award and recognition committee members are able to provide service units, service unit managers and/or recognition coordinators a tutorial on adult volunteer awards. Contact Wendy Walton to arrange a visit or phone call. Resources including award descriptions and tips for writing endorsement letters are available on River Valleys' website at GirlScoutsRV.org/volunteer/recognition/. Nomination applications will be available on the website as of November 1, 2011.