

Girls of Distinction

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This month, dedicated women from all walks of life will be honored by an organization that inspires girls to take the lead.



Forget the thin mints and Samoas, the Girl Scouts—Arizona Cactus-Pine Council aims to accomplish so much more than satiating sweet teeth across the state. Although the Girl Scout name has become synonymous with those small boxes of heaven we stock in our pantries, for nearly 100 years, the Girl Scouts organization has been instilling in young girls the importance of leadership in their own actions, their ambitions and in their communities.

"What we are trying to create are opportunities and support for girls so that they can author their own lives," says Tamara Woodbury, CEO of the Girls Scouts—Arizona Cactus-Pine Council, who became a Girl Scout in her teens. "So that girls can make decisions that come from a deep sense of knowing about themselves and that are congruent with their own values. And I think that then helps girls have resiliency against peer pressure and all kinds of other things.

"As one of 171 Girl Scout Councils in the United States, the Arizona Cactus-Pine Council was formed in 1936 and works at implementing programs that equip girls with the tools necessary to improve the communities in which they thrive. Encompassing more than 66 percent of the state, the Arizona Cactus-Pine Council serves nearly 23,000 girls across Arizona. Leadership is a highly regarded theme in the Girl Scout philosophy.

"Leadership is when people have a choice to follow and are inspired by someone," Woodbury says. "The way you transform communities or organizations is that every single person in the organization is a leader and the first thing they do is take personal responsibility for their own actions. If everyone was doing that, the world would look really different."

Woodbury says a strong group of nearly 8,000 men and women volunteers of the Girl Scouts who exhibit leadership qualities in their lives serve as firsthand examples to current Girl Scouts.

"We want to be known as best in the world for helping girls develop leadership skills that are more inclusive of the attributes of balanced leadership and don't rely on power or authority. But rely on the more feminine qualities of collaboration, building relationships, cooperation and service."

On Dec. 6, the Arizona Cactus-Pine Council will honor 14 outstanding women and current Girl Scouts for their contributions and excellence in the arenas of humanity, courage, learning, future, arts, community service and leadership. The 14th annual World Awards honoring "Women of Distinction" will take place at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa.

"We want to be the most vibrant and relevant organization for girls," Woodbury says. "And for girls to feel that there is an organization in this state that stands up for them, advocates for them, and provides them with the kinds of programs and experiences that help them find their greatest and highest potential."