



Shelby O'Neil Receives Girl Scouts' Highest Honor for Developing a movement called No Straw November to combat waste and defend the environment

Shelby O'Neil has been honored nationally as an exceptional leader for taking action to improve the world and enact sustainable change while earning Girl Scouts' highest award.

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Ventura, CA —Today, Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast announced that Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) named Shelby O'Neil a 2018 National Gold Award Girl Scout, the organization's most prestigious honor. GSUSA selects ten National Gold Award Girl Scouts (formerly known as the National Young Women of Distinction) annually among candidates who have earned their [Girl Scout Gold Award®](#), the highest award a Girl Scout can earn, and one that is only available to Girl Scouts. By designing and implementing extraordinary projects of measurable, sustainable, and far-reaching impact, these girls demonstrate a steadfast commitment, as well as a stunning ability, to create true change.

Each year, thousands of girls in grades 9–12 nationwide are recognized as Gold Award Girl Scouts for transforming an idea and vision for change into an actionable plan with strong impact on local, national, and global levels. Approximately 5 percent of Girl Scouts earn their Gold Award each year—and just ten girls in this high-achieving group receive the National Gold Award Girl Scout distinction. Applications are judged by previous National Gold Award Girl Scouts, leaders from a diverse array of professional fields, GSUSA executives, and a representative from the Kappa Delta Foundation.

For her Gold Award project, Shelby founded the nonprofit Jr Ocean Guardians to combat waste and defend the environment. Initiating a movement called No Straw November, she encouraged people who don't medically need a straw to reject unnecessary plastic straws during November, because they're a main source of ocean pollution. As a result of her advocacy, Shelby's resolution proclaiming November to be No Straw November in California was approved by the state legislature. She also conducted a letter-writing campaign to executives at prominent corporations, convincing a leading airline to formally discontinue its use of nonrecyclable plastic straws and working with other companies to improve their sustainability practices. Shelby's organization, with support from Girl Scout troops and notable environmental activists, has eliminated the use of millions of plastic straws and promoted reusable alternatives. Shelby also demonstrated business sense and an entrepreneurial mindset in the process, proving how girls are successful in their own right, how their financial decisions generate substantial economic impact, and how they are prepared to be our next generation of business leaders.



"Earning my Girl Scouts Gold Award has given me the opportunity to help inspire others throughout the world, bringing awareness to the health of our ocean and planet. I have dreamt of earning the Gold Award since the first grade and it has been the experience of a lifetime. I encourage every Girl Scout to use the Power of G.I.R.L. to achieve their dreams," says Shelby.

Research verifies that participating in Girl Scouts and earning the Gold Award are linked to developing crucial leadership skills and advanced achievements. In addition to Girl Scouts being [more than twice as likely](#) than other girls to identify and solve problems in their communities, they over-index when it comes to seeking challenges and learning from setbacks, having confidence in themselves and their leadership abilities, and forming and maintaining healthy relationships. The majority of women who earned their Gold Award [display](#) more positive life outcomes compared with women who did not participate in Girl Scouts in their youth, including being more optimistic about their future; seeing themselves as leaders; and being more civically engaged, particularly in politics.

Mary Charles, Interim CEO of Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast states, "Gold Award Girl Scouts are able to focus on issues they are passionate about and take action to make real changes in the world. Not only do they leave a lasting impression on their communities, but they are able to act as a positive role model and leader for girls everywhere."

Girl Scouts will honor all the National Gold Award Girl Scouts on Thursday, October 11, at a celebratory event in New York City made possible through generous support by the premier event sponsor, Toyota Financial Services. Through a multi-year partnership, Toyota Financial Services and GSUSA are helping girls become financially savvy leaders; obtain real-life, age-appropriate financial skills; and gain the tools necessary to make a positive influence in their communities.

To honor the National Gold Award Girl Scouts, a combined \$100,000 in college scholarships, which includes \$10,000 for Shelby, has been provided by Susan Bulkeley Butler, founder of the Susan Bulkeley Butler Institute for the Development of Women Leaders and former member of the Girl Scouts of the USA Board of Directors.

The Kappa Delta Foundation has granted the selected girls a combined \$50,000 in college scholarships, reflecting its commitment to girls' leadership and pursuit of education. This includes \$5,000 for Shelby.

Finally, Arconic Foundation has granted the ten young women a combined \$50,000 in college scholarships, including \$5,000 for Shelby.

Being honored as a National Gold Award Girl Scout, earning the Girl Scout Gold Award, and receiving generous scholarships are just a few of the countless incredible experiences girls have through Girl Scouts. To join or volunteer, visit www.girlscouts.org/join.

**About GSCCC**

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 10,200 girls across six counties and is committed to making the Girl Scout Leadership Experience available to girls in ways that impact their lives both in the moment and into the future. Girls participate in troops, individual projects, council events, day camps, resident camps and more. A variety of leadership, outdoor skills, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) based programs and events provide girls with opportunities to learn and explore in fun and informative ways. To join or volunteer in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara or Ventura County, visit: <http://www.girlscoutscoc.org>.

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Points of Light has named TFS one of its Civic 50, which recognizes the most community-minded companies in the nation. For more information about the company's support of financial literacy, youth development programs, and other community initiatives, visit www.tfsinthecommunity.com.

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