



## **Girl Scout Organizes Diaper Drive for Families in Need**

*Megan Wang earns her Girl Scout Gold Award with "Motherhood Matters" project*

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Megan Wang is an Ambassador Girl Scout from Thousand Oaks, California, currently entering her junior year at Westlake High School. While volunteering at her local food bank, she noticed that young moms would often request diapers but there were usually none to give. A [study](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that nationally, one in eight women experience postpartum anxiety or depression. These estimates vary by state and can be as high as 1 in 5 women, yet it is not a widely discussed issue. One factor that often contributes to this anxiety and stress is financial burdens and the consequent difficulty in providing necessities, such as diapers, for a family.

"One mom mentioned that she was always worrying about having enough diapers and that she was unable to remain employed due to the cost of child care," Megan said. "My experience volunteering at Manna Food Bank opened my eyes to how financial need impacts new mothers. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all living in extremely stressful circumstances, especially people who are struggling financially. My project aims to let mothers know that they are not alone and that it's okay to ask for help, whether it be getting diapers from the food bank or reaching out for mental health resources."

According to the National Diaper Bank Network, one in three families in America report experiencing diaper need. The average expense of disposable diapers for infants rounds up to about \$960 per year, a financial burden we often don't realize some members of our community may be struggling with. Throughout Megan's project, she educated her community about the link between postpartum depression and financial stress, increased awareness of resources for maternal mental health, and collected diapers for families in need.

Megan began researching postpartum depression and compiling resources on maternal mental health disorders. She arranged partnerships with two childcare centers, Camp Amgen and Horizon Hills, and a birthing center, Birch Family Birthing Center, with whom she provided donation bins where families could drop off extra diapers that their children had outgrown. Megan also created flyers with infographics and tear-off "take what you need" strips to display at



these locations, which provided contact information for mental health resources and relevant statistics.

"To develop my educational plan, I needed to increase my understanding of postpartum depression and how it affects families," Megan said. "At the beginning of my project, I was lucky enough to be invited to an informational session that a perinatal mental health professional held at Birch. The presentation was so helpful, and I found that a lot of people either don't know how to access resources for help or they felt like it's not okay to talk about their struggles."

Since Manna does not require that donated diapers be in new, sealed packs, Megan was able to accept even more donations while also cutting down unnecessary waste. She completed regular pickups from each of the three locations, sorted them by size, and packaged them in easy-to-distribute quantities with the help of local Junior and Ambassador Girl Scouts. Each package of about 20 diapers was wrapped in hand-stamped paper and attached with a QR code label, which when scanned led parents to an [educational video](#) on postpartum depression that Megan created.

In November of last year, Megan created and manned a station at Los Robles Hospital's Prematurity Day and celebration of the NICU's 25th Anniversary with the help of a Junior Girl Scout Troop. Families learned the difference between "Baby Blues" and postpartum depression. "At the station, I welcomed families who had premature babies in the NICU, handed out inspirational note cards to attendees, and explained what mental health resources are available in our community," Megan said. She also demonstrated her hand-lettering skills as a stress relief technique and sold customized pencil boxes and name tags to fundraise for supplies and supplement additional diaper sizes.

"I wanted to spread awareness that resources for help with maternal mental health disorders are available and emphasize the message, 'You are not alone. You are not to blame. With help, you will get better,'" Megan said.

In total, Megan collected and packaged nearly 3,700 diapers from her donation locations. This amounted to about 183 packs of diapers that she provided to Manna Conejo Valley Food Bank. Not only was she able to provide families in need with a crucial necessity, but she also increased awareness of resources that could benefit them.

To detail the evolution of her project, Megan created a [digital playbook](#) to inspire others to pursue similar programs in their communities. She described how she learned to create her own QR code, video, and infographic in the hopes that readers will realize that editing programs aren't as intimidating as they seem. "I shared how my experience volunteering at Manna Food Bank opened my eyes to how financial need impacts mothers," she said. "Also, I explained how many people who need help aren't aware of how to access mental health resources in their communities. And for people who want to help, I increased the awareness that our local food bank accepts non-food donations such as diapers."



On completing her project, Megan said, "I learned that it's really gratifying to talk to people about difficult topics. By breaking down that wall, one can have really meaningful experiences. I feel like I am able to help so many people by using education to reduce the stigma of mental health issues."

To learn more about the Gold Award and the Girl Scouts that are making a difference in your community and the world at large, visit [here](#).

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### **About Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast**

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 8,800 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, and Math (STEM) 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>.