



### **Girl Scout Crochets Hats for Cancer Patients**

*Sophia Pelaez from Ventura, CA, earns her Girl Scout Gold Award*

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**Ventura, CA —**

Sophia Pelaez is an Ambassador Girl Scout from Troop 60001 in Ventura. A high school senior this year, Sophia has, “personally seen some of [her] strongest and smartest peers break down and crumble under the stress and pressure that comes from academics, sports, extracurricular activities, and the college application process.” She is also the daughter of a cancer patient and witnessed firsthand the physical and emotional toll that cancer takes on an individual. Intending to address both of these problems, she took to the art of crochet. Sophia began to crochet hats for cancer patients who have undergone chemotherapy as a way to provide them comfort, and by teaching her peers to crochet she hopes to provide a means for students to relieve their stress while also giving back to the community.

“These hats will provide warmth to cancer patients whose hair has fallen off during chemotherapy,” Sophia said. “Moreover, these hats are a gesture from the community that they have support and love behind them; essentially, the hats serve to represent a sort of emotional solidarity to cancer patients. To provide high school students with an accessible, healthy coping mechanism, I taught multiple groups of students, ranging in both grade level and location, how to crochet hats. I personally taught these individuals how to crochet over multiple lessons ranging from thirty minutes to two hours.”

To ensure that the skills she taught were retained beyond her lessons, Sophia also created a YouTube video and set of written instructions on crocheting that was made accessible to the students. Some individuals have continued to use the craft past their lessons, including one troop leader who is now using the skill to make baby shoes. In an anonymous feedback survey, one participant said that crocheting, “allowed her to funnel anxieties into something external instead of spiraling.”

“Those I taught learned how to crochet a hat,” Sophia said. “In doing so, they gained a healthy means to cope with anxiety. Moreover, in learning a completely new skill, many of these individuals learned how to become more patient and persevering.” Participants of her project



were also able to hear from a speaker who shared the mental health benefits of crocheting and offered her own experience with crochet and anxiety.

"I led my team by coordinating group meetings in which I instructed attendees how to crochet a hat," Sophia said. "In doing so, I was a patient and encouraging teacher who provided personalized feedback to those in need of help. As a leader, I knew my project hinged on the work of others, so accommodation to others was the main focus in nearly every aspect of my work. I was aware of the skills and struggles of those whom I taught, adapting the pacing of my instruction for each individual.

"From lesson to lesson, I made sure to learn from my mistakes of the past and find a way to convey my message more thoroughly and concisely. Moreover, I also made sure to keep an upbeat and positive attitude, emphasizing the successes of my peers and uplifting those who felt frustrated or impatient. Essentially, I led my team not only through my skill in crochet, but through my patient, self-aware, and encouraging attitude."

For five months, Sophia taught approximately 25 different individuals how to crochet, including high school students of all age levels and troop leaders. Sophia was also able to make 27 hats on her own to contribute. On December 21, 2019, she delivered 52 hats to the Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. Sophia said that when she went to donate the hats with her family and troop advisor, "the nurse even commented on how much these hats would mean to the patients at the hospital, which made the project all the more meaningful."

For more incredible projects from Girl Scouts in your area, check out our [2019-2020 Girl Scout Gold Awards Yearbook](#)! Find more information about the Gold Award and how Girl Scouts are creating positive change in their communities [here](#).

### **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>.

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