

# YEAR OF THE GIRL

## *Girl Scouts Celebrates 100th Anniversary*



BY KRISTIN QUINN

Girl Scouts throughout the country, including those in Central New York, will celebrate 2012 as the 100th anniversary of the organization.

Pam Hyland, CEO of Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, is thrilled to declare 2012, "the year of the girl." Local Girl Scouts will be hosting anniversary events throughout the year, including a Women of Distinction Birthday Gala on March 12, at the Oncenter in Syracuse, which marks the official 100th birthday of the Girl Scouts. The gala will honor 100 women who serve as positive female role models.

The Girl Scouts is also launching a nationwide "To Get Her There" campaign, which Hyland describes as the largest initiative dedicated to girls' leadership in the country's history. "If you take those three words, 'to get her,' what do they spell?" Hyland asked. "Together. Together we can get her there."

Hyland, who has been affiliated with the Girl Scouts since she first joined a troop at the age of 9 in 1954, believes seeing examples of female leadership, such as those honored at Women of Distinction events, is key to raising awareness among girls about what it means to be a leader. According to her, if you ask most girls and women who are clearly leaders if they consider themselves to be one, most would say, "no."

"The definition of a leader for a woman is so different. But good leaders, they are the women who have a strong sense of self, who work together with others to make a change in their world." Hyland proudly tells the stories of many Girl Scouts who do just that, whether they are providing pillowcases and school supplies for foster children, educating classmates about the dangers of drunk driving, increasing the local bat population to benefit a community's ecosystem, or donating cookies to troops overseas.

"You get the whole range," Hyland said. "It's amazing. When girls take on a project that has touched them, the energy behind it is so much greater." Hyland said although it's unrealistic to break down societal barriers that inhibit girls' success in only one year, she believes it is possible to create balanced leadership in one generation. "I believe so much in what we do. I wouldn't have stayed this long with the organization if I didn't."

Local troops will continue the celebration by traveling to take part in a "Rock the Mall" sing-along on June 9 in Washington, D.C. Also, they are planning a jamboree weekend at the Cayuga County fairgrounds in late July. Girl Scouts has also teamed up with the Onondaga Historical Society to prepare exhibits and presentations about the 100-year history. Hyland hopes the historical initiative will attract alumnae to reminisce about their days as a Girl Scout. "The premise of girl scouting over these past 100 years has not changed a bit," Hyland said. "But the issues for girls are different."

Hyland said she is proud looking back over the last century to see that Girl Scouts was often ahead of what was going on in society. "Not many organizations last 100 years," she said. "And the only way you last 100 years is if you maintain relevancy." Hyland said she strives to achieve this through taking to heart the current issues, such as bullying and body image, presented by her Girl Advisory Board, a group of girls who meet with her once a month.

"I want to see Girl Scouts continue for the next 100 years," she said.

*To purchase tickets to the Women of Distinction Birthday Gala, visit [www.gsnypenn.org/WOD](http://www.gsnypenn.org/WOD).*