



Meet Alumna Madeleine Duncan

I have been a Girl Scout in Billings since before I was born (my mom is a Lifetime Member and was serving on the Treasure Trails Board of Directors when she was pregnant with me). My mom sang me GS songs and taught me all of her GS traditions as I was growing up. I officially joined Girl Scouts in Kindergarten as a Daisy and never left. I received my Lifetime Membership as my graduation gift from high school.

One of the highlights of my Girl Scout adventures was attending a Destination in the Boundary Waters/Quetico Canoe Area Wilderness in Northern Minnesota/Canada. I canoed and camped for two weeks with girls from around the U.S. This adventure taught me something about my own strength—what I have within me to survive, whether it is the physical strength of portaging a canoe and gear for miles through the woods and swamp or the mental and emotional strength of how to keep going when your body wants to give up.

I earned my Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards as well as the Gold Torch Award.

Although I am proud of these successes and the hard work and growth leading to the completion of the higher awards, earning badges and awards was never the motivation for me to stay in Girl Scouts. I genuinely loved the activities, the service projects, and finding ways to make the world a better place. The Girl Scout Law—the fundamental mission of Girl Scouting—is something that guides me every day and forms the foundation of my desire to become a physician.

The second I was old enough, I went to Timbercrest Girl Scout Camp and fell in love. I was a camper every summer, sometimes attending more than one session, then served as a Program Aide and a Junior Counselor. After graduating from high school, I worked on GSMW camp staff at Timbercrest, Camp Sacajawea, and Camp Castle Rock, progressing to Program Director and ultimately Assistant Director. Camp helped make me who I am today.

One of the really important lessons I learned working as a camp staff member was how to be a servant leader. I learned how to work with all sorts of different people under difficult and challenging circumstances without falling apart. I learned how to accept responsibility for mistakes and then move forward to make something better. I learned what it is to truly be flexible. You can make plans, consider all possible needs and outcomes, be ultra-prepared, and still have surprises. By working closely with a small staff in intense circumstances, I could see how empathy and holding each other responsible are not mutually exclusive but absolutely necessary for success.

I could go on and on. All of the skills I learned as a Girl Scout, as a camper and as camp staff prepared me to be a doctor. The courage, confidence, and character developed over a long period of time in a million GS experiences are attributes that I have absorbed and made a part of who I am.

The best advice I can give to any Girl Scout, of any age, is to always be honest, compassionate, and caring. Strive to be the very best human you can be and hold yourself responsible for your actions. None of us are perfect, but we can all make a positive impact on the world. You may never know how much of a difference you can make with just one smile.



We would love to catch up with you too! Please contact us at alum@gsmw.org so we can tell your story.

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of montana
and wyoming