



Girl Scout – Land of Lakes Council
400 2nd Avenue South
Waite Park, Minnesota 56387-1404
320-252-2952 or 800- 955-6032
320-253-9403 Fax
www.girlscoutslolc.org

Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley
400 South Robert Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55107
651-227-8835 or 800-845-0787
651-227-7533 Fax
www.girlscoutscv.org

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Contacts: Dawn M. Short, Communications Specialist, Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley, 651-251-1218, 800-845-0787 or dshort@girlscoutscv.org
Tauna Quimby, Communications Manager, Girl Scouts - Land of Lakes Council, 320-252-2952, 800-955-6032 ext. 221 or TQuimby@girlscoutslolc.org

Two Minnesotans Honored with the 2007 Young Women of Distinction Award by Girl Scouts of the USA

Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) has named two Minnesotans—Minna Zhou of Woodbury and Linsey Ness of Tenstrike—among 13 Girl Scouts chosen as the 2007 National Young Women of Distinction. They will be honored locally by the Girl Scouts, as well as Minnesota senators and representatives, and United States representatives at a press conference in room 125 of the state capitol on Saturday, June 9 at 4:30 p.m. On June 12, Zhou and Ness will attend the 2007 Young Women of Distinction Recognition Ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Girl Scouts of the USA and an external committee comprised of high-profile professional women selected the 2007 National Young Women of Distinction from a pool of 250 applicants nationwide who had earned the Girl Scout Gold Award. Honorees represent the highest degree of leadership and personal development and display the utmost commitment to their community service project, which is implemented over one to two years and has far-reaching effects in their communities and beyond.

The Gold Award, Girl Scouting's highest achievement, is earned nationally by 5-6 percent of Girl Scouts ages 14-18, more than 5,000 girls, who have demonstrated their leadership skills to discover, connect, and take action to make a significant positive impact on their local, national, or global communities.

Ness, 18, of the Girl Scouts – Land of Lakes Council Council, was the first Girl Scout Gold Award recipient in her hometown of Tenstrike. She planned, coordinated, and led *Indigenous Days*, a four day series of age specific classes on Native American culture and history. Linsey wanted to create a project to build connections among native and non-native members of her community rather than distrust and fear. "If you don't know where you're from, you can't know where you're going," said Ness. She is currently studying at MN State University - Moorhead.

(more)

Zhou, 16, of the Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley, organized *Reuniting China and Her Children*, through which she led classes to adopted Chinese children to keep them connected with their culture and heritage. For over five months, Zhou met with children of all ages bi-weekly at a community church and taught about Chinese language, customs, holidays, dance, and music. In addition, the parents also learned more about Chinese traditions through weekly newsletters. In a final recital, the children performed a dance and skit, displaying their new knowledge, pride, and interest in their native Chinese culture. "Since the project ended, I have become a true leader in the community," said Zhou. She is currently a student at Woodbury High School in Woodbury.

"As Girl Scout Gold Award Young Women of Distinction honorees, Minna and Linsey carried out projects that exemplify the true meaning of community service," said Kathleen H. Corley, chief executive officer of the Girl Scout Council of St. Croix Valley. "They saw a need and took action in their community. This is just one example of the great power of our youth and the hope that they provide for the future of our country."

For more information on how to join, volunteer, reconnect, or donate to Girl Scouts, call 800-845-0787 (Twin Cities Metro and Western Wisconsin) or 800-955-6032 x221 (Central, Western, and Northern Minnesota), or visit www.girlscoutsmn.org.

Girl Scouts and Leadership

Girl Scouts of the USA has a 95-year tradition of building leadership skills in girls. Research shows that Girl Scout alumnae represent 70 percent of women serving in Congress and 66 percent of women of professional achievement. Locally, a handful of notable former Girls Scouts include Heidemarie Stephanyshyn-Piper, who flew the space shuttle in September; Ellen Anderson, Minnesota state senator; Betty McCollum, U.S. representative; and Joan Anderson Growe, former Minnesota secretary of state.

About the Gold Award and National Young Women of Distinction Honor

The Gold Award has evolved from a long line of Girl Scout leadership awards going back as far as 1919. The Gold Award recognizes the work of Girl Scouts who demonstrate leadership culminating in 65 hours or more, dedicated towards a service project that has lasting effects in their community.

About Girl Scouts

Founded in 1912, Girl Scouts of the USA is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls with 3.6 million girl and adult members worldwide. Girl Scouting is the leading authority on girls' healthy development, and builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. The organization strives to serve girls from every corner of the United States and its territories. Girls Scouts of the USA also serves American girls and their classmates attending American or international schools overseas in 90 countries.