

Religious Awards

What?

What are religious awards?

- Religious awards programs are created by the various religious groups to encourage girls to grow stronger in their faith.
- GSUSA recognizes these programs and allows the recognition to be worn on the official uniform, but each religious organization develops and administers its own program.
- Religious awards are optional programs for girls to complete with the help of their families and religious leaders.
- Adult religious awards are by nomination only.

Why?

Why promote religious awards?

Religious awards help girls fulfill their promise *To Serve God*.

- The religious awards programs share many of the values that are integral to Girl Scouting, e.g., service to the community, intergenerational relationships, friendship-making skills, and positive self-esteem.
- The religious awards programs provide opportunities for girls to reinforce and internalize the values they have learned in Girl Scouting and to relate them to their faith.

Religious awards can increase community sponsorship

- The religious awards programs (the curriculum and recognition items) are created by the national religious organizations, not by the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. This allows councils to initiate dialogue with local congregations about one of their own resources created by their faith community to serve their youth.
- The religious awards programs can help a congregation embrace Girl Scouting not as an outside group that meets in its building, but as an integral part of their ministry with youth. Local congregations will not only be providing religious instruction through the religious awards programs, but they will also be strengthening the spiritual component of the Girl Scout program.
- The religious recognitions programs can be presented not only as opportunities for religious education, but also for ministry and outreach. For example, a faith community that offers the P.R.A.Y. Mentor program

for parents is ministering to the whole family, not just to the child. And a faith community that offers a religious awards class and publicizes it through the council newsletter might be reaching out to girls of the same faith who do not have membership in a religious institution but are interested in earning their religious award.

Religious awards can increase diverse membership

- The religious awards programs can help councils reach diverse racial and ethnic groups and specific geographic areas or communities not being served by the Girl Scout program. The religious awards programs provide an instant and visible connection between Girl Scouting and a faith community.

Religious awards can increase adult membership

- Adults active in a congregation may volunteer as counselors for the religious awards programs because they see that as a direct extension of their congregation's ministry. The religious awards programs may be their first exposure to the Girl Scout program.
- The continuity and tenure of adult leaders in religious institutions is greater than those in other areas.

How? **How to promote religious awards?**

- Promote the religious awards of all faiths. Provide information on all religious awards so that girls learn about the program for their own faith.
- Understand that promoting religious awards means providing information, not religious instruction. Religious instruction comes from the family and religious community.
- Utilize the following interfaith resources (these resources were developed by the National Interfaith Committee for Girl Scouting and use inclusive language appropriate to all groups):

To Serve God Brochure - Full color photos of all religious awards available for girls and adults. Includes a Quick Reference Chart with contact information for the various organizations. Available at www.praypub.org.

Religious Awards Presentation Script: A Presentation by Girl Scout leaders to Troops and Parents – A sample script to help leaders make presentations on the religious awards. Available at www.praypub.org.

