GSUSA Gold Award Scholar

Mariella Dreiling

We are proud to announce that Mariella has been selected as a recipient of the prestigious 2026 GSUSA Gold Award Scholarship for her remarkable Gold Award project, “Preserving the Past and Updating for the Future.” This national honor recognizes Gold Award Girl Scouts who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through projects that create measurable and sustainable impact.

While a sophomore at Hays High School, Mariella completed her Gold Award which focused on historic preservation and accessibility at the Bunker Hill Historical Society Museum, helping ensure the community’s rich history will remain accessible for generations to come.

She organized a fragile collection of local newspapers dating from the 1880s to the 1930s into archival storage, cleaned and reorganized display cases, and replaced faded handwritten labels to better preserve the history of museum artifacts. Mariella also created new displays, including one featuring Bibles and church records written in German. Using her German language skills, she translated these important records and helped preserve an important piece of the area’s Volga German heritage.

Mariella’s work extended beyond the museum’s collections. She helped secure three grants to fund improvements, painted the museum’s exterior sign, and helped replace a deteriorating entrance ramp with a safer, accessible ramp and handrail.

To showcase the improvements, Mariella hosted a Memorial Day open house where she taught visitors how to preserve their own family heirlooms. Her work helped generate renewed interest in the museum, with attendance increasing during her project and throughout the summer.

“Experiences from the Gold Award process provided me with the skills required to make positive contributions and to achieve future goals,” Mariella said. “I hope that youth will be inspired to volunteer and to preserve history.”

Mariella has continued that mission by writing, illustrating and publishing two bilingual children’s books about local Volga Germans, which are being sold by the Ellis County Historical Society as a fundraiser.



She is attending Fort Hays State University to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry before transferring to the University of Kansas to pursue a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Her goal is to return to Western Kansas to practice pharmacy.

From preserving the stories of generations past to preparing to serve future generations, Mariella’s leadership demonstrates the lasting impact one Girl Scout can make.

Ready to go for the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award?

Leadership Awards help build your confidence -and a bonus? They're part of an expanded set of options to fulfill the prerequisite toward earing Girl Scouting's Highest Awards.

What types of leadership can you explore?



Personal Leadership: Build courage and confidence



Peer Leadership: Learn to lead and support a team



Teaching Leadership: Inspire younger kids



Community Advocacy: Make change on issues you care about