



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 26, 2019

Media Contact:  
Kaitie Foley  
(888) 686-6468  
kfoley@gskh.org

## Two Wichita Teens Earn Girl Scout's Highest Honor, the Gold Award

**WICHITA, Kan.** — Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland will honor two new Gold Award Girl Scouts, Alicia Thurston and Caitlyn V. of Wichita, Kan., for creating sustainable projects to benefit their communities. At the council's Recognition Breakfast and Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 30, the two Wichita Gold Award Girl Scouts and another from Osborne, Kan. will be celebrated by fellow Girl Scouts, volunteers and alumnae.

Earning the Gold Award is one of the most challenging, exciting and rewarding experiences a Girl Scout can have and one of the most prestigious recognitions she'll accomplish. The Girl Scout Gold Award stands as the highest achievement a Girl Scout can earn, comparable to the Eagle Scout rank in Boy Scouts. The award recognizes girls in grades 9 through 12 who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through Take Action projects that have a sustainable impact in their communities and beyond. Girl Scout Gold Award recipients who join the armed forces enter one rank higher than other recruits, and they qualify for exclusive scholarships.

"Earning the Girl Scout Gold Award is truly a remarkable achievement, and the young women who earn this award exemplify leadership in all of its forms," said Liz Workman, chief executive officer of Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland. "They saw a need in their communities and around the world, and took action. Their extraordinary dedication, perseverance and leadership is making the world a better place."

Thurston noticed many schools reducing budgets for their arts programs and took action. To combat the trend she witnessed, she developed a plan to enable schools to continue beautifying their spaces, while also reducing the amount of plastic going in trash bins. She created a large scale mural at her school made from up-cycled plastic lids, leaving behind extra lids and materials for future students to swap out her mural for a new one. Miniature mural kits were also made for students in other schools to build and display, allowing students to take ownership of the beauty in their surroundings.

"Typically in schools whenever someone puts up a mural it just stays there, and nothing ever happens to it. My project promotes change while adding another creative outlet for everyone involved," Thurston said. "I'm trying to spread the idea that beauty can come from anywhere and everywhere. It does not take fancy, expensive materials to make art and put beauty in the schools."

On earning her Gold Award, Thurston said, "My leadership skills have grown throughout my project." As she led a Girl Scout Junior troop through steps to carry on the project and explaining her Gold Award to teachers and students, she gained knowledge on better communicating ideas and rallying others behind her efforts.



As a sophomore in high school, Caitlyn loved working with younger children but noticed the damaging effects of bullying. She mapped out a plan to address this problem within her own school and set to work. Caitlyn learned woodworking and built several buddy benches with her own hands, weatherproofing them to ensure they would stand the test of time. White Elementary received two benches, one was placed at Oaklawn Elementary and each of the Rainbows United schools in Wichita received one as well.

Caitlyn hopes the benches are used for years to come, impacting hundreds or thousands of students along the way, “Bullying is an issue, not just for children, but also for many older people around the world every minute of every day. I feel that the younger we teach children to feel compassion towards others, and to reach out and make friends, the more they will take what they learned out into the world and help make a difference in many other lives.”

“Throughout doing the project I learned or improved on many skills such as leadership, woodworking, time management, delegating tasks, communication, follow through, and how to deal with setbacks,” Caitlyn said. She plans to continue working towards making the world a better place by pursuing a career in the medical field, helping others along the way.

###

#### **About Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland**

Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland serves more than 10,000 members in 80 Kansas counties through its operational headquarters in Wichita, Kan., and regional offices in Salina, Hays, Emporia and Garden City. Founded in 1912, Girl Scouts is the leading authority on girls’ healthy development and is the pre-eminent leadership development organization for girls. Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

#### **About the Girl Scout Gold Award**

Since 1916, Girl Scouts have been making meaningful, sustainable change in their communities and around the world. The Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout can earn, acknowledges the power behind each recipient’s dedication to not only empowering and bettering herself, but also to making the world a better place for others. These young women are courageous leaders and visionary change makers. *They are our future, and it looks bright!*

