

Abby Legge's Gold Award Project: Buddy System Tutoring Partners

Abby's Take Action Project, The Buddy System, is a program that partners elementary age students with high school students for tutoring sessions. Each tutor works specifically with one student in order to learn that child's learning styles and serve as a role model for that child.

Abby began her Girl Scout Journey as a Brownie, and became a Girl Scout lifetime Member upon graduation.

Abby's parents are Jim and Stacy Legge of Spanish Fort. Abby graduated from Spanish Fort High School in 2015 and will attend Mississippi State University, majoring in Secondary Education and Mathematics.



How did you come up with your idea? The spring of my junior year I was hired to tutor a third grade boy. As I worked with him, I recognized that he wasn't dumb or slow, he just needed one person to sit down and work individually with him. As the semester went on, and as getting to know him better, it became easier to recognize what helped him and what tricks helped him learn better. I recognized that there are a lot of other children who will go without that help and will continue to struggle, so I decided to do something about it.

Were you intimidated by the scale of the project? Of course! In other service projects or clubs you have a role or a job. In the Gold Award Process, you are the secretary, treasurer, president, and volunteer all wrapped in one. Instead of just being able to focus on just one part, you have to focus on every possible aspect of the project you are starting.

How did you keep up the momentum for the project? Stay positive and remember why you are doing this. My motto was "It's for the kids." Also, make sure you schedule in work and play. If you try to do all the hard parts first, it becomes discouraging. Make sure you participate in the fun parts as well.

Were you ever discouraged? If so, what did you do to overcome that? At first, when I was originally discussing the idea with the principals of both the high school and elementary school, they were skeptical. Not because they didn't believe my idea was good, but they have to be the practical ones and ask the hard questions. I just reminded myself that I had answers for their questions, and I kept emphasizing the impact the project would make.

Can you tell us a little story about some part of your project that was special to you? Something funny, or touching, or that went terribly wrong and how you fixed it? The funniest child I worked with throughout the year's name was Jaden. He looked at me and asked me during the end of a tutoring session if we would be back next week. I replied that we would and Jaden said that that was "tight", meaning that he was excited and was enjoying the program. I replied, "your right, it is Tight". He looked at me very seriously and replied, "Don't say that. You have to be cool when you say something is 'tight'." So for the rest of the semester, each week I received my own tutoring lessons on how to speak "cool".

How will people benefit from this? The elementary age students will become better in their math and English skills as well as develop a bond with a student tutor. The tutor will get accountable service hours and the chance to be a mentor and a help to someone who looks up to them.

How did you feel after you finished? Calm. Relieved. Positive. I am calm and relieved because my hard work payed off. Those kids are happy, so I'm happy. Positive because everyone wants to leave some sort of legacy behind. When I leave for college, I may not be remembered by peers or teachers, but the kids I partnered with will always know that I helped them.

What advice would you give to other girls considering a Gold Award)? There will be times when you ask yourself...Is it worth the award? Couldn't I just do the project and not get the silly little pin? You could, but I say it will lose some of its significance. Not every Girl Scout stays in long enough to reach for their Gold. The Gold Award is more for you to look at yourself and say, "I did it." I spent 10 or more years working toward this and look at the young woman I have become!

Your Gold Project made a change for the better in your community. Did it change you? If so, how? Did you learn new skills, or change your outlook on an issue? What will you take away from this experience? I learned a lot of organization skills. I talked with people through countless emails and phone calls and remembering who said what could get confusing.