

## Madison Darling's Gold Award: Parent/Teen Communication

Earning a Gold Award is not easy -- but the rewards, for yourself, your community, and your future are worth the effort.

We ask Gold Awardees to give other Girl Scouts who are considering a Gold Award Project a realistic idea of what is involved. Below, Madison Darling tells us about the challenges and rewards she encountered while implementing her project.



***How did you come up with your idea?*** As Flute Head Section Leader in my high school band I was responsible for 23 girls of various backgrounds. I was able to witness how varying levels of communication skills between parents and teens affected overall success in both school and band. This prompted me to take action

***Were you intimidated by the scale of the project?*** At first I wasn't because I had no idea how much work it would take, but once I started planning and organizing I realized how big it really was. Then I was intimidated. There were so many people and details I had to interact with and compile that it was very intimidating.

***How did you keep up the momentum for the project?*** Earning the Gold Award was a goal I set for myself 12 years ago and after all this time, I didn't want to just give up when I was so close to the finish line. I knew I would regret it if I didn't follow it through.

***Were you ever discouraged? If so, what did you do to overcome that?*** I was discouraged several times because I was interacting with so many people who did not always follow through on a task. However, I overcame it by discussing it with my advisor and learning from my mistakes, that way, in the future, I wouldn't be discouraged the same way again.

***Can you tell us a little story about some part of your project that was special to you?*** For my first clinic, I ordered 10 pizzas; however, I only had 7 people show up. I was stuck with 7 pizzas left and it was 8:30 at night and I had no idea what I was going to do with all of these pizzas! Then the pastor at the church that hosted my clinic told me there was a substance abuse support group meeting next door. So I took all of the pizzas over there where 20 people were meeting to work through their addictions and improve their lives. I was very glad we could help them by providing this meal.

***How will people benefit from your project?*** Once you learn something or experience something it stays with you, since people learned and experienced what it would be like to have better communication skills from my project, in the future they can call upon this knowledge and use it to improve their lives.

***How did you feel after you finished?*** I felt very accomplished and very proud of myself.

***What advice would you give to other girls considering a Gold Award?*** Pick a project or an idea that you love. It would have been so much harder to work on my project if I wasn't passionate about the topic.

***Your Gold Project made a change for the better in your community; did it change you?*** It changed me so much; ultimately, it made me a better leader and a more mature person. I learned a lot about how to communicate with people in different ways; I also learned many skills that will help me for the rest of my life: in college and in the workplace.