

## Lucy Puranen's Gold Award Project: High School Band Mentorships Promote Engagement/Leadership

Lucy's Gold Award Take Action Project was a mentoring program in conjunction with her high school band. This offered one-on-one tutor-type private music lessons for younger students and leadership opportunities for older students.

Lucy has been a Girl Scout for 13 years, earning both her Bronze and Silver Awards. She has served as a camp counselor at Camp Scoutshire Woods and at Kamp Kiwanis



Lucy will graduate From Prattville High School in 2016 and plans on attending the University of Southern Alabama, majoring in nursing (and joining band). Her parents are Chris and Laura Puranen of Prattville.

**How did you come up with your idea?** Band has been a big part of my life since I was little. My parents did it and I finally joined when I was 12. I noticed that a lot of upcoming freshmen were frustrated with the level of music because there isn't a lot of one on one time in Jr. High. Many of them dropped for that reason or because they just didn't know anyone in the band. I disliked the fact that band was meant for personal growth, goals and friends, and here are these students dropping out because they could not obtain those qualities.

**Were you intimidated by the scale of the project?** Not at all. My position in both bands is very personal. Younger students know me from my little sister. Older students know me from being a section leader or friend. I knew I could get the attention from fellow students, but I didn't know how they would run as soon as I handed them the baton.

**How did you keep up the momentum for the project?** Honestly, it was the comments made to me from the younger students. They all had personal goals they had made and they were determined to complete them. If this program could help them with personal goals, imagine it in the larger scheme of things.

**Were you ever discouraged? If so, what did you do to overcome that?** Yes, many times. I had trouble with initial numbers at first. Some people were scared. Others were too busy. As time went by though, more students were showing up simply because word got around about the program.

**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?** My favorite day was the first day we started. Everyone was put with their sections and they learned warm ups and stand tunes. They got to know everyone in the section and become integrated into the group that they will call their family for the next four years. At the end of the day, we gathered up in a big circle and we played a few stand tunes together. Everyone was having fun and dancing and just being general goofballs. This was what I feel in love with about band. Everyone drops their guards, lets go of any emotions from the day and has fun.

***How will people benefit from this?*** People will gain leadership and teaching skills as well as a safer sense of family within groups like band. It brings these peer groups together who normally wouldn't group up, even within band.

***How did you feel after you finished?*** I feel satisfied as well as relieved. I've always known that this was an award that I wanted to go after and try to achieve and just to say I did it is amazing.

***What advice would you give to other girls considering a Gold Award?*** Think outside the box when it comes to projects. Look for those areas where some people wouldn't normally look at. Most mentors and advisors will tell you to make your project personal, and that is one quality I believe every girl should take advantage of.

***Your Gold Project made a change for the better in your community. Did it change you? What will you take away from this experience?*** I have always looked at those "bigger leaders" in my groups and thought it was just a sense of natural leadership that made them so great. I now realize that it's just putting their skills to bigger practice. I think this is my first step in becoming a better leader.