

Stephanie Schisler's Gold Award: Founding a School Library

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, Stephanie Schisler tells us about the challenges and rewards she encountered while implementing her project.



How did you come up with your idea? At first, I looked around the downtown, comparing it with other downtowns, trying to find something our downtown didn't have that those other downtowns did have. I was going to do a sprinkler playground for kids, but when I examined the cost and possibility of this project being completed in my projected time, I realized it wasn't feasible. It wasn't until I started examining the smaller communities around my school 'til I found a project worth working on - The Dale County Christian School Library.

Were you intimidated by the scale of this project? At first, no, I wasn't. But, it wasn't until I started getting into the main part of the project when I started wondering what I had gotten myself into.

How did you keep up the momentum for the project? Up until the time I started getting distraught about my project, I really didn't have a hard time keeping up, because it was mainly taking books off shelves, writing letters, etc. When the book organizing, labeling, cataloging, and shelving came into play, I really didn't know what to do except "keep swimming".

Were you ever discouraged? If so, what did you do to overcome that? Yes, once or twice I got discouraged. The book sorting, cataloging, and shelving really got me. Things were set back several times because something was done wrong. When shelving, I thought the books were never going to end because there were so many.

I just kept thinking that there were only a few more books left to put up before I was done. That and that the project was almost done.

Can you tell us a story about some part of your project that was special to you? It was during the portion of the project when I was shelving all the books. Many people were so enthusiastic about the library that they kept donating boxes of books. I would get pretty far shelving them and a new box of books were donated. So, I had to move books down - shelves at a time - so that I would have more room on the shelves for the new books. This happened several times during my project.

How will people benefit from this?

- Fewer detentions from lateness of books should be handed out at school.
- Students will have higher grades.
- Students and teachers will have a better time checking out books in the library.
- Youth going to Ewell Bible Baptist Church will have an extra source of information.
- Books are the source of knowledge. Students will gain that knowledge provided by those books.

How did you feel after you finished? In a word, relieved. I know that I won't have to go back there and spend all day every day putting up books or something.

What advice would you give to other girls considering a Gold Award? "Don't give up. Be relentless in your project. It's worth it in the end." My mottos for the project were "The harder it gets, the closer you are to finishing it." and "Just keep swimming!" - Dory from *Finding Nemo*

Your Gold Project made a change for the better in your community. What will you take away from this project? Did it change me? I'm going to have to say yes. This project made a big impact not only in other's lives but also in mine. I am a little bit of a 'in charge' type of person. This project made me realize that not everyone likes to be followers and be told what to do. In rare moments during this project, I was taken out of my leadership position and put in a follower's place. It felt different and was an eye-opener on how others view things, giving me not only the leadership point-of-view but also the follower's perspective of things causing me to have better judgment on telling people how to do things.

I definitely learned new skills. Library cataloging is more difficult than it looks but at the same time easy. You have to order the books on the shelves by last name of the author. After you do that, you have to add them all in to the computer system. Once you have them on the system, next comes the easy part. You find all the barcode labels for all the books. For those books that don't have barcode labels or even ISBN (International Standard Book Number) codes, you make one for that specific book using a ISBN generator. Then, You print off the barcode stickers, find the corresponding book, put the label on the inside of the front cover. Organization and time management are skills that I brushed up on while I was working on this project. Those were used countless times.

What will I take away from this experience? All of the above plus some others. Determination is one. When I go into a book store, much less a library, I have to struggle to stop myself from looking at every last book in there and getting ten of them. Throughout this project, I had to stop myself countless times from reading a book when I'm supposed to be doing something totally different. Another is the desire to volunteer again. I am really happy knowing all my hard work I put into the library will not go to waste. The students will use it. The teachers will use it. Church youth will use it. Everybody benefits.