

Volunteer Edmonton

Girl power

Girl Guides celebrating 100 years

Evelyn Pham
Special to the Examiner

years of helping girls and women become confident, resourceful leaders.

Throughout the years, Girl Guides of Canada has changed with the times to reflect the needs and interests of contemporary girls and women, yet the core values have remained the same – achieve personal growth and help make a positive difference in the community.

For Beverly Simpson-Headon, being part of Girl Guides is also about having fun, making lasting friendships and being part of a supportive sisterhood.

As the current Edmonton and area commissioner and a former Girl Guide herself, Simpson-Headon has seen first-hand the impact the organization has on those involved.

"I've stayed in Guiding and it has been such a great experience. I've done things I never thought I'd do if it wasn't for Girl Guides," Simpson-Headon explains. "I've gained skills that I've used in every aspect of my life."

Selling Girl Guide cookies is just one example of how girls develop important skills.

"It may not seem like an important thing, but selling cookies is a lot like cold-calling, and that's hard. We have girls who are doing that at a very young age and it's a valuable skill to have."

Girls are divided into different branches – Sparks, Brownies, Guides, Pathfinders and Rangers, according to ages that range from seven to 18. Girls in the program have an opportunity to get involved in various age-appropriate programs and activities that help them discover their interests, learn about social and environmental issues, embark on international trips and volunteer in the community.

"At Christmas, the girls went out into the community and performed service. I was amazed by what was happening. The girls made cards and favours for seniors, went caroling, went to the food banks. They came up with such unique ideas," Simpson-Headon says.

Simpson-Headon hopes others will give back. "We definitely need leaders," she says.

Annie Desautels has been a leader for 12 years.

"You need to be prepared – have the lessons planned and activities ready for the girls. Be honest with yourself and with others," she advises. "You need to be willing to share your knowledge, but you're learning at the same time."

While she got involved because a unit leader stepped down, Desautels stays for the girls.

"I get some personal satisfaction that I've helped someone learn just a little bit to be better

Canada's original "girl-focused" organization is celebrating 100

people, better citizens."

To sign up to become a Girl Guides of Canada member or to volunteer as a leader, visit the Girl Guides of Canada website at www.girlguides.ca.

To learn about Volunteer Edmonton, visit www.volunteeredmonton.com.

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