INTRODUCTION
Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri is committed to helping girls and young women to be caring and compassionate individuals. With the Disability Awareness Program, girls from Brownie Girl Scouts to Senior Girl Scouts can gain greater insight, understanding and compassion for people with disabilities. Through a series of carefully constructed activities, girls will learn about the challenges faced daily by many people in our community.

As a Leader, you may have experienced the rewards of having girls with disabilities participate in your troop’s activities. With society moving towards more inclusive social programs, it is important for both you and your girls to develop an awareness and understanding of different types of disabilities and to use this knowledge to promote the inclusion of all girls in Girl Scouting.

To help you in this process, Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri offers Disability Awareness programs for Brownie, Junior and Cadette/Senior Girl Scout age levels. These activities have been created to generate discussion and nurture an environment of inclusion.

Don’t forget Daisy Girl Scouts!
Although Daisy Girl Scouts do not have a patch program, there is plenty for them to learn, too! In the Resource Center you’ll find Disability Awareness Activity Kits—hands-on simulation activities that allow your girls to experience the feelings and challenges a person with a disability sometimes has when facing barriers in society.

MORE RESOURCES FOR TROOP LEADERS
Another excellent resource for Leaders of all age levels is Focus on Ability, the Girl Scouts of the USA guide on serving girls with special needs. Focus on Ability can be borrowed from the Girl Scout Resource Center.

By completing a Disability Awareness program, your girls can increase their awareness of the barriers faced by people with disabilities, thus helping girls to act with greater compassion and inclusiveness towards those who are different from themselves.

In order to purchase the appropriate age-level recognitions for Our Own Council’s Disability Awareness Program, Girl Scouts and their Leaders must complete the program evaluation. Please return the attached form to the G.S. Shop in St. Louis or Hannibal at the time of purchase.

If you have questions about the program, contact Julie Schloss, 314.592.2301, jschloss@girlscoutsem.org.
DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Before your troop members begin working on their Badge project, it will be beneficial for them to learn about “Disability Etiquette.” This information will help the troop know what is and what is not respectful language and behavior to use when interacting with people who have disabilities.

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

People First Language puts the person before the disability and it describes what a person has—not what a person is.

**PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE**

**SAY:**  
Person with a disability  
She has a learning disability  
The child has a developmental delay  
Congenital disability or birth anomaly  
Person who uses a wheelchair  
Accessible parking

**INSTEAD OF:**  
The handicapped or disabled  
She’s learning disabled  
The mentally retarded or slow  
Birth defect/affliction  
Wheelchair-bound or confined  
Handicapped parking

Talk about the person first, then the disability. Say “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person.” Remember—if a person’s disability is not important to the story or conversation, don’t mention it.

It is okay to offer help to a person with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted BEFORE you help. Listen to instructions the person may give.

Leaning on a person’s wheelchair is like leaning or hanging on a person and is usually considered annoying and rude. The chair is a part of one’s body space and should be respected as such.

When offering help to a person with a visual impairment, allow that person to take your arm. This will enable you to guide, rather than lead the person. Use specific directions, such as “left two feet” or “right six steps,” when directing a person with a visual impairment.

When talking to a person who has a disability, speak directly to the person, not through a friend. Relax! Don’t be embarrassed if you say things like, “See ya later” or “Gotta run,” which seem to call attention to a person’s disability.

To get the attention of a person who has a hearing impairment, tap them on the shoulder or wave. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to determine if they read lips. **NOTE: Not all people with hearing impairments can read lips. Those who do rely on facial expressions and body language for understanding. Stay in the light and keep food, hands and other objects away from your mouth. Do not shout. Use written notes to convey messages.**
When speaking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, place yourself at eye level with that person.

When greeting a person with a visual disability, always identify yourself and others. For example, you can say, “On my right is John Smith.” Speak in a normal tone of voice. Let them know when you move from one place to another.

THE DISABILITY AWARENESS BADGE
The Disability Awareness Badge can help you learn about different disabilities. It also can show you what it is like to have a disability, what services are available, and how to be respectful of people with disabilities. Complete five of the activities below; Activity 8 is required.

ACTIVITY ONE
*LEADER’S NOTE: Invite a person who uses an adaptable device to your meeting.
Learn about the special equipment available for people with disabilities to use, including wheelchairs, crutches, books written in Braille, and augmentative communication devices. Discuss how this equipment is used. If possible, borrow different equipment and learn how to operate it.

ACTIVITY TWO
Write your members of Congress or state legislators to inquire about laws protecting people with disabilities. Learn more about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a law to ensure equal rights for people with disabilities.

ACTIVITY THREE
Learn about the different occupations for working with people with disabilities. Jobs may include social worker, teacher, engineer, sign language interpreter or physical therapist. What type of education is required? What is their day to day activity like?

ACTIVITY FOUR
*LEADER’S NOTE: See the Resource Section for a list of organizations.
Many organizations in our area provide service to people with disabilities. Contact at least three organizations and ask what services they provide and who they help. Invite someone from one of these organizations to speak at a troop meeting about their organization and their job. Prepare questions in advance and ask how your troop can assist the agency.

ACTIVITY FIVE
Practice using “People First” language when talking about people with disabilities. (Refer to page 2.)
Girl Scouting is for every girl, everywhere. How do girls with disabilities engage in Girl Scouting activities? Have your troop participate in a “Special Projects for Special Girl Scouts” activity.

Research to learn more about famous people with disabilities. Your research might include Thomas Edison, Helen Keller, Franklin Delanor Roosevelt, Wilma Rudolph, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Find out about Juliette Gordon Low and how she became hearing impaired. With your troop, talk about how you react toward people with disabilities. Why do you feel the way you do? Why do people sometimes feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities? How does learning about people with disabilities help make us feel more comfortable?

*LEADER’S NOTE: simulation activities are to learn about specific disabilities and to problem solve ways to make daily tasks easier.

There are many different types of disabilities. Try a few of the exercises in the next section to experience what it is like to have a specific disability.

A person with a visual disability may have trouble seeing images, color, lights or shadows. Their vision may be distorted or blurred. Even though some people with visual impairments wear glasses, other people with visual disabilities may have severe vision problems that cannot be corrected with glasses.

**Simulation Activity #1**
Using plastic wrap, tape six to eight layers of plastic to the lenses of an old pair of sunglasses. You may use swimming goggles or protective goggles. Put on the sunglasses or goggles and try to do everyday tasks such as reading a book, putting together a puzzle, playing a board game or making a sandwich.

How did it feel to have your vision impaired? What would have made the task easier? Make a list of different ways everyday tasks could be made easier for a person with a visual disability.

**Simulation Activity #2**
Watch a television program while wearing a blindfold. Was it hard to “watch” the show without seeing it?
HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
A hearing disability can be defined in many ways. It can range from mild to moderate deafness in which a person has trouble hearing soft sounds, to complete deafness.

A hearing impairment can affect speech, language, communication and social skills. A person with a hearing disability relies on other senses, such as sight, to help them with basic communicative skills.

Simulation Activity #1
Us a sign language chart (see page 74 of the Junior Girl Scout handbook) to learn the Girl Scout Promise in sign language.

Simulation Activity #2
With a partner, sit facing each other have one person at a time say something to the other, moving their lips only. Try to have a conversation and do not speak out loud.

What problems did you have in understanding what was said? What happened if your partner turned her head?

PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS
Physical impairments are probably the most recognizable type of disability because they are something you can see. A person may be born with a physical disability (congenital) or the disability may occur as a result of an accident, infection or disease. There are many conditions that can be called a physical disability, including cerebral palsy, epilepsy, spinal injuries or loss of a limb.

Simulation Activity
Place two chairs of different sizes side by side. Move from one chair to the other and back without standing on your feet or using your legs. This is how a person who uses a wheelchair must transfer to a chair, bed, sofa, etc.

Sing a song such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.” Try singing the song three times. Some people have impairments affecting their muscles, which can make it difficult to do things such as raise their arms or reach their toes.
SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES
More people have learning disabilities than any other type of disability. A person with a learning disability is not dumb or lazy; they may experience trouble learning or understanding certain things, such as reading or math or directions.

Simulation Activity
Have each girl in the troop read one sentence aloud from the paragraph below.

“Cro-Magnon Man”

ehT qaimtimg also qroved that,  
Sa well sa being a great hunter,  
Cor_Wagmom Nam saw a comsiberadle artist.  
He dah flourisheb to a tine when eno fo eth terrdle  
Ice Ages saw dlotting out nuch fo Europe.  
He had estadlishedb jinself, fought wilb aminals rof sqace,  
Surviveb eht ditter colb, and left beeq bown unber groumb  
Nenorials of his yaw for life!

When finished, discuss the following questions:
Did you feel frustrated while reading your sentence? Did it slow you down? If this was how you saw words, would you want to leave the group when it was your turn to read? How did you feel when other people helped you? Were you angry at yourself? Where you angry at other girls?

This is an example of a visual perception problem called reversals. Some people with learning disabilities reverse letters, numbers or whole words (saw-was). A person who writes reversals probably reads reversals, causing them to slow down while reading.

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS
A person with a cognitive disability is like anyone else who enjoys many activities that most people do—having fun and being with friends.
A person with a cognitive disability has a lower than average intelligence. This means they learn things more slowly than a person with average intelligence.
They also may do things that you would expect from someone younger. A person with developmental delays may not develop social or life skills, such as how to greet other people or make themselves a snack. Instead, they may do things and react to situations in ways that you do not understand.
Simulation Activity
Using only two-syllable words, write a paragraph about your favorite Girl Scout memory or what you did during your last school vacation. Once completed, consider: How hard was it for you to write the paragraph? How would you feel if you had to work this hard every time you tried to write? This is often how a person who has a cognitive disability feels when they have to write their name or a simple sentence.

BEHAVIOR DISORDERS
Have you ever felt so strongly about something that you couldn’t think about or focus on anything else? For some people with behavioral disorders, that is how they feel much of the time. A behavioral disability does not mean a person is bad or only does things to get attention. It is a disability they cannot control. A person with a behavioral disability is much like anyone else. She needs to be shown friendship and respect regardless of behavior.

Simulation Activity
Sit on the floor with your knees up, head down, arms around your knees and think about a time when you felt very alone. You can rock or hum, but do not talk. Try to focus only on your feelings. After five minutes, get up and write about how you felt.

COMMUNICATION DISORDERS
Imagine you had difficulty in communicating clearly with others. How would you let people know what you thought, how you felt or what you needed? A communication disorder involves speech and language. Speech is the sound we use when sharing our thoughts or ideas. Language is the formation of thoughts or ideas into sentences or phrases. A person with a communication disorder has difficulty with their speech or language.

Simulation Activity
Read the following examples of different types of communication disorders out loud to other members of your troop. When you are finished, discuss how you felt and how your listeners felt during communication.

Articulation Disorder
A thpeech dithoda ith not funny. It can be vewy embawathing to the thpeaka.
Even a mld dithoda can cauth a mithunuthtanding.
Stuttering
A-a-a speech d-d-d-isorder is not f-f-funny. It c-c-can be, uhm, you know, uhm very embaaarrassing to the -the speaker. Eeeven a m-mild dis-dis-dis-order canc ause a mis-mis-mis-misunderstanding.

PROGRAM LINKS—BADGES

- Healthy Relationships
- Model Citizens
- My Community
- Girl Scouting in the USA
- Communication
- Celebrating People
- Junior Girl Scout Leadership Award (pin)

ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST
Take a look through your school, an area office building, local library or other public place. Using this checklist, determine how accessible the place is to a person with a disability.

Are there reserved parking places for people with disabilities? (They must be at least 96 inches wide.)
- YES    □ NO

Does the main entrance have a barrier-free ramp? (It must go out at least one foot for every inch it goes up.)
- YES    □ NO

Do all doors have a clear opening of 33 inches or more when open? (Allows a wheelchair to pass through.)
- YES    □ NO

Are the doorknobs located in such a way that people in wheelchairs can reach them?
- YES    □ NO

Are there handrails in hallways and near stairs?
- YES    □ NO

Can drinking fountains be used by people in wheelchairs or by people with impaired use of their hands?
- YES    □ NO

If the building has more than one floor, does it have an elevator? Are the buttons marked in Braille?
- YES    □ NO
Are fire alarms/smoke detectors equipped with flashing lights for people with hearing impairments?

- YES  
- NO

Are windows 24 to 28 inches from the floor so people using wheelchairs can see out?

- YES  
- NO

Is there at least one bathroom stall with handrails that could comfortably be used by a person in a wheelchair? (The stall door must swing outward.)

- YES  
- NO

Is at least one sink, soap dispenser, and towel dispenser no higher than 34 inches from the floor?

- YES  
- NO

RESOURCE GUIDE

Missouri Developmental Disability Resource Center
http://www.moddrc.org

Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities
http://www.mpcdd.com

Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis
8420 Delmar Boulevard, Suite 506
St. Louis, Missouri 63124
(314) 961-2504
http://www.dsagsl.org

Edgewood Children’s Center
330 North Gore Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63119-1699
314.968.2060
http://www.eccstl.org

Epilepsy Foundation of the St. Louis Region
7100 Oakland Ave
Saint Louis, MO, 63117-1813
http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/stlouis
Paraquad, Inc.  
5240 Oakland Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63110  
314-289-4200  
http://www.paraquad.org

St. Louis Learning Disabilities Association  
13537 Barrett Parkway Drive  
Suite 110  
Ballwin, MO 63021  
314.966.3088  
http://www.ldastl.org

Missouri Department of Mental Health  
http://www.dmh.missouri.gov

NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) of Metropolitan St. Louis  
http://www.namistl.org

St. Louis Arc  
1816 Lackland Hill Parkway  
Suite 200  
St. Louis, MO 63146  
314-569-2211  
http://www.slarc.org

Recreation Council of Greater St. Louis  
200 S. Hanley  
Suite 100  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
(314)726-6044  
http://stlouis.missouri.org/reccouncil
DISABILITY AWARENESS PATCH PROGRAM
JUNIOR BADGE

Life Skills Foundation
10176 Corporate Square Drive
Suite 100
St. Louis, Missouri 63132-2924
(314) 567-7705
http://www.lifeskills-stl.org

Support Dogs, Inc.
11645 Lilburn Park Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63146
314) 997-2325
www.supportdogs.org
EVALUATION

PART 1: For Troop Members and Adults
Indicate the number of girls in your troop by program age level and the number of adults who participated in the program:

- Brownie Girl Scouts _____  Junior Girl Scouts ____
- Cadette Girl Scouts _____  Senior Girl Scouts ____  Adults _____

Questions for girls (record cumulative answers):

2. Were these activities fun?  
   Yes    No

3. Did you learn about Disability Etiquette?  
   Yes    No
   Describe some things you learned:_________________ ____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

Did you learn about impairments?  
   Yes    No
   Describe some things you learned:_________________ ____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

4. Have these activities changed the way you feel about people who are different from you?  
   Yes    No

5. Do you have a better understanding of how people with disabilities deal with everyday barriers?  
   Yes    No

6. Do you think you will feel more comfortable around people with disabilities?  
   Yes    No

7. Do you have new ideas about how to include everyone in your activities?  
   Yes    No

PART II: For Adults Only—Rate the Disability Awareness Program

1. Instructions for Activities  
   Very Good        Good           Needs Improvement

2. Materials for Activities  
   Very Good        Good           Needs Improvement

3. Activities  
   Very Good        Good           Needs Improvement

4. How did you learn about the Disability Awareness Program?  
   Leader Program Bulletin _____  Neighborhood Announcements _____
   Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri Web Site ____  Other _____  (describe)___________________________

5. Comments:
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________