

Girls Living in Poverty

Serving every girl, everywhere!

GSBDC strives to accomplish the Girl Scout Mission and its local vision by serving girls where they are. In doing so, volunteers often times connect with girls and adults residing in communities that are challenged with the effects of long-term poverty.

In the book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne, PhD, poverty is defined as “the absence or inaccessibility of several vital resources a girl needs in order to reach her full potential.” Girls involved in Girl Scouting may not have access to one or more of these vital resources, paraphrased below:

Money to buy goods (necessities and desired item) and services (such as healthcare, child-care and recreation).

Emotional Stability that enables a girl to choose and control her emotional reactions in ways that are non-threatening to herself and others.

Mental Stability that enables a girl to reason well (to read, write, compute, etc.) in order to deal with daily life; and the inability to make logical/wise decisions.

Spiritual Foundation that supports belief in a higher power such as God. It also embraces the belief in a divine purpose for one’s life.

Physical Fitness that allows girls to be active and mobile.

Support Systems that provide girls with caring people as well as other resources such as counseling centers, health center, churches, etc., that they can lean on in times of need or when they are going through important transitions.

Relationship/Role Models who nurture girls and **do not** engage in self-destructive behavior. In these relationships, girls feel safe and highly valued.

Knowledge of Hidden Rules which enables girls to pick up on the unspoken cues and habits of a group (such as the upper and middle class in a given society).

GSBDC responds to the lack of vital resources for girls growing up in a culture of poverty in the following ways:

Financial assistance is available to families who need help paying for membership and Girl Scouting activities.

The emotional stability of girls is nurtured in Girl Scouts by giving girls opportunities to mingle with others from a variety of backgrounds, to practice acceptable conflict resolution techniques and to develop teamwork.

The mental stability of girls is supported by offering them a wealth of learning experiences in Girl Scouts settings that allow them to discover and develop their natural abilities/talents and personal interest.

The spiritual foundation (belief system) which is an important aspect in the daily lives of many of our members is recognized in the Girl Scout Promise and Law and in the faith-based award, My Promise, My Faith.

Physical fitness is promoted in Girl Scouts by engaging girls in activities such as hiking, canoeing, playing sports and active games just to name a few.

A girl's **support system** is enhanced by Girl Scouting in that a girl can connect with caring, trained adults as well as community resources who can assist them through important transitions.

A great role model for girls can be a Girl Scout Volunteer who helps girls feel safe, welcomed and valued in any Girl Scout setting.

As girls interact with others from a variety of backgrounds, they become more aware of the **hidden rules** they must know in order to navigate their way through society. These include, but are not limited to, using good grammar, obtaining a good education, managing money wisely, making good first impressions and building good networking skills. These rules are often demonstrated in Girl Scout settings by caring, compassionate Girl Scout Volunteers!

Keep in mind that poverty may be generational or situational. It is also rarely due to lack of education or ability. All girls can be taught success. GSBDC is dedicated to advancing the opportunities of underserved girls, including those living in poverty, through site-based programming, STEM programming and partnerships with other community organizations.

Thanks to Girl Scouts of the Southern Appalachians for sharing their resources.