

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars



Program History

Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri established Girl Scouts Beyond Bars in 1996 to address the needs of girls whose mothers are incarcerated. This is a collaborative program of Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri; Missouri Department of Corrections; and the Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center (WERDCC) in Vandalia, Missouri.

Nationally, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars was created in partnership with the National Institute of Justice in 1992 and now operates numerous sites. Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri's program is the only one of its kind in the state of Missouri.

“Girl Scouts helps me become a better person.”
-GSBB participant

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Troop

This multi-age-level troop meets regularly in St. Louis and also travels to WERDCC for troop meetings with their mothers. Troop members participate in traditional Girl Scout activities such as camping, field trips and service projects. Girls learn new skills as they earn Girl Scout badges and awards.

One-third of the current members have been in the troop five or more years. Often, members remain in the troop after their mothers are released from prison. Girl Scouts discover practical life skills through Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, such as understanding the effects of drugs and alcohol, taking pride in themselves and how to stand up for themselves in positive ways.

Program Goals

- Preserve the mother/daughter relationship
- Reduce the trauma of separation
- Minimize the girls' at-risk behaviors by introducing them to positive values through Girl Scouting
- Provide opportunities for girls to share positive experiences with their incarcerated mothers in the safe, supportive setting of a Girl Scout troop meeting

Program Outcomes

In the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program, girls have the opportunity to be involved with positive adult leaders in an accepting and nurturing environment.

86% of daughters and mothers say Girl Scouts Beyond Bars helped reduce the trauma of separation caused by the mothers' incarceration*

98% of daughters and mothers say their relationship is close and stronger due to Girl Scouts Beyond Bars*

99% of the girls say they are making smarter choices for themselves, using what they have learned in Girl Scouts*

*2009 Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Evaluations,
Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri

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