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YOUR VIEW

Girls Scouts have taken lead in communities for 100 years

On Tuesday, the Girl Scouts will honor five outstanding women from the Lehigh Valley at the Take the Lead event at Arts Quest at SteelStacks. The Take the Lead 2012 honorees are women of courage, confidence and character whose leadership makes the world a better place.

The 2012 honorees are Carmen Twillie Ambar, president of Cedar Crest College; Shelley Brown, president and CEO of the State Theatre; Frances Hesselbein, president and CEO of the Leader to Leader Institute; Susan Kubik, vice president of Institutional Advancement at Northampton Community College and executive director of the college's foundation; and Dr. Donna Miller, the medical director of Westminster Village and Moravian Village in Bethlehem.

The Take the Lead event is unique among the hundreds of fundraisers in the Lehigh Valley. It is the culmination of a leadership development program in which Scouts attend workshops, meet, interview and shadow their respective honoree and do what Girl Scouts do best — develop skills that will make them the leaders of tomorrow. Each of the Take the Lead 2012 honorees will be presented at the event by a Girl Scout before hundreds of attendees.

As one Girl Scout will relate in her presentation, "the [honoree's] grandmother and father taught her to have respect for all people ... I think that is where she developed her philosophy of 'Think first, speak last!'"

Another Girl Scout, in her presentation, will relate the advice she received from an honoree: "We still live in a world where women do not make as much as men, [particularly] in Fortune 500 companies [and] in the sciences ... young women must be in driving mode — some doors still need a bit of a kick."

These presentations are meaningful and provide a young woman's perspective and recognition of the honorees' backgrounds, achievements and wisdom; the presentations are inspiring to the Girl Scouts, moving to the attendees, and a truly special moment in time for the honorees.



Nancy Conrad

The Take the Lead event not only recognizes these outstanding women and Scouts, but it also highlights the importance and value of supporting and mentoring women. Women continue to face challenges in their personal and professional lives. As noted by an honoree, while we have made advances in salaries, positions and professions, there is still a way to go. Take the Lead reminds all women to continue to excel in their personal and professional paths and to provide leadership in assisting other women to advance in their personal and professional lives.

As a past Take the Lead honoree, I recently participated in a meeting with other past honorees. Having recognized the importance and power of a network of women professionals, we met at the home of a past honoree and reconnected with Girl Scouts and each other. Our network includes women from diverse backgrounds and professions, including, CEOs, engineers, lawyers and physicians. We committed ourselves to building and developing our relationships and to supporting each other in our personal and professional lives. We likewise committed to our continued support in mentoring young women to be their personal best.

The Girl Scouts are also celebrating the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouting at the Take the Lead 2012 event. Juliette Gordon Low formed the inaugural troop of 18 girls in Georgia and at that first meeting claimed, "I've got something for the girls of Savannah, and all of America, and the world, and we're going to start it tonight!"

Since that start, generations of girls have benefited from Scouting, forming networks, earning badges and developing interests in areas that include technology, engineering, moviemaking and Web design. Notably, former Girl Scouts include Hillary Clinton, Reese Witherspoon, Laura Bush and Katie Couric.

I hope that you will take the lead and support the Girl Scouts, an organization that provides the premier leadership development program to girls in the greater Lehigh Valley. Believe in these girls and join the Take the Lead 2012 and the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouting celebration.

Nancy Conrad, a former Girl Scout and previous Take the Lead honoree, is co-chairwoman of Take the Lead 2012. She is an attorney in the Lehigh Valley and resides with her family in Emmaus.