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Celebrating Girl Scout Troop Leaders

SACRAMENTO - April 22 is national Girl Scout Leader's Day, a day to celebrate Girl Scout leaders who build girls of courage, confidence and character. Girl Scout leaders serve as an inspiration for girls as they dedicate their time and energy to the Girl Scout movement.

Here are two stories from local Girl Scout Troop Leaders:

Tracy Caldwell - Troop Leader in Rancho Cordova, Service Unit Treasurer and Council Trainer

Tracy Caldwell became a Girl Scout as an adult in 1992 and has been a troop leader for two generations of girls. Once her children were adults she became a troop leader for her granddaughter and now has 20 girls in her troop; an average troop has 10 girls.

"I serve every girl who wants to be a Girl Scout," Caldwell said.

For the past 10 years, Caldwell has also volunteered as a Girl Scout First Aid Trainer. She plans to stay involved with Girl Scouts "forever."

"I work hard and push a lot of paper at work but being involved in Girl Scouts is the most important thing I do," said Caldwell. "There is real joy and meaning in spending time with girls; they are so excited about everything!"

"Everything my daughters do today comes back to Girl Scouts. They have confidence around their peers, they can get up and speak in front of 150 people and it's just normal operating procedure, these are the things Girl Scouts has taught them and the reason why I stay involved," said Caldwell.

Caldwell's youngest daughter is her troop's co-leader and works as a massage therapist and youth synchronized swim coach. Her oldest daughter is studying law at McGeorge School of Law and her middle daughter is a preschool teacher.

Donella Patalon - Girl Scout troop leader in Brownsville and Outdoor Skills Trainer

Donella Patalon has been a Girl Scout leader for 20 years and a trainer for 16 years. She started a troop when her daughter was a Girl Scout Brownie. Her daughter is now 26 and Patalon is still leading a troop of older Girl Scouts.

Patalon has been known to drive for hours to help at an event, train a group of troop leaders or mentor a girl on her Girl Scout Gold Award project. She says she will stay involved in Girl Scouts, "for as long as I can in one capacity or another."

"I want to give girls encouragement and advice and see girls take initiative and help other people. That's why I do



it, so yeah, I drive anywhere to stay involved with Girl Scouts," said Patalon.

Through all of her years of dedicated leadership, Patalon has noticed that it's not just the girls that benefit from the Girl Scout program but the leaders also benefit.

"I've seen the long term benefit it has for girls and leaders. It's all about the commitment, leadership and passion," said Patalon.

Patalon's background is in outdoor education, which she believes is a key component of being a Girl Scout.

"Outdoor education is more than just camping. It's about environmental education, working together, budgeting and so much more," said Patalon. "Experiencing nature gives girls a softer look on life and they realize the great outdoors is not that scary."

About Girl Scouts - Founded in 1912, Girl Scouts is still the leading authority on girls' healthy development, and builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. The local council, Girl Scouts Heart of Central California is headquartered in Sacramento and serves nearly 29,000 girls in 18 counties in Central California. For more information, visit <http://www.girlscoutshcc.org/>



Tracy Caldwell with her troop making funny faces.