

Special Issue #228 - Girl Scouts with Special Needs - Part 1 of 3  
Scouting Links Newsletter - September 19, 2003

Welcome to this Special Edition of the Scouting Links Newsletter for leaders/volunteers who have Girl Scouts/Guides with special needs/disabilities/different abilities. When you have girls with different levels of ability in your troop, the most important tools you need are a good sense of humor, patience and knowledge. In this issue, you will find advice, activities and websites about how to integrate all girls into your troop and how to get the other girls to accept differences and limitations.

My deepest thanks to the many wonderful people who contributed to this special issue!

This issue of the Scouting Links Newsletter is going out to 4,282 subscribers. To all our new subscribers, welcome!

For all of our new subscribers who don't understand why they are getting this issue of the newsletter when it doesn't apply to them, let me explain. Every once in a while I write "Special" issues that are devoted to one topic. If you get a special issue about something that you're not interested in, please just delete it. If you missed the one that pertains to your particular level, you can get it from the archives at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Scouting\\_Links\\_Newsletter/files](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Scouting_Links_Newsletter/files). Just click on the folder that applies to the level that you are interested in.

If you enjoy this newsletter, please forward a copy to your Girl Scout/Guide friends and invite them to join (I'm always looking for new people to get ideas from)!!

To subscribe, unsubscribe, change your email address (I need new and old address) or include a request in the newsletter, please send me a note at <mailto:katie.baron@att.net> and I'll take care of it for you.

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Since a sense of humor is so important . . . .

Q. How many Girl Scouts does it take to change a light bulb?  
A. Thirty -- 1 to change the bulb and 29 to sing about it!

Q. How many Girl Scout leaders does it take to screw in a light bulb?  
A. Only one. But she's required to attend eight hours of mandatory training first!

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>>Editor's Notes:

1. In order to respect the privacy of the girls, all girls' names have been changed.
2. The US government is now using "Intellectually Challenged" instead of "Learning Disabled" or "Mentally Disabled". I want you to know what the currently accepted terminology is, but I'm not comfortable changing the wording of items that people have submitted, so please keep this in mind as you read through the newsletter.
3. This is by no means a comprehensive resource. It is based solely on information that was sent to me by other leaders and information that I found on the internet.

\* \* \* Disabilities . . . Different Abilities . . . What Are Leaders Dealing With? \* \* \*

>>Submitted by Eileen, <mailto:eileenmsmith@msn.com>

My daughter has a learning disability that makes math hard and reading harder. Unfortunately the handbooks are all geared for girls at grade level and difficult for her to enjoy.

In addition to my own daughter, I have a girl who has ADHD and a girl I was sure had a problem because she struggled with spelling, coloring and reading. Sure enough 2 years later the school system finally diagnoses her and gets her the much needed reading help.

Many of these young ladies already struggle with issues in school and

have self esteem issues.

>>Submitted by Karen, <mailto:karenl@uwpc.org>

I have a girl who is deaf in my troop. I've also worked with a girl who is developmentally delayed in my troop for 2 years, and this is the same troop in which I had 3 girls who were gifted. That was . . . interesting.

>>Submitted by Judy, <mailto:bzmomx2@insite-pro.com>

You really get a lot out of having such a girl in your troop, in your life. I've had all different types of girls in my troops. However, right now I have a girl with Cerebral Palsy in my troop. She either uses a walker or her wheel chair and she is just amazing. It has actually been fun (although her dad doesn't think so to see her break out of her shell and start to have some normal early teen attitudes). She is the 2nd of 7 and until she joined my troop about 15 months ago she always watched them going, doing, playing, etc., and only had her one week away at CP camp. What a joy!

Another thing was watching as the girls in the troop changed what they naturally did to make sure that they were accommodating her. They stopped playing monkey in the middle when dinner was over and waiting for the meeting to start and went to other things that would include this young lady without ever having to be told. It can work!

>>Submitted by Carol, <mailto:cgradyreader@juno.com>

For the last several years I have had a girl in the troop who is both physically and mentally handicapped. She is in Life Skills classes. Physically she has to deal with an unusually-shaped head (she was born with the bones fused and they have been separated twice) and deformed hands and feet. Also, she has problems communicating and her speaking device is both very expensive and usually non-operative.

"Kelly" is included in all troop activities except those she is too young for (I have a mixed age troop). Many of our service projects are simple--this year the girls worked in the butterfly garden my daughter created as part of her Gold project, moved wood chips from a church parking lot to the playground, made St. Jude Halloween candy treat bags, worked at Thinking Day--all of these are simple to do. I read requirements for badge work to "Kelly" and explain them to her mom, who helps her with requirements. Council lets me gear work from the Junior book to her level, so each badge is tailored to her level. We try to do one or two badges a year and one or two council patches within the troop. The girls are good about helping "Kelly" with crafts when we do them (not often--I'm not crafty) and once they got over trying to do everything for her, it has worked out. If we're doing something

difficult, someone does it one-on-one with her. "Kelly" went to camp again this year for the second time, and her mom is very pleased. "Kelly" had been to another camp for special students in the past and the kids made fun of her and called her a monster. She did not want to go to camp anymore. Girl Scouts have been very accepting. Last year my daughter was a CIT and she said the main problem "Kelly" had was not showering--her mom said she is afraid of showers. This year she is in a session that is centered around pool activities and I told the office to have one of the staff take her to the private shower, turn it on, hand "Kelly" the soap and tell her to get wet and soap and rinse. On understanding her....we do our best and she does hers, I can usually figure it out, and if not, yes/no questions can usually get us there.

>>Submitted by Mary, <mailto:mmille5002@mediaone.net>

I have been very fortunate to have had several girls in my troop that are "handicapped or have ADHD, hearing impaired, learning disabled, sensory integration disorder" and that is just 3 girls. My youngest daughter is one of those 3 girls. She is learning disabled, with ADHD and sensory integration disorder. The other 2 girls are/where in her class at school. It is a great challenge for them to try and integrate into a "normal setting" with out seeming to stand out or to get special treatment. It can be very difficult to manage them sometimes, but in the long run it is worth it. One of them bridged to Juniors last year and the other 2 girls will bridge with me to Juniors next Month. Some parents don't understand these children just want to be liked and have friends just like everyone else. They have feelings that get hurt when someone says "Why do you talk like a baby?" "Why can't you read as well as the other 3rd graders?" I have focused on the Try Its that included acceptance. I have tried to teach tolerance to the other girls, and try not to favor my daughter when ever possible. We did Caring and Sharing at a sleep over in town; we worked on the Around the World Try It, Brownies Around the World. This year we did the Stitch It Try It and we made quilt squares for me to sew into a larger quilt- they are not perfect by any stretch of the imagination but **ALL THE GIRLS TRIED THEIR BEST**. And that is all I ask of them. Yes my daughter with ADHD got frustrated with hers and we put it down and came back to it later and finished when she was calmer. It does work! If your have a girl who is medicated for ADHD, please talk to her parents and make sure she is takes it before your meeting if needed. If you are having a discipline problem with a girl, please do not let it slide. Talk to her parents, do not just brush it off as just another problem. Lots of kids with ADHD have learning disabilities as well. The girls may be upset because you gave her too many directions at one time to follow, it is as simple as that some times and it can escalate to "Suzy doesn't listen" Talk to your Special Education Department and ask about any pointers about conditions in general with out disclosing any names. Most schools also

have a Parents Advisory Council for the school in general and another for the Special Ed department as well. Our school does and they can be helpful in getting you some information. It is a very fine line that I have to walk. Generally I ask one of my Co -leaders to talk to my daughter if need be and then if she doesn't listen we go to 3 strikes and your out (my husband would come and get her if need be.) She tends to behave better when I'm NOT at the meetings (sometimes I have to work), but for the most part the meetings go very well. We meet at night so the ADHD factor is lessened since she has time after school to get out some "energy" so to speak. Yes a lot of children without ADHD are wound up after school and I did Daisies and Brownies after school. It was a lot tougher than at night even the "normal" girls were hyper; that might be an alternative for some leaders.

As for children in wheel chairs, there are plenty of things that you can do and places you can go. A hike at local Audubon society, a trip to the local museum (most public buildings are handicap accessible), go to the library, Police station, town hall, fire department, etc. Talk to the girl's parents and find out any restrictions, etc, just like you do for all the girls. Talk to the girls. Make sure all the girls have a turn being a buddy with a girl who has special needs. No matter what the special need issue is, help her to participate in the troop governance, collect dues, take attendance, etc. Educate the other parents in the troop as well as the girls. You don't always have to change a lot. Just talk to the girls and parents and try and treat these girls as normal as possible. That's all they really want and to **MAKE NEW FRIENDS AND KEEP THE OLD, ONE IS SILVER AND THE OTHER GOLD.** Remember, whether it is your daughter or not, every girl has the right to be there as long as she can follow the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

>>Submitted by Leanne, [mailto:leanne\\_p\\_2@yahoo.com](mailto:leanne_p_2@yahoo.com)  
Got one for you that is SOOOOOOO often overlooked . . . Just because a girl is 'smart' doesn't mean she can do everything. Many incredibly intelligent girls are socially awkward and may not make friends easily-- other girls, especially ones they know from school, may well continue to shun the 'nerd' or the 'teacher's pet' at GS as well. These 'smart' girls may need extra attention and encouragement to be included-- just as if she were of the low-skills group. Leaders often overlook the needs of high-skills girls, assuming that since they're 'bright' they can just figure it out on their own (that is, if the leader even realizes the girl may need help at all).

\* \* \* WORKING TOGETHER AS A TROOP \* \* \*

>>Submitted by Carol, <mailto:cisch@cinci.rr.com>  
During my years as a Girl Scout Leader I have had 4 girls with ADHD, one

girl who is autistic, one girl who is deaf on one side, one who is dyslexic, one girl who has an oppositional disorder as well as ADHD and an eating disorder, and one who is developmentally handicapped. Just looking at my girls you would never have know that any of the girls were not "normal".

My girls have all gone to school together and know each other well, so the girls are very aware of most of the other's limitations. We have done all of the activities that other troops have done. The girls are now entering their last year as Cadettes. We have found that certain problems that were not much of an issue when the girls were younger (the lack of reading skill for the girl who is dyslexic was not a problem in 1st grade, but became a problem by 5th grade), and that the most of the problems have decreased with their maturity. Some of the issues have become more pronounced with age though, including the addition of anorexia and the greater differences of the developmental disorder. The cliquishness of Jr. High girls has been more of an issue than any of the above disabilities and is something that we are always on guard for.

\* We (generally the girls) always place the girl who is partially deaf on the right side (her left is her good ear) of the group and she has a normal spot on the corner of the table we meet around. She speaks up when she doesn't hear, and we ask.

\* We are all aware that too much attention or frustration will make our girl who is autistic very nervous and tend to bring on problems, so she generally sits close to one of the leaders (the leaders see to this) at a meeting where crafts or intense planning is required. That way we can help her as needed with minimal notice. The girls are also aware of her problems and tend to keep "low key" to help her out. When we go on field trips, the girls are very protective of her, and as leaders, we tend to just keep an eye on things. This girl is very intelligent and the girls realize this and prize her input. Educating the other girls is key here!

\* Our girl who is dyslexic was very shy (she has since moved to another state). Her problems surfaced mainly where reading was an issue, and so we tried not to put her in a position where this came up, all of our ceremonies or times when we may have had the girls read something were read aloud by a leader (adult or scout) or memorized. The other girls did not know about her problems by her parents' request. This made it more difficult as the older the girls got, the more she tended to try to sink into the background. We always made a point of manipulating the patrols and "buddies" to see that she was with one of the more sensitive girls.

\* My girls with ADHD have usually been my greatest challenge, because they do not "appear" to have a problem. Most are on medication (though not all) and emotional roller coasters and disruptions are a fact of

life. We have found that a light style works best to diffuse these issues. The biggest problem is that the other girls haven't always accepted these girls as well; we have had two loners develop from this group. Part of the problem is that these kids never have had their problems discussed in a group (at school or at Girl Scouts). As the girls have gotten older these problems have diffused.

\* My girl with several problems (ADHD, Oppositional Disorder and Anorexia) has been more of a challenge with the other parents than the girls. They tend to see her as a bad influence on the other girls (she can be a bit difficult) and her parents do not want her problems made public. The contact the other parents have had with her is mainly in field trips and activities where we have parent volunteers or in "father/mother - daughter" events. She is also very witty and smart and we have found that by playing up her leadership potential, and praising the positive that she can be dealt with. She is another girl that in trips and meeting we try to have a leader sitting/being close to her to help her realize what the limits are. She is actually a strong contributor to the troop and is very funny. Imagine having a young Robin Williams in your troop.

\* The girl in our troop that has developmental issues is approximately 4 years (or more) behind the other girls, developmentally. This translates into being less mature, and unable to complete certain badge/award requirements as written in the program. After talking to council, she is now working on her Silver Award and we modify (very subtly so she isn't aware of it) the requirements to meet her needs. She is very sensitive to the fact that she is different, but on the whole, is incredibly enthusiastic. When the girls are planning events and volunteering to do things, she tries to volunteer for everything - we (the leaders, and some of the more mature girls) step in and try to help keep the assignments more even as she does not have the ability to follow through like the other girls can. I have developed a strong bond with this girl's mother, and call her after every meeting to keep her in the loop with what she is volunteering for, and what she needs to be working on. I also call this girl before every event or meeting that she is participating in to make sure she is prepared.

The single thing I have found to be most helpful is education and knowledge. The more the adults working with the girls and the girls themselves understand about the problems and challenges these girls face (as all of them are "unseen" handicaps) the easier it is to work with the girls as part of the troop. The girls are VERY supportive if they understand what is at issue. The need to work closely with the parents or caregivers of these girls is also crucial to understanding what their limits are and how they react to challenges. I have found that these girls have added a richness and diversity to our group that you would never guess if you were to see our "white, upper-middle class, suburban"

troop out in public.

>>Submitted by R. Jingle, <mailto:RBJ2040@aol.com>

My experience has been that any activity can be modified to fit the needs of any girl. For some activities that may include additional people and safety equipment but most importantly it requires a willingness to think out of the box and to do something a little crazy even.

I've got lots of suggestions, but here are a couple of quickies:

1. Ask the girls to brainstorm how to do an activity that seems difficult for the person with the disability. Allow the ridiculous answers as well as those that may be workable. Don't let them give up, come up with a solution, try it. Everybody learns; everybody wins. Example: How does a person in a wheelchair do a hand stand? If she can bend at the waist, she bends and put her hands down. If she can't bend, then touch the hand of a friend who is standing!

2. Have all of the girls experience the disability while doing an activity. By laying materials out in order of use, giving very clear, simple directions and, through kinetic instruction we can teach any activity. And, it may help the other girls to realize how differently or similarly the one girl "sees" the world. When I've given this suggestion, sighted leaders often raise the question of colors in crafts. If a girl is sight impaired, she can't see what colors to use. So, mark them in Braille or lay them out in alphabetical order (Blue, Green, Red, Yellow) or better yet, who says the sky has to be blue? Have you ever considered what blue smells like? Not what it looks like but smells or tastes or feels like?

>>Submitted by Eileen, <mailto:eileenmsmith@msn.com>

Getting along as a troop with girls from super bright (1 is in the gifted program) to learning disabled in reading and math is a challenge. I learned right away not to push girls who do not like to read in public to read out loud. They have that pressure in school and don't need it in scouts. And there are always plenty of volunteers waving their hands to read.

As far as badge requirements, you really do have to bend a bit. We did journals for a heritage badge. I made some pages very fill in the blank and we read them together. Other pages were blank for the girls to use for stories or pictures. No matter what the badge I always let the girls express themselves in pictures as well as words. The only exception would be a writing badge but that badge would not be particularly suitable to a group with girls who are learning disabled.



Sometimes I'd make kaper charts or pair the girls for activities so they would be more balanced.

And leadership skills come in all packages. You just have to find the right task for that girl to be in charge of. She may be a good organizer, or have an outstanding personality that naturally leads the rest. She may be more reserved and prefer the behind the scenes tasks. All these jobs need to be done. And with any luck they will open up to new ideas and projects.

Here in Richmond there was recently a story in the paper of a Brownie Girl Scout who is disabled. She has an older friend (middle school age) who comes to all the meetings with her to help her participate. I do not believe the older girl is a scout but as a leader I would probably have the girl or other helper registered for insurance purposes.

Maturity is another issue altogether. I am noticing that as my girls age the gap between the oldest girls and the youngest girls is more and more noticeable and problematic. The older girls would prefer more leader roles and the younger to just "play". Our youngest is more immature as well. I believe she would be happier in a troop with younger girls as she gravitates towards them at large functions. Now if you can just convince the mom.

And there's also a time factor. If you have a girl with special needs who really wants to earn her Bronze, Silver or Gold Award, you need to help her decide whether to stay in a level an extra year or move up early. For example my daughter is a 6th grade Cadette to give her time to work towards the Silver.

>>Submitted by Jann, <mailto:gstroop183@hotmail.com>

I have a Girl Scout who has significant development delays. When she joined the troop (as we entered Cadettes) we did several activities to help prepare everyone for working successfully with "Suzie".

1. "Suzie's" Mom wrote a letter to the troop, explaining "Suzie's" history and current abilities. We read this at a meeting (when "Suzie" was not there.) We discussed what this meant and used the GS Law to talk about being friendly, considerate and how we could be a "sister to every Girl Scout."

2. I developed several activities based around different types of disabilities. The girls learned about physical handicaps by having hands, legs, ears or eyes bandaged and completing a set of physical tests. I also developed a series of reading and writing challenges (the

idea is based on the Girl Scout book dealing with disabilities.) Math problems become difficult when numbers change meaning and letters have different sounds. This prompted the biggest discussion and most frustration for the troop. It was the best example of what life is like day in and out for "Suzie".

"Suzie" does everything the other troop members do - from badge work to service projects. There are some activities where "Suzie" requires additional support.

3. When we have traveled (to London in 2000 and to Paris in 2002) "Suzie's" parents have traveled with us. I must be responsible for ALL members of the troop. Traveling such great distance and to foreign countries, I felt it best to have one on one support for "Suzie". Her parents have helped by coming along on our fun trips to help specifically with "Suzie", her medications and her needs.

4. For local, overnight events "Suzie" has had a variety of adult support to insure that she can attend. (again, as troop leader, I have to be responsible for ALL members of the troop and cannot be focused on just one girl.) We have had college students and young professionals willing to volunteer a night to attend a sleepover at a museum or similar event as "Suzie's" buddy.

5. We constantly swap buddies when doing activities. At troop meetings, we work in pairs and the girls help "Suzie" when there are writing or reading activities. I have several other troop members who have learning disabilities; this pairing has helped all of them achieve their goals. When we travel we change buddies twice a day, so there is a lot of change and movement of the girls.

6. I have very supportive troop parents and many are willing to help out at meetings when we are doing crafts or more complicated activities. They will often pair with "Suzie" when the girls are working independently.

7. "Suzie's" younger sister, who does not have any disabilities, is now a member of the troop. I make every effort to NOT put the sisters together or to depend on "Suzie's" sister for assistance. I avoid pairing them or putting them as buddies unless we are traveling. I feel she has enough responsibility at home - that Girl Scouting should be her focus when with the troop.

"Suzie" is entering her 7th year in the troop. She continues through an extended High School program. This year, with the support of our Council, "Suzie" will be working toward her Girl Scout Gold Award. I am

working with a member of our council to develop activities and requirements that fit "Suzie's" abilities. "Suzie" saw 6 members of our troop receive their Gold Award last year - and she is very excited to work on her very own project.

>>Submitted by Harriet, <mailto:LMBAr1@aol.com>

As the mother of a child with disabilities, I know how important it is for children with disabilities to be included in their communities and what a challenge it can be for the adults working with them.

I have a few suggestions on how to make things go a little smoother: First, talk to the parents, they are your #1 resource, they know their child better than anyone and have dealt with them in different situations. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the disability and the child. If the child is comfortable, ask them about their disability or how they handle different situations. Try to educate yourself about the disability, if you know of another person or family dealing with the disability, or working with a child with the disability (teacher, therapist, etc.). It is not unreasonable to request someone accompany a child if you do not feel you can handle the situation alone. Some behavioral disorders may require a lot of one on one supervision and some girls may need a lot physical help. Remember that even if a girl has an adult (parent, older sibling, etc.) with them, you still need to treat them like the other girls and interact with them as much as possible and encourage the other girls to do likewise. It important to get to know the girls as individuals, with likes and dislikes, they are very much like any other girl their age. Also remember that these are GIRLS with disabilities, not disabled girls. They can be just as capable as the typical girls in your troop, if given the chance. In general, parents of disabled children are very involved and would be glad to help out at meetings and trips. Families with physically disabled children usually have vans, so they can transport their child and a few more. Let the parents get involved, you will have "expert" help with their child and help with the entire troop. It always makes a girl feel special to have her parent there helping at a meeting. Also, incorporate the Girl Scout program, e.g., Caring and Sharing Try-It, how we are ALL different in some way, etc.

I have personal experience dealing with ADHD and Autism. I have a girl with ADHD in my Junior Troop. We have had problems with her attitude, some children with ADHD have a negative attitude and say whatever comes to mind (no impulse control) and she would say things like "I hate Girl Scouts" or "I begged my Mom to let me quit". I would speak to her about what she'd like to do differently and appropriateness of comments (she would say these things in front of the other girls). I tried not to take the comments personally and would discuss this with her mother and ask

advice of others familiar with the disorder. I discovered that she loved to earn badges and other awards, just didn't necessarily like to do a lot of work and also that it was very difficult for her to do extra work at home, keeping up with schoolwork can be a challenge, since she couldn't focus for long periods of time. I tried to plan all 6 badge requirements during meeting times, I also made a point of telling her when activities were part of an award. For example, we had only 2 Juniors who were older sisters of our Brownies so we met at the same time. I told her activities with the Brownies counted towards the Junior Aide award. She became very helpful after that and stopped complaining about being with the younger girls. I saved the award until the end of the year and recognized her hard work at our ceremony (which we invited the parents to). So, keep in mind that many girls with ADHD may be externally motivated and use the awards as incentives for them to participate in activities and to keep a positive attitude. I would remind her about keeping a good attitude, especially when we had something special going on and compliment her on good behavior. It worked. As a bonus, I got to know her Mom well and could count on her help despite a hectic work schedule. As a nurse, she came in and helped us earn the Healthy Habits Try-It and Healthier You Badge. She also chaperoned all our trips.

I myself have a girl with autism. I became a Daisy Leader so she could attend. We have a lot of behavior issues with her; she doesn't comply much of the time and won't always participate. It's difficult to lead the troop and deal with her. Our neighbor is my Asst. Leader and will take over if I need to deal with my daughter. I have also had my husband come and get her if she is too disruptive. Sometimes children with autism can be set off by little things, I would recommend they be accompanied by an adult who knows them, especially at first. Of course, there are many children with Autism who are very independent and can participate well in a group, but they are usually a little older. Most people with Autism are very visual, so a picture Kaper Chart may help them, also their own picture schedule (their family can help with this). There aren't many community programs available to children with Autism, most people don't want to deal with them; so if you can give a girl with Autism (or any disability) the opportunity to participate in Girl Scouts, you are doing something wonderful for her and her family. You'll also find that it is a very rewarding experience for you and a great learning opportunity for everyone.

>>Submitted by Donna, <mailto:tnthompson@sympatico.ca>

I have a daughter in Guiding with special needs. She is limited physically in what she can do. But she is very knowledgeable and able to have a lot of input in planning and to some peoples surprise how she participates at camps and various activities. Even before joining

Guiding, we had our own motto "Do the Best You Can". And in Guiding we have followed that through since so many of the girls are different in how they do things, as long they do their best and try that is what counts.

I have also had girls in my units who learn differently. In Brownies we would do things as a group and it was natural for the ones that weren't keeping up to gravitate to one side and I would help then and then there were the girls the excelled and they seemed to cluster around another leader and then there was the core group. But since we all worked more or less in a circle, no one seemed to notice that some were ahead and others were slightly behind.

Every year no matter what age group I am working with, we hold at least one ability awareness evening. Some examples of activities are:

Having the girls feed themselves blind folded.

Having them feed each other blindfolded or with mittens on. (Pudding is the snack of choice for this)

If you can borrow wheelchairs from a local rehab centre you can have relay races. (Obstacles are set up for this such as a piece of carpet that isn't flush with the floor, you'd be amazed how hard this is for some and pillions that they have to weave in and out of)

You can have one or two girls volunteer to spend the whole meeting in a wheelchair.

Have them try to turn pages of a book with out using their hands or tie their shoes without using their thumbs.

Have them put socks on their hands and try to do something as simple as picking up puzzle pieces or a piece of cutlery.

For one night I was able to get a beeping ball and blind folded all of the girls for a game of catch. (this was very interesting)

Trying to do up buttons with one hand.

You might be able to borrow items from a local rehab centre such as canes for the blind and blind fold the participants to go through an obstacle course.

Another idea is to hand out a card to each girl and not show it to anyone else. On each card each participant has a different ability, which from that moment on they have to participate in regular activities at the meeting while having that different ability. This is great to use at a regular meeting night and then discuss how they felt and how they thought they were treated differently.

>>Submitted by Jann, <mailto:djschultz1@cox.net>

When working with Girl Scouts who are disabled, the program allows you to adapt and arrange badge requirements and awards to accommodate their abilities. Within the Cadette and Senior program, there are many IPA's

that can be adapted for girls with special needs.

Some things to consider before you start:

1. Does this badge work interest the girl? If no, don't use it "just because" it will work. She has to be interested in the activities - just like the rest of the troop!
2. If the troop is working on a specific IPA, what activities within the requirements can be adjusted for different skill levels? Are there similar types of activities that could be used to replace requirements that would be more appropriate for the girl?
3. How can troop members be included to help a disabled troop member achieve the award?
4. Are there consultants who can assist with the badge work who are familiar with working with disabled girls and can help adapt requirements?

Most often, adaptations need to include discussions instead of writing, partnering rather than individual activities, role play to involve the girls, reading aloud by members of the group rather than individual reading, prepared handouts to focus on specific activities and provide simple guidelines. Consultants should be advised of any special needs, so they can be prepared for working with all troop members.

Here are some examples of adapting IPA activities:

Conflict Resolution IPA - This is a great award for every girl to earn!

Here are some adaptations:

Skill Builder 1 - Have troop members read aloud from their handbooks and hold a discussion on techniques for resolving conflicts. Have girls share stories about using these techniques. Include everyone in the discussion.

Skill Builder 3 - Role Play the Listening Exercises, every member of the troop can have a responsibility as a participant, observer or facilitator. Discuss as a troop how they felt about the activity.

Skill Builder 4 - Work as partners or triads to read aloud from the handbook. Have small groups compare answers. Discuss as a troop.

Skill Builder 5 - Attend a live sports event as a troop or gather to watch one on TV (great activity in the fall for football or spring/summer for baseball.) In advance, prepare the girls to watch for specific behaviors. After the game, hold a discussion addressing the questions in the book.

Technology 3 - Watch 2 or 3 television shows together (great at a slumber party with a TV/VCR.) In advance, prepare the girls to watch for the specific issues you want to discuss (post them on the wall or give them a handout.) Hold a discussion after the shows. Create skits or role plays. Divide into small groups and design a new ending to each

of the shows and share the "skit" with the rest of the troop.

Service Project 1 - Hold a brainstorming session to list issues of interest to the troop. Select 1 or 2 for a Mock Court. Identify appropriate roles for troop members. There can be jobs for everyone - Lawyers, Defendant, Plaintiff, Sergeant at Arms, Judge, jury, witnesses, members of the press, etc. Role play the mock court, including all troop members. Arrive at a resolution. Hold a discussion to insure understanding of the process and the resolution.

Career Exploration 1 - When inviting a consultant to visit the troop (or to go and visit a consultant at their job) have troop members prepare questions in advance. Each girl can be prepared to ask a question.

Emergency Preparedness - Knowing what to do in an emergency is important for all girls to learn! Prior to attending a First Aid / CPR training, ask the instructor for accommodations for troop members. Often verbal testing can be given, demonstration of skills can be used instead of written testing.

Camping - Almost every girl likes to be in the out of doors. (Even if just for the day!) Choose your camp site location to accommodate all members of the troop. Check for handicapped facilities prior to your trip. This leads into activity #1.

Skill Builder 1 - When selecting a camping site, make sure every member of the troop can participate. The girls can be very creative and locate cabins, mixed use camp sites, etc. Discuss the questions from the book.

Skill Builder 2 - Every member of the troop submit recipes for a troop camping cookbook. Use partners when completing cooking activities.

Skill Builder 3 - Discuss all emergency procedures and role play to insure understanding. Working as partners, complete additional activities for emergencies and first aid.

Skill Builder 5 - Brainstorm ideas as a troop for creative ways to arrive at your campsite. Have the troop select their favorite, taking into account everyone's abilities. (Our troop selected the mystery ride and scavenger hunt and tasked the adult leaders with preparing for the troop!) Work as small teams to review maps, plans and checklists.

Technology 3 - Visit a local sporting goods store. Advise your consultant about the needs and requirements of the troop. Have the troop members prepare questions prior to the visit and everyone ask a question.

Technology 4 - Working on the internet - gain parent permission and have troop members work in small teams or as partners. Prepare a specific questionnaire (like an on line scavenger hunt) for the partners to complete. Discuss answers as a troop.

Service Project 1 - lends itself perfectly to a group activity. As a

troop, complete the assessment from the GSUSA book Focus on Ability. Discuss the results of the survey and assign a troop member to record your findings. Submit a letter asking for campsite improvements. Career Exploration 1 - When inviting a consultant to visit the troop (or to go and visit a consultant at their job) have troop members prepare questions in advance. Each girl can be prepared to ask a question.

Other IPA's that have been successfully adapted:

Family Living - requires the family to work with the Girl Scout (our troop did this over a summer holiday.)

Home Improvement - every girl likes to "dress up" her room. Good life skills included in this IPA.

Travel - great activities to complete as partners and small teams.

Service Project 2 lends itself to discussing traveling with someone who finds it difficult to travel on her own.

Understanding Yourself and Others - lots of great role plays and discussions!

Creative Cuisine - working as partners and with consultants you can have dinner parties and field trips.

Wildlife - enjoy visits to the out-of-doors, to a zoo or on local field trips. Work as partners or small teams to complete identification activities. Service Project 3 lends itself to discussions in the troop for accommodating all troop members.

Women's Health - important for all girls to complete! Using consultants, discussions, role plays & skits to insure understanding. Several service projects can be completed by working as teams or partners.

Computers in Everyday Life and Exploring the Net --computers are an important part of our world. Working with consultants, locating school resources, working as partners or small teams can complete this IPA.

Do You Get the Message - can be a fun, interactive IPA to complete as a troop. There are lots of opportunities for discussion, role play, small group activities. Consultants for Career Exploration 2 can help troop members learn about disabilities.

A World of Understanding - can be a great tie in to Thinking Day. Lots of discussion, team or partner activities, consultants and field trips.

Collecting - while a collection can be a very individual activity, this IPA lends itself to group activities, field trips, discussions and team activities.

Museum Discovery - can often be completed in cooperation with a museum education director. This IPA lends itself to field trips, overnight events at a museum, partner activities and discussions. Adapt the Service Project requirement to complete a survey for accessibility and ease of use for a specific museum. Submit ideas and recommendations to the museum director.

On A High Note - if your troop likes music, this can be a fun IPA to



complete together. Through listening, discussions, field trips and consultants. The Service Project can be a Troop Activity (a singing show.)

Women Through Time - by using oral history, partners for reading activities, discussion groups and role play the entire troop can enjoy earning this badge. Consultants can help with Career Exploration and partners or small teams can work on the service projects together.

Games for Life - what can be more fun at a sleepover than playing games. Using discussion, partners, team activities that the girls can complete many of the activities. The Service Project 5 lends itself to discussing disabilities and adaptation of games. A Consultant could help with the Service Project and Career Exploration.