

A HELPING HAND

Girl Scout designs medic kits, training to assist those on autism spectrum

By Eileen Mozinski Schmidt
Special to Conley Media

HUBERTUS — Anxiety and fear impact all of us at times. For some, those feelings can be increased by factors like noisy sirens and flashing lights.

Kailey Ambrose of Hubertus noticed her own anxiety and stress level increasing after the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“She was more aware of the sirens not far from our house,” said Bethann Ambrose, Kailey’s mother.

This realization helped inspire Kailey Ambrose to create a project to help others in the community, a project recently recognized with a top honor from the Girl Scouts.

“We started to learn more about sensory bags. This prompted action to find out how sensory items could be used in settings (like) school, home, or outside where noises were very loud,” Bethann Ambrose said.

Kailey Ambrose began work on a formal project presentation for the Girl Scouts in early March.

Ambrose, a member of Troop 2031 in Washington County, put together a project creating medic kits for emergency responders to use when assisting those diagnosed with autism.

The resulting kits are designed to help individuals remain feel calm in emergency situations. Kailey Ambrose created 12 kits for use by EMTs, fire fighters and police. They include sensory bottles, therapeutic putty, noise canceling headphones, fidget toys, sunglasses, coloring books, vinyl lap pads and stories, according to the project description.

Students from the Wisconsin Independent Learning College provided assistance in assembling the kits and Kailey Ambrose partnered with the Autism Society of Southeastern Wisconsin to develop live and virtual training for EMTs focused on working with individuals on the autism spectrum during emergencies.

Those first responders in the training sessions reported feeling more prepared to assist those with autism and other disabilities following the training, according to the Girl Scout project summary.

Confirmation students in Kailey Ambrose’s class at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Menomonee Falls also helped assemble the kits for use in the area.

“Kailey met the students at the Dollar Tree parking lot in Menomonee Falls to collect the items,” Bethann Ambrose said.

From the exploratory phase to formal presentation, the project took



Submitted photos

Kailey Ambrose of Girl Scout Troop 2031 in Washington County recently put together a project creating medic kits for emergency responders to use when assisting those diagnosed with autism. The project received the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award given by the Girl Scouts.

about six months to put together as it required social distancing and setting up presentation meetings, according to Bethann Ambrose.

The project recently received a Girl Scout Gold Award.

The award is the highest that can be earned in Girl Scouts in the senior and ambassador levels of scouting, according to Sue Molina, director of Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

A Gold Award project involves Scouts tying something of personal interest to a community need. It also includes a suggested minimum of about 80 hours of work to benefit the community.

Scouts put together their plan for a project and propose it the Girl Scout council, working with mentors for support.

The project has to incorporate sustainability and it “has to address a root issue and needs to be measurable. There needs to be a global connection,” Molina said.

“It is wonderful when it all comes together.”

This year, there were 15 Gold Award winners in all of southeastern Wisconsin, according to Molina, who said about 5 percent of Girl Scouts nationwide earn the award

annually.

Numbers of project applicants have risen recently, according to Molina.

“We have seen an increase in girls going for the Gold Award. I think it’s because of COVID-19 and increased attention in doing good in the community,” she said.

The Gold Award projects require a host of skills to put together a plan and carry it out, according to Molina, who named “leadership, communication, problem solving, budgeting, advocating for others and public speaking” as a few of those skills.

“The girls achieving the Gold Award are definitely living our Girl Scout Mission, where they are building their courage, confidence and character,” she said.

Currently, Kailey Ambrose is partnering with departments within Waukesha County Technical College to make the sensory medic bags and to review the training.

She is working with a family friend who teaches at WCTC and is giving Easterseals of Wisconsin bags for use by special education teachers on field trips, according to Bethann Ambrose.

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Submitted photo

Kailey Ambrose with the medic kits she designed for use by emergency responders to assist those on the autism spectrum or with a disability. Her project, which was recently recognized with a Girl Scout Gold Award, also includes the development of live and virtual training for EMTs focused on working with individuals on the autism spectrum.

Scout

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“The vision is to produce a CD with instructions for agencies who do not have time for presentations. Eventually, the items will be with the partner who will assist in marketing the kit through three college departments,” said Bethann Ambrose, who said Kailey Ambrose will help assemble the bags with the early childhood classes at WCTC.

“Kailey is getting excited to work with Dr. Jennifer Koel at WCTC to get the project underway,” Bethann Ambrose said.

Kailey Ambrose said she

would like to remind others to respect those with disabilities, especially in emergency situations.

“Do not judge them or make assumptions. They are people with feelings, just like everyone else,” she said.

In her project description, Kailey Ambrose added that her effort also demonstrates that people with disabilities can share their talents, too.

“As a Girl Scout with a disability, I must continue to advocate for a unique group of people. I hope what I have done will help others understand the challenges life holds for those with disabilities,” Kailey Ambrose said.