



## **GIRL SCOUTS GO GREEN**

By Maureen Traxler

Founded by Juliette Gordon Low on March 12, 1912, the Girl Scouts of the USA is celebrating its 95th birthday this year. To mark this milestone, Girl Scouts across the country will plant up to 30,000 trees, making a significant impact on the environment. The Girl Scouts' tree-planting initiative is a community service project designed to promote environmental awareness and civic responsibility. To carry this project forward, the Girl Scout organization is collaborating with The Future of Life Inc., an environmental nonprofit that encourages young people to take a leadership role in improving their communities and to discover and appreciate the Earth and its natural elements.

This March 12, scouts from the New York area, including girls from Nassau County, held a ceremonial tree-planting to launch the service project. The event took place at the Girl Scouts' Edith Macy Conference Center, a training and leadership institute in Westchester County. Juliette Low had also participated in a tree planting ceremony at the same natural setting when "Camp" Edith Macy opened in 1926.

More locally, some 40 Nassau County Girl Scouts planted 95 trees in celebration of their 95th year at the C.W. Post campus of Long Island University in May. The college horticulturalist showed the girls the proper technique for planting trees and explained the benefits to the environment of tree planting. C.W. Post was chosen as the home for these "special" trees because, as part of Post's Community Arboretum, the trees will be nurtured by experienced staff members and because the girls and their families can visit them conveniently.

"It was fun to get down in the dirt and get messy without getting in trouble," said Meryl, a Junior Girl Scout who participated in the tree-planting project. "It made me feel good about myself because I was helping the environment," added Junior Scout Sarah, who confessed that she's also "a tree hugger."

Twenty of the trees will grow in a "Girl Scout Grove" and become part of a pre-existing walking tour on campus. The remainder was planted in a "nursery," and once grown, the trees will be distributed throughout C.W. Post's 307-acre campus.

"I had fun and enjoyed being on such a pretty campus with beautiful scenery," Annemarie, a Cadette Scout remarked. "The trees will be a nice reminder of the work Girl Scouts do in helping to make the world a better place."

The Nassau County Scouts hope to return on the 100th birthday of Girl Scouts in 2012 to visit the seedlings, which will then be five-years taller and healthier.

From late May through early June, Suffolk County Girl Scout troops take advantage of "Getaway Weekends" at the Council's Camp Edey in Bayport, a 102-acre natural preserve on a chain of freshwater lakes. In addition to games, activities and a chance to kick-back and relax, this year the girls—on average, 60 scouts each weekend mostly ranging in age from 7 to 12 years of age—participated in an anniversary event that saw the planting of 95 pine trees donated through the Girl Scouts of the USA and The Future of Life.

"The girls enjoyed the hands-on aspect of planting the trees," says Laura Donlon, Volunteer Coordinator for Girl Scouts of Suffolk County. "They learned how their efforts in environmental preservation will have tremendous impact on both the camp grounds and the greater environment."

Throughout the year, Suffolk Girl Scout troops adopt sections of land in their communities and plant flowers and clean debris and weeds. Participants in these environmental awareness projects range from the youngest Brownies to Senior Scouts preparing to receive the Gold Award, the highest award presented to a Girl Scout.