

OUR OWN COUNCIL'S



"WHAT IF I COULDN'T?"

Interest Project Award for Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

- **LEARN:** Acquire new skills while building your knowledge of a specific topic.
- **DO:** Practice your newfound skills and knowledge. Many of these activities engage you in exploring a career path that might potentially interest or benefit you in the future.
- **SHARE:** Really shine by demonstrating your new skills and knowledge in a leadership role. Many of these activities ask you to develop and plan a sharing project in your community.

Breakin' It Down

Up to eight million children between ages ten and eighteen are thought to be limited in their school or recreational activities because of chronic health problems or other disabilities. Of the teens who have disabilities, around sixty percent have a moderate limitation, thirty-three percent have a mild limitation and the remainder have minimal limitations.

The five most common conditions are:

1. orthopedic/mobility disabilities or diagnoses
2. asthma diagnoses
3. hearing impairments or diagnoses
4. visual impairment or diagnoses
5. intellectual disabilities or diagnoses

Most important, teens who have a disability are still teens; they enjoy and dislike the same things that teens *without* disabilities do! They are looking for friends who treat them with compassion, understanding, and respect.

HERstory: "What If I Couldn't?" was originally created as an IP in the Girl Scout Council of Pine Valley (now part of Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta.)

You've Got MAD* Skills

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors in Greater Atlanta and beyond can put the Girl Scout Law into action by:

- raising awareness in the Girl Scout and local community of the needs of individuals with disabilities and increase efforts to involve girls with disabilities in Girl Scouting
- understanding the reality of living with a disability through interaction, interviews, research, and volunteering.
- making connections with people and resources in the disability community
- exploring careers in disability education and services

* Making A Difference.

Helpful Links

- http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/
- <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs> (facts about the Americans With Disabilities Act)
- <http://www.nichcy.org/Disabilities/Specific/Pages/Default.aspx> (information about specific disabilities)
- <http://www.nichcy.org/Pages/StateSpecificInfo.aspx?State=GA> (list of state and community resources)
- <http://www.atlantaparent.com/justkids/articles/2006/2006-01-Therapy-Primer.html> (an inside look at therapies for special needs kids in the Metro Atlanta area.)

Important!

First complete the REQUIRED activity and one LEARN activity before moving on to the DO and SHARE activities. Some things to keep in mind while visiting or working with individuals with disabilities are:

- Talk directly to the person with the disability, not to the near-by family member, aide or interpreter.
- Do not pretend to understand if the person's speech or ideas are not clear. Ask her – politely of course – to repeat herself or clarify. Continue speaking to the girl rather than asking a companion to answer for her.
- If a person uses a wheelchair, sit when talking to her so that you are at eye-level. Do not move a wheelchair, crutches or walker out of

reach. Ask if assistance is needed. Do not lean on the wheelchair or otherwise “invade” the person’s personal space.

- Offer assistance, but do not impose – allow the person to do things for herself, even if it takes longer. Do not impatiently take over doing things which she can do on her own. Ask the person with the disability about the best way to be of assistance. Personal experience makes her the expert!
- Work to control reactions of personal discomfort when someone behaves in an unexpected way or looks different. Try to see the wholeness of spirit underneath and overcome the tendency to turn away or ignore the person with the disability.

FROM: www.aadd.org (All About Developmental Disabilities)

There are six steps, described below, for completing this IP:

1. **BUILD:** Build a skill foundation by doing the IP's REQUIRED activity, which is separate from the LEARN, DO, and SHARE activities.
2. **LEARN:** Do ONE activity of your choice from the LEARN category.
3. **DO:** Do ONE activity of your choice from the DO category.
4. **SHARE:** Do ONE activity of your choice from the SHARE category.
5. **DESIGN** and do an activity of YOUR OWN (based on a SMART goal you'll plan with the help of an adult advisor).
6. **REFLECT:** Prepare a short REFLECTION describing what part(s) of the Promise and Law relates to what you did while earning this IP. Think about how this IP has given you skills or greater understanding to help you live out that part(s) of the Promise and Law in your own life and then prepare a REFLECTION that best expresses your experiences and personality.

1) REQUIRED ACTIVITY:

What if you had an accident or illness that caused you to have a disability? How would your life change? How would it remain the same? With a group of friends, play the “**If I...Could I Still?**” game, below, to help you think about how a disability can affect the way you lead your life but not the person you are.

To play this game, you’ll need to:

- Put the phrases below on individual cards or strips of paper.
- Put the "If I..." cards into one paper bag and the "Could I Still" cards into another paper bag. (Or put them in two piles, face down.)
- Take turns picking one card from each bag and answering the question the best you can. If you answer "No" to a question, talk it over, do some creative thinking, and see if you can think of a way to change your answer to "yes." Sometimes, *nothing* can be done; the answer will still be "No." Talk a little about how not being able to do that activity would change your life or life style. Ask others how it would change their relationship with you.

IF I...

couldn't hear
 couldn't see
 had only one leg
 couldn't speak clearly
 had seizures sometimes
 had trouble reading
 couldn't see or hear
 used an asthma inhaler
 used a feeding tube

used a wheelchair
 used crutches
 had only one arm
 couldn't use my legs
 couldn't use my hands
 stuttered
 had trouble making friends
 had trouble sitting still
 learned new things very slowly

COULD I STILL...?

watch TV
 talk to my friends
 put on makeup
 go to school
 day dream
 go to parties
 drive a car
 play with my pet
 feel sad
 go swimming
 text a friend

celebrate my birthday
 be in a school play
 go to a movie with my friends
 cry when my feelings are hurt
 fly in an airplane
 play a musical instrument
 spend the night at a friend's
 eat my favorite ice cream
 hate doing a lot of homework
 help bake cookies
 read a book

2) "LEARN" Activities

1. Simulations offer non-disabled people a way to experience a little of what it feels like to have a disability. It helps you better understand why a person with a disability might act a certain way, or how they may feel frustrated when there are barriers in their way. To understand what it might be like to have a physical disability, live with one of these simulated disabilities for at least three hours, including a meal or activity if possible. You might try this

while you are at camp or a lock-in. Afterwards (this is important!) talk about how you felt and what you learned. If you are doing the activity with a group, write the simulated disabilities (below) on slips of paper and draw them at random. If you draw a disability you already have, draw again!

- blindness or low vision – wear a blindfold, or glasses or goggles coated with fingernail polish.
- unable to use (or not have) a hand or arm – put your dominant hand in your pocket, then have someone hold it in place with a triangular bandage or scarf tied around your waist.
- limited mobility – splint your knees using magazines or wooden slats (fasten them with bandages or bandanas above and below the joint); use a [borrowed] wheelchair, walker, or crutches if possible.
- hearing loss – use soft ear plugs, ear protectors (safety ear muffs) or ear buds with a radio tuned to static (not too loud!)

2. There are many hidden or “invisible” disabilities or conditions. They usually involve cognitive, intellectual, learning, or neurological conditions that are not apparent just by looking at a person, but which may affect communication, understanding, or behavior. Educate yourself about the following conditions or diagnoses so that you have a beginning idea of what it means to live with these disabilities:

- Dyslexia and other Learning Disabilities or Differences (LD)
- Epilepsy and other Seizure Disorders
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder (ADD/ADHD)
- Intellectual or Developmental Disorders
- Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

If a girl with any of these hidden disabilities joined your troop or group, what would you tell other people about her condition to help them understand both her actions and her needs?

3. The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against qualified people with disabilities. For the first time in American history, it provides for equal opportunities in employment, transportation, and telecommunication for people with a disability. Find out the ADA’s definition of “disability” and the three categories of individuals protected under the ADA. Find out about the five sections, or “titles” of the ADA that cover different aspects of non-discrimination. How have these five titles opened the world to people previously limited by a disability? The ADA also recognizes inaccessible buildings as one form of discrimination and addresses this by specifying how buildings and facilities must be designed, modified, and constructed to be accessible. What are the ADA Accessibility Guidelines? Who is responsible for meeting ADA guidelines? Who pays for

them? How does the ADA affect Girl Scout meeting places, events, and camps?

4. What does it take to work professionally with children, teens, or adults with disabilities? Interview someone who works in one of these fields: occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy, orientation and mobility (for the blind), sign language interpretation, prosthetics and orthotics, inhalation therapy, special education, speech therapy, social work, or another career that supports people with disabilities. What made them want to work in their field? What kind of training, education and experience is required? What is the salary range for the position? Are there personal rewards for working in a field that helps other people? Is it difficult to find the right balance of work and family or work and a social life with this career?

3) "DO" Activities

1. Celebrate a holiday with a special populations group at a recreation center, a United Cerebral Palsy Center, a center for the visually impaired, school for the deaf, physical rehabilitation center, group home, Veteran's Hospital, children's hospital, therapeutic riding center or sports team, or a camp for children with special needs. You might plan a dance or party, make cards, snacks, or decorations with the participants, help with a special holiday projects, or provide entertainment. Christmas and Thanksgiving usually have the most volunteers, so consider Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, the Fourth of July, Columbus Day, etc.

2. Visit a center that specializes in rehabilitation for people with spinal cord injuries, acquired brain injuries, multiple sclerosis, or blindness or low vision; or a center where people are learning to work with their new assistance animal. Arrange ahead of time to talk with a person who is willing to share what her or his daily life is like. Spend time with this person and interview them about their life. Find out what their life was like before coming to the rehab center or getting an assistance animal. What do they normally do each day? Do they have a job? Go to school? How do they get around (to work/school, shopping, visiting friends, etc.) How do they take care of their home and belongings? What would they like non-disabled people to know about people with disabilities?

3. Adaptive equipment and assistive technology allow children and adults with disabilities or special needs to participate in daily living activities such as dressing and feeding themselves, reading, playing with toys, taking part in sports, driving a car or using a computer. Go online to find out about adaptive equipment and lending programs such as Lekotek of Georgia,

Project ReBoot, Tools For Life, and Tech-Able. Arrange to visit a facility, tour the site, and talk to staff members and volunteers about their work and mission. If possible, learn about the training and education of the people who create adaptive/assistive resources.

4. An Indiana third-grader sent a letter to Santa Claus as part of a local radio station contest. In it, she asked for just one day when classmates didn't laugh or make fun of her limp and speech impairment resulting from cerebral palsy. A Washington State middle-school student was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after classmates, one in particular, yelled at this teen with cerebral palsy, rammed her wheelchair into a wall and mocked her. How does your school handle unwanted behaviors such as these? Does it have a clearly written policy against harassment and make it available to everyone? If not, work with (or organize) a student group to press for more anti-harassment or anti-bullying measures. They could include establishing and publicizing school policies that:

- Do not tolerate such behaviors and establish clear consequences for violation of the policies.
- Encourage sensitivity awareness and training related to diversity.
- Require supervision of frequently reported harassment locations, such as playgrounds, lavatories, lunchrooms, hallways and buses.
- Encourage everyone to self-monitor their speech and conduct.
- Teach coping skills and strategies for anyone who may be harassed or bullied because of a disability.

4) "SHARE" Activities

1. Talk to the director or volunteer coordinator of a day care center, respite care center, recreation program, day camp or summer resident camp that serves children with disabilities or special needs. Ask what you can do to help and how you can volunteer your time to work with the kids. Arrange to volunteer for a specific number of hours or for a specific program.

2. Share what you have learned about disabilities and the disability community with a group in or outside of Girl Scouts. If you choose to share with younger children, you might create and perform a skit or puppet show that helps increase their understanding and respect for people with disabilities. If you choose to share with teens or adults, you might tell the story of the person you met at the rehab or animal assistance center, your personal experiences in a disabled community, the careers you explored, what you learned about the ADA or about adaptive technology. Sharing what you've learned could be spoken, written, or illustrated, in a group presentation or as an article for your school or community newspaper.

3. Volunteer to help the planners of one of your service unit's big events (or an event at your school or place of worship) keep the event as accessible as possible for people with mobility, visual, hearing, and cognitive/intellectual and other hidden disabilities. Familiarize them with the typical barriers encountered by people with these disabilities, both in the environment and in communications, and help them find solutions for removing those barriers. To help you with your project you may borrow a copy of the book *Accessible Temporary Events – A Planning Guide* from the Girl Scout Resource Center nearest you. (Or purchase your own copy from the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access [CATEA], 490 Tenth St., Atlanta; 404-894-4960; www.catea.org.)

4. Advocacy groups are committed to promoting the rights of all people with disabilities. They believe that people with disabilities have the right to be independent, make decisions for themselves, have access to their community, and to achieve goals in life like any other individual. Some advocacy groups, such as disAbility Link and All About Developmental Disabilities provide advocacy training for both disabled and non-disabled persons. Most disability-specific support groups (United Cerebral Palsy, Tourette's Syndrome Association, Down Syndrome Association, etc.) provide advocacy for their members. Research and identify a group that you would like to work with. If possible, take their advocacy training, spend some time as a supportive volunteer, or attend the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, which invites people with disabilities, family members, policy makers, business leaders and providers to gather at the Georgia State Capitol in celebration of community, advocacy, friendship and achievement one day each winter.

5) YOUR OWN Activity

Design and do YOUR OWN disability awareness activity, based on a SMART goal you plan with your Advisor's help. Designing a goal and activity of YOUR OWN is a great way to build and flex your leadership skills! Look here for help: http://www.studio2b.org/lounge/gs_stuff/ip_intro_steps.asp

6) REFLECT...

Prepare a short REFLECTION describing which part(s) of the Promise and Law relate to what you did while earning this IP. Think about how this IP has given you skills or greater understanding to help you live out the part(s) of the Promise and Law in your own life and then prepare a REFLECTION that best expresses your experiences and personality, such as a:

- 1-2 paragraph description
- Poem
- Song/rap
- Drawing/painting/photograph
- Short movie

One way to keep a record of your REFLECTION and the part(s) of the Promise and Law that applies to it is to use the **MY REFLECTION form** at **http://www.studio2b.org/lounge/gs_stuff/ip_intro_steps.asp**. You may want to keep forms in a binder you design to create a journal of your experiences and personal growth. Of course, you always have the option of creating your own format for recording your own REFLECTION.

CHECK IT OUT... An "Our Own Council's" award reflects what is special about a community, area, or resource in a council:

- **All About Developmental Disabilities:** Support, Advocacy, Opportunity for people with developmental disabilities (www.aadd.org)
- **UCP of Georgia: United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)** is the world's premier gateway to disability resources on the Internet and is a network for people with disabilities: www.ucp.org/ucp_local.cfm/63
- **Shepherd Center:** Private non-profit hospital specializing in treatment, care, and rehabilitation of spinal cord injury, acquired brain injury, and diseases including multiple sclerosis. www.shepherd.org
- **Center for the Visually Impaired:** Georgia's largest comprehensive, fully accredited, private facility providing rehabilitation services for individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. Volunteer opportunities! www.cviatlanta.org
- **GA Tools for Life - ReBoot** is a nonprofit, statewide, collaborative effort of many groups and organizations committed to recycling computers for people with disabilities. www.gatfl.org/reboot/
- **Lekotek of Georgia:** Making a difference for children with disabilities. Adapted toys, software and computer input devices that families may checkout (like a library) are our tools to help any child with a disability. (<http://www.lekotekga.org/>)
- **Atlanta Area School for the Deaf (AASD)** in Clarkston provides quality, comprehensive, full-day instructional services to infants, children, and youth who are deaf. Students experience a range of academic, vocational, and s In Cave Springs is one of three state-operated schools in Georgia. The school was established by the state legislature in 1846 to educate deaf and hard-of-hearing children living in the state of Georgia <http://www.gsdweb.org/>
- **BlazeSports**, a legacy of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games, provides sports training, competitions, summer camps and other sports and recreational opportunities for youth and adults with spinal

cord injury, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, muscular dystrophy, amputation, visual impairment or blindness as well as other physical disabilities. Check out their Web site at <http://www.blazesports.org/> for resources and activities.

APPENDIX



Driver Ed for Teens with Disabilities

Adapted Cars and Driving Strategies

© Lynn Moore, Aug 22, 2008

Teens with disabilities use adapted driving equipment and specialized strategies to learn to drive (but every licensed driver must pass the same driver assessment.)

Equipment for Drivers with a Physical Disability

Some teens have physical limitations that will need to be evaluated for ability to move quickly and with sufficient range to drive safely. In the case of a teen with a physical disability adapted equipment might be recommended, including a spinner knob, hand accelerator and brakes, and adapted mirrors.

Strategies for Drivers with Hearing Loss

For some teens, such as those with a hearing loss or a learning disability, the language of the test may be confusing. Getting a driver's assessment study book is one of the first steps. It will tell the would-be driver:

- Road signs and their names
- Types of maneuvers expected on the behind-the-wheel assessment
- Practice test questions
- State websites with online practice tests

Drivers with Low Vision

Some students with low vision may need special mirrors to compensate for difficulties with visual perception and acuity. They may require different glasses when driving. They may require an attachment to their usual glasses to enhance vision.

*The copyright of the article **Driver Ed for Teens with Disabilities** in **Special Needs Parenting** is owned by **Lynn Moore**. Permission to republish **Driver Ed for Teens with Disabilities** in print or online must be granted by the author in writing.*

Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta, Inc

www.gsgatl.org

Cumming Service Center and Badge & Sash Store
133 Samaritan Dr., Suite 102, Cumming, GA 33040
(770) 702-9299

Dalton Service Center and Badge & Sash Store
2204 E. Walnut Ave., Dalton, GA 30721
(706) 226-1435

Griffin Service Center and Badge & Sash Store
350 Airport Road, Griffin, GA 30224
(770) 702-9499 or toll free at (800) 327-4475

Mableton Service Center
5601 North Allen Road, Mableton, GA 30126
770-702-9100 or toll free at (800) 771-1139 toll
Badge & Sash Store: 770-702-9199
Girl Scout Resource Center: 770-702-9610

This module brought to you in part by



Girl Scouts.

Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta, Inc.

ANNUAL FUND

and the



Community Partner

JUNE 2010

