

Girls Rock the Capitol

By Carmel Quinn—Director of Advocacy, Girl Scouts of the Green & White Mountains

Girls Rock the Capitol (GRTC) is a unique Legislative Internship program that immerses teenage girls in the democratic process, promotes team building and women's leadership, and provides a forum to discuss ideas and issues that are important to Vermonters. The program incorporates training and experiential learning as the girls work alongside women in leadership roles in Vermont government.

Alexis Lounsbury of Brandon participated for four years, starting at age 14. "When I began I had a terrible fear of public speaking," Alexis said. "I was quickly forced to face that fear head-on. Carmel took every opportunity to schedule workshops, talks and impromptu speeches where we would speak about what it's like to be a teen girl in Vermont. My experiences in GRTC have been essential in helping me grow into a more secure, sharper young woman."



GRTC participants with former Governor, Madeleine Kunin (lt) and GRTC program director, Carmel Quinn (rt)



The night before each statehouse session interns spend the evening at the Girl Scout Service Center in Essex Jct. "This is a great chance for us to discuss different bills in the Legislature, share experiences, get to know each other," said intern Rachel Sanguinetti of Berlin. "The next morning I met my mentor, Senator White from Windham. We sat in on the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee and heard testimony about the future of our police forces. The afternoon was spent discussing the stimulus package and how to spend it. It was an exciting day!"

Interns participate in 15 hours of public speaking, advocacy, civics and leadership training, and spend 12 days working directly with their assigned legislator. But the learning is not a one-way street. Girls testify to committees and provide an ever-present "face of the future" to legislators.

The outcome? Girls become critical thinkers, learn to work as a team to advocate for themselves and others, are better prepared for leadership roles in their schools and communities and have a rich understanding of the democratic process. And one day, they may even be in the Vermont Legislature mentoring a young woman just like themselves.

Girl Scouts of the Green & White Mtns received a \$5,000 grant from the Women's Fund in 2009 in support of this program. For more information on GRTC contact Carmel Quinn at (802) 878-7131