



## Community Service and Take Action Projects: What's the Difference?

The girls in your troop are eager to find ways to better their community, especially when it comes to paying it forward during the holidays. Giving back is *always* in season at Girl Scouts, so encourage your girls to harness that spirit of goodwill and bring their charitable intentions to life!

As they look for meaningful ways to contribute to their community, you can help sharpen their problem-solving skills and expand their definition of philanthropy by discussing community service and Take Action projects.

**Community service projects** make the world a better place right now. Whether your girls engage in a short-term community service project, like collecting toys for kids who live in shelters, or a long-term or recurring project, like weekly volunteer shifts at a soup kitchen, their work fills an immediate need in the community.

**Take Action projects**—also called service learning—take community service to the next level. Though the girls still identify areas in which they'd like to help their communities, a Take Action project addresses the root of an issue and creates a lasting effect. “We stress the sustainability of the Take Action projects,” explains Silvia La Falce, a Girl Scout Ambassador troop leader in the Greater Chicago area. “How will this continue to work after you have finished doing your part, as opposed to a service project that could be repeated several times but would end after the girls' involvement with it ends.”

Both projects serve important needs, but at different levels. And if your troop members want to pursue their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, they'll need to understand the kinds of projects that qualify.

Depending on your girls' ages, you might need to clarify the differences between the two projects. “It is always helpful to have some examples,” says Lara Cordeiro, an Ambassador troop leader in Western Ohio. “A community service project could be asking for donations for a food bank, while a Take Action project would be setting up a program where you can get schools, people, or companies to regularly donate to the food bank and perhaps teach them about hunger.”

“At the beginning, girls tend to think more in terms of service projects, because that is what they are used to being involved with,” says Silvia. “They probably participated in food drives, book collections, and other service projects, and it might be hard, especially for younger girls,



to think of other options. They might think that repeating a service project several times will make it sustainable. A good way of clarifying the difference could be to ask them, ‘What will happen with this project once you are done doing your part? How will it continue to help? How can you involve others in the community so that your project continues to deliver?’”

And if your younger girls are having difficulty understanding the difference, don’t worry! “The importance is not the meaning of or difference between the tasks but that the girls find the need and work towards filling it,” says Kara Johnson, a Girl Scout Brownie troop leader in Western Ohio. “I want them to understand the importance of helping others in our community—that is the main goal.”