

Giving the gift of Girl Scout camp — and more

The stuff of a young girl's dream: saddling, riding, haltering and grooming. More than 500 girls participate in local Girl Scout horse camps each summer, making them the best-attended sessions offered by Girl Scouts, San Diego-Imperial Council.

Yet without generous endowments, some girls would never have the chance to spend a summer's day on horseback.

One such endowment was created in memory of Colonel Morris and Anna Hyde Milner to honor their passion for Girl Scouting. The Milner Trust supports "camperships" that allow girls with financial limitations to attend Girl Scout camp.

As a result, Emily S. spent a week at Camp Winacka, one of Girl Scouts' mountain camps near Julian.

Thirteen-year-old Emily dreams of living on a horse ranch one day. Last summer's "Horse Sense" camp gave her the chance to imagine that life. Attending Girl Scout camp also helped her make friends, something that hadn't been easy for Emily, since moving to Oceanside two years ago.

"Emily came home from camp with a pack of friends," said her mother, Kim. "At Camp Winacka, it didn't matter what school you went to or whether you were 'cool.' Nobody knew anyone else when they arrived; everyone was equal at Girl Scouts."

Six months later, Emily is still e-mailing her friends from horse camp.

A summertime equestrian experience could go a long way and turn a girl's fantasy into reality. She might parlay her new horse-riding skills into other sports. She might become a veterinarian. Or perhaps she'll cultivate a lifelong friendship, inspiring her to fulfill the last tenet of the Girl Scout Law: "...To be a sister to every Girl Scout."

That may have been Arline Fisch's goal when she and her siblings created an endowment fund that supports Girl Scout "camperships" in honor of their mother Elizabeth Fisch, helping other girls realize their dreams like Emily.

Fisch recalls a similar generosity when she was a young girl growing up in New York.



Every summer, more than 500 San Diego-area Girl Scouts attend horse camps, where their equine education includes riding skills, stable chores and veterinary care.

"I received a scholarship to attend Girl Scout camp," said Fisch, who serves on the San Diego-Imperial Council's Board of Directors. "I appreciated all that I learned in Girl Scouts, from my years as a Brownie through high school."

Fisch, an award-winning contemporary jewelry artist, is professor emeritus at San Diego State University, where she founded the jewelry program. Her work appears in collections worldwide, including the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Vatican Museum in Rome, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

"I was always more interested in art than in sports," Fisch said. "So I gravitated to the 'arts and crafts' area of camp, where I learned to emboss copper. Sewing and knitting were my mother's strong points, so I had an opportunity as a Girl Scout in her troop to expand my skills. My career as an artist and jeweler stemmed from those

early experiences."

Last year, Girl Scouts, San Diego-Imperial Council awarded 353 "camperships" to local girls so they could experience the benefits of Girl Scout camp. With more than 100 summer sessions, camp programs are available to fit every girl's interest: from arts and crafts to astronomy; from mountain biking to filmmaking.

Through programs such as summer camp, Girl Scouting works to build girls' confidence, courage and character. Individual and community support keeps Girl Scouting and its girls throughout San Diego growing strong.

This is just one girl's story of how an endowment helped to make her dream come true. Each year, thousands of people are affected in a positive manner by endowment funds. These established funds put money back into San Diego's communities in a variety of ways; from funding scholarships to beach clean-up programs, helping to increase the quality of life in San Diego.

On Oct. 15, 2005, The San Diego Foundation, a nonprofit, community-based organization focused on improving the quality of life in San Diego through responsible and effective philanthropy, announced the launch of "Endow San Diego."

This is a multi-year initiative designed to inform and inspire San Diegans to understand and support endowments. Less than two months after the launch of Endow San Diego, more than 176 nonprofits have signed up to be part of the Endow San Diego Nonprofit Partnership, including the Girl Scouts, San Diego-Imperial Council.

The nonprofit partnership group is organized to provide planned giving tool kits to the nonprofit partners and to convene forums and educational seminars on various related topics - all designed to aid nonprofits in building endowment funds to support their organization/cause. To date, more than 120 people from the Endow San Diego Nonprofit Partnership have been specially trained and equipped for endowment outreach.

How two generous San Diegans shared their passion

Since the launch of Endow San Diego, The Foundation announced two new endowments. These endowments are the result of the generosity of Eugene W. Schmitt and Leslie J. Blain, who both relocated to San Diego years ago from Illinois. These individuals established two new endowments, which are named the Eugene W. and Anne E. Schmitt Memorial Legacy Fund and the Leslie J. Blain Endowment Fund.

Eugene W. and Anne E. Schmitt Memorial Legacy Fund

Eugene W. Schmitt rose from humble beginnings, working to help his family keep their farm.

In 1941, he came to San Diego. He quickly became a savvy investor, purchasing and managing many apartments in the area. Over time, he accumulated a healthy financial portfolio and shared his earnings with the community, giving many significant gifts to organizations such as the American Heart Association, the Leukemia Society and the Alzheimer's Association.

In 2001, Schmitt decided to establish an endowment with The San Diego Foundation that would support charitable purposes. On April 2, 2005, Schmitt passed away at the age of 89, but his legacy continues to live on through his endowment fund.

Although Gene and Anne will never know the people they help or the difference they will make in this community, San Diegans will know Gene and Anne's generosity in perpetuity.

The Leslie J. Blain Endowment Fund

Leslie J. Blain grew up in an Illinois family with ample resources.

Blain became an elementary school teacher and a single mother with a daughter and a son. She suffered a huge loss when her son died at the age of 11. Despite the devastating loss in her life, Blain focused on what she could do to help others. Her main interest was helping battered women and children.

In 1998, Blain established the Heavenly Glory Fund at The San Diego Foundation. This fund supports nonprofit organizations serving causes Blain cared deeply about, including Case de Amparo, North Coast Service Center for the Homeless and the Women's Resource Center for Battered Women.

Blain's desire to ease the suffering of others led her to name The San Diego Foundation as a beneficiary in her estate plan, creating the Leslie J. Blain Endowment Fund.

Blain passed away in 2004, but she will always be remembered through her permanent legacy of care to provide for women and children in need.

Both of these endowments were established to serve the future needs of San Diegans for many years to come. Leslie J. Blain and Eugene W. Schmitt's generosity and commitment inspires men and women of today's San Diego to look beyond the present time. This is exactly what The San Diego Foundation says Endow San Diego is designed to do.