



“WHAT IF I COULDN’T?”

Interest Project Patch 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 Scouts of Pine Valley Council (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

*Girl Scouts are MAD – Making A Difference.

Helpful Links

- http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/
- <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs> (facts about the Americans With Disabilities Act)
- [ada.htmlhttp://www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/](http://www.childrenwithspecialneeds.com/) (run by parents, for parents)
- <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)

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 girl'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 girl 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 girl'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** (The Atlanta Alliance on 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.

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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	used a wheelchair
couldn't see	used crutches
had only one leg	had only one arm
couldn't speak clearly	couldn't use my legs
had seizures sometimes	couldn't use my hands
had trouble reading	stuttered
couldn't see or hear	had trouble making friends
used an asthma inhaler	had trouble sitting still
used a feeding tube	learned new things very slowly

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COULD I STILL...?

watch TV	celebrate my birthday
talk to my friends	be in a school play
put on makeup	go to a movie with my friends
go to school	cry when my feelings are hurt
day dream	fly in an airplane
go to parties	play a musical instrument
drive a car	spend the night at a friend's
play with my pet	eat my favorite ice cream
feel sad	hate doing a lot of homework
go swimming	help bake cookies
text a friend	read a book

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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, 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, 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 allows 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 the Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities provide advocacy training for both disabled and non-disabled persons. Most disability-specific support groups (United Cerebral Palsy, Tourette 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 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, 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...More Resources!

Local Resources:

- **Atlanta Alliance on 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:** 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/ -
- **justkids** – *Atlanta's Family Guide to Special Needs*: *justkids* is published semi-annually by Atlanta Parent, Inc. You can find copies at the Girl Scout Service Center (Atlanta), Whole Foods, School Box, and other selected locations. Free. TO receive a copy by mail, send \$3 (for postage and handling) to *justkids*, c/o Atlanta Parent Magazine, 2346 Perimeter Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341.

National Resources:

Logan Magazine - *Because Life is Always Beautiful*:
<http://www.loganmagazine.com/>



Meet Logan

At 16 years old, Logan sustained a brain injury. Her desire for positive influences for young women with disabilities motivated her to create *Logan Magazine* with her mom, Laurie.

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Driver Ed for Teens with Disabilities

Adapted Cars and Driving Strategies

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According to a U.S. Census Press Release (May 2008), 12 percent of people age 16 to 64 have a disability. Meeting the needs of those drivers can be complicated. 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.

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BlazeSports 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.

BlazeSports America. is a direct legacy of the 1996 Paralympic Games held in Atlanta, Georgia. These Games, the first held on American soil, were the realization of the dreams of thousands of Americans involved in sports for persons with physical disabilities in the United States. In 1998, a model program was rolled out in Georgia, to bring community-based disabled sports programs to cities across the state. The program, named BlazeSports Georgia after the highly popular Atlanta Paralympic Games mascot Blaze, quickly evolved into a comprehensive program of year round local programs delivered by the community recreation provider; state-level sport camps, clinics, junior teams and competitions delivered by BlazeSports Georgia.

Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta, Inc

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

www.gsgatl.org

Cumming Service Center and Badge & Sash Store
133 Samaritan Dr., Suite 102, Cumming, GA 33040
(770) 205-0412

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 , P.O. Box 1569, Griffin, GA 30224
(770) 227-2524 or toll free at (800) 327-4475

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