

Contact:

Lisa Junkin Lopez, Executive Director
Juliette Gordon Lowe Birthplace
(912) 233-4501
ljunkinlopez@girlscouts.org

Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace Awarded \$178,000 Grant

Project will focus on creating positive community change to build organizational capacity

Savannah, GA (December 3, 2018) — Girl Scouts of the USA was recently awarded a \$178,000 federal grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for a new initiative called Access for All. Access for All: Advancing Girl Scouts' Commitment to Disability Inclusion is a two-year initiative led by the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in Savannah, Georgia, that will consist of trainings, conversations and activities promoting inclusion, empowerment and equity for those living with disabilities. The trainings' goal is to spark an ongoing conversation about disability history, culture, rights and advocacy within the Girl Scout Movement.

"Many people don't know that Juliette Low had profound hearing loss throughout her life, making her birthplace the perfect location for Girl Scouts' new initiative, Access for All, to offer inclusion training for the birthplace staff, Girl Scout troops and their leaders, and other local audiences," explained birthplace Executive Director Lisa Junkin Lopez.

Perhaps because of this hearing impairment, which worsened in adulthood, Low uniquely understood the value of Girl Scouts for girls with disabilities. As a result, the organization has long been inclusive of girls with disabilities, and it aims to serve all girls equally.

Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia's (GSHG's) Chief Executive Officer Sue Else identified disability awareness training as a deficit among her staff and volunteers. She worried the lack of training could result in inadequate service or discrimination. Although GSHG has already taken steps to combat this issue, Else, who will serve as the initiative's project adviser, is enthusiastic about all that it offers.

"Girl Scouts is proudly committed to disability access and inclusion, and the birthplace's new Access for All initiative will extend that commitment by providing training to expand troop leaders' toolkits to better serve girls with different abilities," said Else. "I am thrilled to serve as a project adviser and for Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia to benefit from these trainings."

Other advisers and strategic partners include the Institute for Human Centered Design in Boston, which will provide content expertise and assess the birthplace facilities, GSHG troop leaders, who will attend access and inclusion trainings, and Georgia Public Broadcasting, which will co-produce a series of public programs about the topic.

IMLS selected a total of 160 projects from 582 applications requesting more than \$82 million. The funds will support staff capacity-building projects that use professional development to generate systemic change within a museum. Institutions receiving awards are matching them with \$31 million in non-federal funds.

“These grants enable museums of all sizes and disciplines across the nation to make a difference in their local communities,” said Paula Gangopadhyay, deputy director of the IMLS Office of Museum Services. “This year’s Museums for America projects showcase the leadership vision and resourcefulness of hundreds of museums. The Museums Empowered projects aim to build up institutions’ staff and organizational capacity, leading to systemic change and organizational culture shifts in the field.”

The birthplace is the front door of the Girl Scout Movement, visited yearly by 40,000 people, including Girl Scouts, Girl Scout alums, and the general public. Its staff members desire to lead change by piloting initiatives that can be scaled to a national level, thus influencing the largest girl-serving organization in the world, consisting of 2.6 million members.

“We are excited to extend Girl Scouts’ long tradition of access and inclusion by advancing equity for people with disabilities through programs, trainings, and increasing accessibility here at the birthplace,” Junkin Lopez emphasized.

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About the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, a historic site owned and operated by Girl Scouts of the USA for more than 60 years, is filled with rich stories, special collections, and opportunities for unique experiences reflecting the arc of Juliette Gordon Low’s life.

The birthplace celebrates Juliette’s belief in the potential of every girl and the remarkable Girl Scout Movement she founded--a Movement that changed, and continues to change, the world.

Today the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its contribution to the social, cultural, and philanthropic history of the United States. For more information, visit www.juliettegordonlowbirthplace.org.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s libraries and museums. It advances, supports and empowers America’s museums, libraries and related organizations through grant making, research and policy development. The IMLS vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov.