



For Immediate Release
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New Program Connects Girl Scouts to Volcanic Neighbors

In honor of the 41st anniversary of the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption, Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington announces new STEM, outdoor program in partnership with Mount St. Helens Institute and the U.S. Geological Survey.

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PORTLAND, OR (May 18, 2021)—Just in time for the 41st anniversary of the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington (GSOSW) announced today a brand new program, [Our Volcano Neighbors](#), developed in partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The program aims to teach girls about the cultural and geographical significance of Mount St. Helens and other volcanoes through hands-on STEM activities, career exploration and outdoor adventures.

Female scientists from the USGS and MSHI lent their expertise to the development of the program, bringing not only scientific and programmatic insight, but also inspiration for girls interested in a career in science.

“We hope this program inspires girls to learn about their Neighbor Volcanoes and the earth, as well as think about future opportunities in science,” said Emily Montgomery-Brown, a USGS Research Geophysicist who helped develop the program curriculum.

The dearth of women in STEM fields is well documented, but data shows that [girls are more interested](#) in a STEM career when they have supportive adult networks and are exposed to STEM fields—demonstrating the value of collaborative programs like Our Volcano Neighbors. The program blends Girl Scouts’ unique programmatic approach with MSHI’s youth education programming and expertise from USGS.

The curriculum helps girls develop a sense of connection to land they live on, to understand its unique geological place, and to recognize and better know the communities of people that have lived in the region since time immemorial, including the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.

Although youth in the country are becoming more disconnected from nature, Girl Scouting offers opportunities to progressively build outdoor skills throughout childhood and adolescence. GSOSW offers programming that increases girls' interest, competence, confidence and stewardship in the outdoors. [Data shows](#) that these opportunities can be difficult to discover outside of Girl Scouting.

"The geography of the Cascade Mountains provides unique learning and skill-building opportunities for Girl Scouts, many of whom never realized that exploring volcanoes—visiting, hiking, camping—is an option," said Angie Madsen, Outdoor Program Specialist for GSOSW. "Our goal with this patch program is for Girl Scouts and their families to develop a deeper sense of connection with the Earth, even and especially close to home, so they can be good stewards of the land and have fun while doing so."

When participating in the Our Volcano Neighbors program, girls complete activities in five categories:

1. The Importance of Place
2. Volcano Vol-cabulary
3. Volcanic Hazards
4. People Who Study Volcanoes
5. Create Your Own Volcano

By completing the program, girls earn an Our Volcano Neighbors patch to add to their Girl Scout vest or sash, representing their newfound knowledge and skill.

"From an initial seed of curiosity about geologic change, culture and hazards for which we can prepare, the activities inspire girls to be agents of their learning and prepared for a changing future," said Abigail Groskopf, Programs Director for Mount St. Helens Institute. "Girls have the opportunity to take their new knowledge and skill, and apply it in their backyards, communities and at Mount St. Helens, or other volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest."

GSOSW and the Mount St. Helens Institute are collaborating to offer several virtual and in-person field trips this summer, through which girls can investigate the geology and ecology of Mount St. Helens with hiking, art and hands-on activities, and complete steps towards earning the new Our Volcano Neighbors patch. The variety of options means girls can participate in ways that fit their family's needs, whether a virtual tour from home or an outdoor visit to the MSHI Science and Learning Center just seven miles from the crater.

About Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington

In partnership with more than 6,800 adult members, Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington prepares more than 11,500 girls in grades K-12 for a lifetime of leadership, adventure and success. GSOSW's programs in civic engagement, financial literacy, the outdoors and STEM serve girls in 35 counties in Oregon, and Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties in Southwest Washington. The Girl Scout mission is to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. For more information or to join Girl Scouts today, visit girlscoutsosw.org.

About Mount St. Helens Institute

The Mount St. Helens Institute, founded in 1996, connects people of all ages to Mount St. Helens and our natural world through educational programming designed to enrich visitors' appreciation and understanding of the Pacific Northwest's youngest and most active volcano. We are proud of the many ways we connect people to the volcano they love, from outdoor youth education programs hosted at the Mount St. Helens Science & Learning Center, to expert-led field seminars and guided exploration programs, to meaningful volunteer opportunities across Mount St. Helens and the

surrounding Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The Mount St. Helens Institute is a 501(c) (3) private, nonprofit organization devoted to helping people understand and protect the volcano. For more information, visit mshinstitute.org.

About the United States Geological Survey

Created by an act of Congress in 1879, USGS has evolved over the decades matching its talent and knowledge to the progress of science and technology. USGS is the sole science agency for the Department of the Interior. It is sought out by thousands of partners and customers for its natural science expertise and its vast earth and biological data holdings. As the Nation's largest water, earth, and biological science and civilian mapping agency, USGS collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides science about natural resource conditions, issues, and problems. Our diverse expertise enables us to carry out large-scale, multidisciplinary investigations and provide impartial scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. For more information, visit usgs.gov.

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