

Girl Scouts to have lead role in Memorial Day ceremony

By SUE REID

For a handful of Chagrin Falls Middle School Girl Scout members of Troop 70808, this year's Memorial Day celebration bears substantial significance.

Not only will the troop, the oldest and most active in Monday's 'Little Parade,' proudly carry its banner along the path to Evergreen Hill Cemetery, but for the first time will raise and lower the American flag as part of the time-honored ceremony.

It is a responsibility they take not only seriously, already practicing and perfecting the steps, but take to heart, realizing the meaning behind the role and how it will serve as an inspiration to others.

"I think it's really beautiful that we get to be the first ones (with the flag)," Moreland Hills resident Anna Kirsch, 13, said. "We get to show all these little girls that they can do everything a guy can do."

"I enjoy being able to set that example for younger girls," fellow member Lauren Eickhoff, 13 of South Russell, added. "I like inspiring them. It brings me a lot of joy."

The troop, the majority having been together since first grade, is working alongside members of the American Legion Post 383 in Chagrin Falls in preparing for the special day.

"Raising the flag is a means of showing respect and love for our country," John Bourisseau, Judge Advocate for the American Legion, said. "Girl Scout Troop 70808 honors those who have sacrificed for our country and the men and women of Chagrin Falls American Legion Post 383 with their participation in this Memorial Day ceremony."

Troop Leader Emily Gold, who also directs the Chagrin Falls Girl Scouts Service Unit numbering more than 15 troops, added that it is important to give the girls these types of opportunities that enable them to set an example for others.

They are showing the younger girls that they can do all these wonderful and amazing



Photo by Geoff Powers

Giving the proper salute along with members of the American Legion and in preparation for their troop's first-ever role in raising and lowering the American flag during this May's Memorial Day ceremony, Chagrin Falls Middle School Girl Scout Troop 70808 practice last week. Pictured near the Civil War memorial at Evergreen Hill Cemetery are (from left) John Bourisseau and Ted Rood from the legion and troop members Anna Kirsch, Lauren Eickhoff, Darcy Osborn and Abigail Gold.

things, she added, and have great experiences.

"If they see girls leading a parade or raising a flag, maybe they say, 'I get to do that one day,'" Ms. Gold said of younger troops.

Participating in the Memorial Day Parade means honoring those who served our country or gave their lives so we can have certain privileges, Lauren, a Chagrin Falls Middle School eighth grader, explained.

Fellow troop member Abigail Gold, 13, of South Russell, said she sees the significance of their role with the flag increasing as she gets older.

"In a couple of years, I will look back and

say that I was one of the first girls in Chagrin Falls to raise the flag," Abigail, a CFMS eighth-grader, said. "I'm excited to understand that even later in my life."

The troop's five members, four of whom will take part in the flag-raising, have ties to the military, whether through a grandparent, great-grandparent, neighbor or friend.

Anna and Darcy Osborn, 13 of Chagrin Falls, had grandfathers in the U.S. Navy, while Abigail's maternal and paternal great-grandfathers served in the military.

Abigail recalled a late neighbor of her grandmother who was in the U.S. Air Force

and had a banner in his garage that said, "Welcome Back Virgil."

"This previous year, when I walked in the parade, the whole time I was thinking that I was doing that for him," Abigail said. Troop members also led the parade last year with their banner, the first girls to do so.

"I think it's really important to appreciate what they did because so many gave their lives to us and died for our freedom," Anna, a CFMS eighth-grader, added.

As part of its preparation for raising and lowering the flag, Ms. Gold said her troop will work alongside Legion members as well a representative of the Girl Scouts so as to combine both rules and practices of the organizations in an appropriate fashion.

"We will be practicing to give the respect and honor that it deserves," Ms. Gold said.

Abigail said the troop has had practice chanting "Taps" and reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance."

They have worked to earn badges and their Bronze Award as well as take part in community service throughout the years.

Members see their involvement in Scouting as both a sanctuary of sorts as well as one in which they have opportunities for growth.

"To me, Girl Scouts is a safe space where I can hang out with friends and also make a difference in the community," Abigail said.

"We are all part of one big community," Anna added.

"I really enjoy having a space to be myself while also having fun with friends and giving back to the community," Lauren said.

The members said that while the flag is sometimes difficult to fold, they are both positive and assertive about this first-ever role.

"I feel pretty confident because we have helped out with the flags before, and we will have practice," Darcy said.

"We have participated in bringing it up, and we've brought it down," Lauren added. "We are getting to do so much in our community."

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