

PRESS RELEASE



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WARSAW – It’s a big deal when a Girl Scout bridges from her current level of activity, say Brownies, to a higher rank, which in this case would be Juniors. Usually a ceremony is involved, parents and grandparents are invited and the whole affair is kind of a party. This rite of passage, says Jean Orcutt of Indiana Lakeland Girl Scout Council, symbolizes the growing up of girls. And if they don’t understand it, at least their parents do -- the girls are maturing and moving on into uncharted territory – their Girl Scout activities are age specific so they’ll be new and more challenging each time they bridge up.

At the local council, leaders from troops that are about to bridge generally pick up a small bridge prop from the council service center in Goshen that the girls walk across during their ceremony. Over the years the council has accumulated three wooden ones; but none of them is big enough to accommodate a wheel chair. And frequently there’s a run on reserving them because many troops bridge at the same time of year.

So when Eva of Warsaw determined she wanted to accomplish the prestigious Silver Award community service project, she decided to create a collapsible bridge. A freshman at Warsaw High School, Eva found she had enjoyed the Industrial Tech class she had taken the previous year and likes to build things. Her goal was further strengthened when she considered the plight of a fellow Girl Scout who is in Madison Troop 95. That girl, Marissa, is disabled and in a wheelchair. “...she cannot do everything that her troop does without some help. I wanted to make her feel special by

helping her get to bridge up with everyone in her troop....The bridge is divided in three sections and is made at length and width regulations for a girl in a wheelchair. This bridge is for any troop that is part of the Indiana Lakeland Council.

“My Dad showed me all kinds of things that have to do with working with wood and painting it and how to work all different kinds of power tools...I used a power drill, drill press, band saw, two different kinds of hand sanders and the table saw. Of course, SAFETY FIRST, I was very careful.” Eva says she also learned that “construction is a lot of work!” After designing three different plans, she built a bridge that can be taken apart for easier storage and transport and wide enough to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) specifications.

Before she concludes her community service project Eva will create a flyer to distribute to area troops to let them know the bridge is available. She also plans to develop a check-out system. For sure she will thank Lowe’s, Big R and one of her troop leaders, Paula Sandburg. These folks donated paint, rope, wood and other items so the entire cost of her project was only \$38.59.

“I feel I now have a better understanding about people with disabilities” Eva concluded...“Americans with disabilities are just like us and we need to do our part to make them feel equal with the rest of us. I feel this bridge will make a difference for our council and troops,”

“It’s beautiful,” says Orcutt of the finished product, “done in natural wood tones and contrasting green (for Girl Scouts) trim.” When they had their ceremony, Eva and Marissa crossed the bridge together – Eva knowing she had done a good thing, Marissa finally able to bridge just as her troop mates had done.