

Girl Scouts is a way of life for Northwest Arkansas sisters

If you ever get the chance to meet Mary H., it won't take long to understand why she will be entering the 7th grade at just 11 years old. Mary and her sister, Sophie, are two of the most well-spoken and friendly 10 and 9-year-olds and are homeschooled year-round in Bella Vista. The pair have been Girl Scouts in Troop 5340 for four years and their mother, Brandy, took over as troop leader a year ago. Since the girls spend most of their days at home with their parents, Girl Scouts has been a great outlet for them to make friends, go to camp and learn new skills.

Mary has had an eventful summer, starting with camping at Camp Cahinnio for a week followed by a cookie-funded week of camping in Colorado with her troop. This was Mary and Sophie's third summer attending Camp Cahinnio and they plan on continuing the tradition for as many years as they are allowed. "At camp, I had a lot of fun and made new friends," says Mary. "My favorite activities were archery, art and swimming, and I especially liked our choices for free time where I got to shoot BB guns for the first time." Not only has she experienced great things at camp, but Mary carries skills learned from camp throughout the entire year. "Camp taught my sister how to use a Dutch oven and has taught me how to build fires, use knives and how to use a first aid kit," Mary explains. The girls also had the time of their lives on their Colorado trip the following week, and used some of their camp skills while there. As for next year's big trip, Mary and Sophie have a combined goal of selling 2,018 boxes of cookies to pay for a visit to Mount Rushmore or the Smoky Mountains.



Mary and her sister, Sophie, at camp

Girl Scouts is a way of life, continued

Since becoming involved in Girl Scouts, Brandy has seen significant positive outcomes in her girls. Through the cookie program, she witnessed her troop transform from a group of shy girls to girls who take initiative in having conversation with strangers. Brandy also credits Girl Scouts for providing opportunities for the girls to make friends and do things they wouldn't have elsewhere. "Mary and Sophie have close friends in Girl Scouts which is very important because they are homeschooled," says Mary. "We go on lots of cool trips as a troop and one of our favorite outings was camping in a haunted cave with bats."

For Mary and her family, Girl Scouts is more than selling cookies and going to camp; it's a way of life.



Mary (far right) and her troop in Colorado