

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **GIRL SCOUTS – DIAMONDS BREAKS GROUND ON \$1.3M CAPITAL PROJECT**

The initiative is poised to expand and enhance programming opportunities for girls across the state

**FORT SMITH, Ark. (May 7, 2025)** — Girl Scouts – Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas broke ground today on its Burnham Woods Capital Project, a \$1.3 million investment to expand youth programming and strengthen STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) education opportunities across the Fort Smith region and beyond.

The \$1.3M investment in Girl Scouts is made possible by lead gifts from the Windgate Foundation, Leo and Barbara Anhalt, Wells Fargo, Joseph Norton, First National Bank of Fort Smith, Deborah and Darrell Robinson, and ABB. Fundraising efforts will continue throughout the summer, with an anticipated ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration in December of this year.

“This transformation will modernize the Burnham Woods property to better serve more than forty-five hundred Girl Scouts and the broader community through dynamic art and STEAM education. The project will bring new life to existing facilities while introducing new, purpose-built spaces for creative exploration.” said Mary Grace Herrington, Girl Scouts – Diamonds president and CEO.

Led by MAHG Architecture, the project will revitalize Burnham Woods with updates to existing facilities and the addition of new, purpose-built spaces designed to spark creativity, leadership and exploration. All updates have been intentionally designed alongside education experts to create a welcoming, age-appropriate environment that fosters imagination, confidence and growth. Leo Anhalt of SSI Incorporated will be leading construction efforts.

The project includes a major renovation of historic Kelley Cabin, including essential electrical upgrades and an expanded porch to support outdoor art programming by connecting creativity with nature. The former regional Girl Scout office will be transformed into an arts education center with flexible spaces for arts instruction, troop meetings and program delivery. A scenic overlook will link indoor activities to the surrounding environment, offering new ways to incorporate nature into learning experiences.

Thanks to a donation from Leo and Barbara Anhalt, the project also includes the construction of the Woodshop, a woodworking facility where Girl Scouts can explore craftsmanship and design through hands-on activities.

“Burnham Woods is an outdoor experience that has served Girl Scouts for more than 77 years,” said Kimberly Snipes, Girl Scouts – Diamonds Chair of the Board. “We know from research that women and girls are underrepresented across all levels of the STEM pipeline. Transforming this property to support both outdoor adventures and STEAM exploration will support STEAM field exploration for Girl Scouts in our council, as well as Girl Scouts from other councils across the nation.”

When complete, Burnham Woods will serve as a regional hub for discovery, offering Girl Scouts a dynamic space to learn, create and lead, in keeping with the organization’s mission to build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.

Learn more about the Burnham Woods property: <https://loom.ly/TJxOSyk>

## **MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES**

Project Renderings: <https://loom.ly/cnAVKwg>

Post-groundbreaking photos will be added here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/NUS3bpurbJ8gwzLt5>

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### **About the Burnham Woods Property**

Burnham Woods is located in Fort Smith and also serves as one of our regional offices. Burnham Woods became a Girl Scout property when it was gifted by Leigh and Fay Kelley in November 1948. Kelley Cabin was built in 1949, Ellyn's House and the Cookie Cabins were added in 1952, the office building was added in 1980, and what is now the STEAM Center was constructed in 1998. The site has four facilities used for troop and council events. It is located in the River Valley of Arkansas between the Ouachita Mountains in the south and the Boston and Ozark Mountains of the north and is a gateway city to the Ozarks. The 13.5-acre property includes facilities for meetings, program activities, and overnight stays, including Kelley Cabin, the STEAM Center, four heated and cooled Cookie Cabins, and the former office, which is being transformed into an arts education center. There are two pavilions on the property with picnic tables, two open activity fields, outdoor kitchens, a hammock hangout, two canvas platform tents, three tent platforms, and a forested area with nature trails and a creek.

### **Girl Scouts - Diamonds**

Girl Scouts — Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas serves over 4,000 girls and over 2,000 volunteers. Our council encompasses all counties in Arkansas except Crittenden, includes Adair, LeFlore, and Sequoyah counties in Oklahoma as well as Bowie and Cass counties in Texas and is a United Way partner agency. Girl Scouts bring their dreams to life and work together to build a better world. Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges—whether they want to climb to the top of a tree or the top of their class, lace up their boots for a hike or advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends. Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors, and millions of alums, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and make changes that affect the issues most important to them. To join, volunteer, reconnect or donate, visit [www.girlscoutsdiamonds.org](http://www.girlscoutsdiamonds.org).



# Burnham Woods Project Fact Sheet

Girl Scouts – Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas has launched a \$1.3 million capital improvement project to expand outdoor programming and strengthen STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) education opportunities for youth across Arkansas and surrounding states. The project will modernize and enhance facilities at Burnham Woods, increasing access to hands-on learning, leadership development, and creative exploration.

## Location

Burnham Woods Property  
5705 Gordon Lane  
Fort Smith, Arkansas

## Est. Investment

**\$1.3M**

## Project Timeline

- Groundbreaking: April 30, 2025
- Anticipated Completion: December 2025

## Project Goals

- Expand year-round program delivery and STEAM exploration
- Modernize existing facilities to better serve Girl Scouts and the broader community
- Construct a new woodworking shop
- Create flexible learning spaces for troop meetings, arts education, and leadership development
- Strengthen pathways for girls in STEAM fields by providing early, accessible engagement opportunities

## Project Impact

- Serve more than 4,500 Girl Scouts annually
- Increase capacity for council programming, volunteer training, and special events
- Position Burnham Woods as a regional hub for outdoor and STEAM education
- Support leadership and confidence-building experiences for the next generation of women leaders

## Key Donors

Windgate Foundation  
Leo and Barbara Anhalt  
Wells Fargo  
Joseph Norton  
First National Bank of Fort Smith  
Deborah and Darrell Robinson  
ABB

## Contractor

SSI, Inc.  
Fort Smith, Arkansas

## Architect

MAHG Architecture  
Fort Smith, Arkansas



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