

Local Girl Scout creates patch honoring Holocaust resistance

Lily Sassani has spent the last two years working with the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh to develop the patch

By **EMMA RIVA**

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Emily Loeb and Lily Sassani unveil the new Holocaust Girl Scout patch on Dec. 7 (Photo by Melanie Wieland)

During the Holocaust, the Girl Guides of Great Britain provided not just comfort for the dying in concentration camps, but also practiced a form of resistance. In Ravensbrück, a secret Girl Guide unit kept one of the few records chronicling which inmates lived and died in the camp. Now, after two years of work, Pittsburgh-based Girl Scout Lily Sassani has created a patch honoring this little-known facet of Girl Scout history, and is debuting the Holocaust Education Girl Scout Patch in partnership with the [Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh](#).

A Girl Scout “patch” is an honor a Scout receives through a three-part process. Scouts who work to receive the Holocaust Education Girl Scout Patch will have to fulfill requirements in “Discover, Connect, and Take Action” curricula.

“It’s something that’s very personal to me, having read about the lives of women who resolved to survive horrible conditions because they loved their communities,” Sassani said. Sassani, a New Kensington resident, [told the Chronicle](#) in 2024 that she was the only Jewish student she knew in her community and was excited to tie together her work as a Girl Scout with her Jewish identity.

Sassani took inspiration from Janie Hampton’s “How the Girl Guides Won the War,” where she learned about the Girl Guides’ role in fighting injustice during World War II. As she was developing the patch, the Holocaust Center

connected Sassani and Hampton, and gave Sassani access to interviews with Holocaust survivor Edith Leuchter, who was a Girl Guide in France, and her daughter Debbie Leuchter Stueber, a member of the Holocaust Center's Generations Speakers Bureau. Sassani has met with the Holocaust Center staff every week for the patch project and is working toward the Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania Gold Award.

"We typically create curriculum for schools, so this was a meaningful challenge — how to make such a serious and heavy topic something Girl Scouts would choose to learn about on their own time," Holocaust Center Director of Programs Emily Loeb said. "We also knew that some girls may have already studied the Holocaust, while others may not have, so the curriculum needed to provide a clear, accessible overview of the Holocaust before focusing on the role that Girl Guides played."

In the two years they've worked together, Sassani has forged deep relationships with Holocaust Center staff. Her project connects the older generation of survivors with civic-minded younger people of all faiths.

"I hope my patch touches a lot of people," Sassani said. "It tells stories of the Holocaust specific to the experiences of women, children and affected civilians across the world as a whole, which I don't think a lot of schools talk about."

To design the patch, she worked with the Holocaust Center to study the Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania's design and production standards and created multiple drafts across a process that ultimately took 10 months.

"It also taught me a lot of preliminary skills that I never would have expected to have learned if it weren't for the topic or for the Holocaust Center," Sassani said. "I got to tie all sorts of my interests with this project, like art, history, writing. It's almost a testament to my motivation to get outside of my comfort zone and create something that will impact people."

Sassani is a senior at Burrell High School and plans to study art, history, or writing in college. And she's dedicated to educating others about Jewish history, she said.

"If we connect that with history, we're building foundational resources for people to protect each other and find solidarity," Sassani said.

The best way to ensure "never again" is more than a slogan is to engage with the history — not just of suffering, but of resistance, she said.

"I think it would be great to see more Girl Scouts, even more kids, really, have an interest in their communities and work with others to create something that means something to them," Sassani said. "I think the more passion and curiosity we create in people, the better off we are. And if we connect that with history, we're building foundational resources for people to protect each other and find solidarity."



Lily Sassani (Photo courtesy of Lily Sassani)

Amy Miehl (Lily's GSWPA Gold Award adviser), Lily Sassani, Emily Loeb (HCP), Julia Gaetano (HCP) on Dec. 7, at the unveiling of the Holocaust Girl Scout patch (Photo by Melanie Wieland)

The Jewish Women's Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh funded Sassani's project throughout its development. This month, after an unveiling on Dec. 7 at Chatham University, the patch is complete and Sassani will begin making the curricula available to other Girl Scouts.

"There is so much I hope Girl Scouts take away from earning this patch," Loeb said. I hope they learn how much power they have and how they can use their voices to make the world better. I hope they are inspired by the courageous actions of the Girl Guides during the Holocaust and feel motivated to build a more just future.

"This program is timeless, and its lessons are deeply relevant today," she continued. "I'm incredibly proud to be part of something that can help a generation of young women see themselves as upstanders and changemakers." **PJC**

Emma Riva is a freelance writing living in Pittsburgh.