

Our Origin Story: Adventurers

This story is written by Barbara Duerk, the VA Skyline Adventurers founder, Girl Scout lifetime member, and Curved Bar (aka Gold Award) recipient.

When I was a Girl Scout Leader, my daughter wanted to try out kayaking, rock climbing, backpacking, and caving adventures. Our local parks and recreation department offered such programs, *BUT only for males* (not even coed programming was available). Girls were eager to be in the great outdoors but were limited in so many ways. Girls' and women's hiking boots *didn't exist*; we had to purchase them in the boys'/men's shoe area at local stores. Low-cost camping equipment was not easily available locally; most backpacks and tents were purchased at the Army and Navy surplus stores. *Many girls and their leaders faced barriers when trying to find ways to do these activities in the 1980's.*



With the intention of removing these barriers, Virginia Skyline Girl Scout Council's (the name of the council back then) Adventurers program was founded in 1986. It was a place for girls to explore the high adventure activities not offered anywhere else as well as a retention tool to encourage Juniors and above to remain in Girl Scouts. In the beginning each Spring, the council held Junior Roundups and each fall, the Adventurers held Challenge Weekends for teen girls. *The program provided outdoor high adventure challenge programs for girls ages 11 and up.*

Girls in the neighborhood, girls who had never been in Girl Scouts before, saw the fun Girl Scouts were having and wanted to join. The Adventurers name was chosen because this was beyond troop meetings and the current perception of what Girl Scouts did. *The girls talked about the FUN they had at the lunch table in the middle school cafeteria, and even boys wanted to join.* More girls became Girl Scout Adventurers members so they could try rock climbing, kayaking, and backpacking.

Virginia Skyline Girl Scouts took the **LEAD** to empower the girls while also empowering the adults too. Annually through the Adventurers' *Wild Women's Weekend*, training and experiences were provided to Girl Scout leaders to try activities that seemed impossible. After experiencing firsthand caving, leaders would recommend Adventurers events to their own girls.

The Adventurers' main purpose was to introduce the great outdoors to more girls. Some troops were not outdoor-oriented. The Adventurers program allowed girls to participate beyond their troops as individuals or in groups at times that work with their schedules.

The Spirit of Juliette continues... what you **DREAM**, you can **ACHIEVE!** Maybe not the very first time and maybe not exactly how you envisioned it, but goodwill comes from the challenges you take on. And that's the Adventurers motto: **Challenging You to Challenge Yourself!** More information about The VA Skyline Adventurers and their current list of events and trips are here: www.gsvsc.org/adventurers

