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Four Girl Scouts in the Deep South Council recently were presented with the Gold Award, Girl Scouting's highest honor, at the annual Elite Banquet.

U.S. Representative  Bonner, whose daughter, Lee, is a Brownie Girl Scout.

*U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner congratulates winners of the Gold Award, the highest honor in Girl Scouting. From left, Mollie Adams, Natasha Pate, Kaylee Morgan and Ashley Ziglar receive the award.*

The banquet, held at the Holiday Inn in Tillman's Corner, recognized outstanding accomplishments of Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts.

Each Gold Award project encourages leadership, service and development and must include at least 50 hours of work.

Less than 3 percent of all Senior Girl Scouts nationwide earn the Gold Award, which further distinguishes these girls in the Deep South Council for their commitment to serving their communities.

Mobile City Councilwoman Connie Hudson also was among the special guests for the Gold Award presentation.

Gold Award recipients also received certificates from: the Deep South Council; chewing gum producer Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company; the Military Order of the World Wars; the U.S. Secretary of Education; Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Mobile); the U.S. Department of Justice FBI; Mobile Mayor Mike Dow, Bayou La Batre Mayor Stan Wright; and the Mobile County Commission.

The following girls received the Gold Award at the banquet:

Natasha Pate, 17, a senior at Alma Bryant High School, organized a volunteer program and a "Girl Scout Band" at a local nursing home to earn her award. Members of the band performed for the residents - including her grandfather - as well as simply spent time talking to them. Pate is a member of Troop 110 led by Willie Pate.

"I like to help people and spend time with them," she said, "so I felt this would be the best way to do it."

Pate helped advertise the nursing home's need for volunteers because a volunteer system was not in place. She also collected tape and CD players for the residents to listen to music at their leisure. The Girl Scout band continues to perform at the nursing home and at local events.

Pate said the most meaningful part of her project was the warm response the residents gave the Girl Scouts and attracting other community volunteers who now give their time to the nursing home.

A Girl Scout for 12 years, Pate is active in her high school band and the Mobile County Honor Band. Since seventh grade, she has received numerous awards for her musical ability. She is a member of the Girl Scout Mariners and Mobile County Youth Conservation, and volunteers with the American Red Cross. Pate has also received the Silver Award, the highest award a Cadette can earn in Girl Scouting. She is the daughter of Gary and Willie Pate.

Mollie Adams, 16, a junior at Davidson High School, Ashley Ziglar, 16, a junior at Baker High School, and Kaylee Morgan, 17, a senior at Faith Academy, each earned Gold Award for their joint project at the University of South Alabama Children's and Women's Hospital. They girls are members of Troop 343 led by Sandie Ziglar.

They coordinated activities at the Tree House, a playroom for pediatric patients at the hospital, and volunteered on the high-risk pregnancy floor every weekend for four months. In all activities, they supported family participation to help parents through their children's hospital stay as well. They solicited donations from businesses for the Tree House, and ended their project with a Christmas party. Now, they are encouraging other Girl Scout troops and community groups to continue volunteering with the hospital.

All three girls agreed that that most successful part of the project was

cheering people of all ages while they were going through a difficult time.

Adams, a Girl Scout for 10 years, is a member of the National Honor Society, Junior Civitan, Mobile County Honor Band, and marching and symphonic band at Davidson. She has performed with the Mobile Opera and Mobile's Singing Children. She has also volunteered with the Mobile Tricentennial and Coastal Cleanup. She is the daughter of Ray and Martha Adams.

Ziglar, a Girl Scout for 12 years, also has earned the religious award, Silver Award, Cadette Leadership Pin, 5- and 10-year Service Pins for her involvement in the council. She was recognized for making the highest cookie sales for her troop. In addition to Girl Scouts, Ziglar is a member of the Seven Hill Baptist Church youth group, and also works at the YMCA. She is the daughter of Jim and Sandie Ziglar.

Morgan has received many honors through her involvement with Girl Scouting, including the Silver Award, and 5- and 10-year Service Pins. She also volunteers with her school library. A Girl Scout for 11 years, Morgan is the daughter of Karen and Stuart Morgan.

Some colleges offer scholarships to Gold Award winners. In-state schools participating include Birmingham-Southern College and Jacksonville State University. Organizations such as the Elks Foundation provide \$6,000 each year for eight young women to attend the college of their choice.

All branches of the U.S. military offer Girl Scout Gold Award recipients the opportunity to enter the military at a higher pay-scale rank.

The earliest forerunner to the Gold Award was the Golden Eaglet, the highest award in Girl Scouting from 1918 to 1939. To earn this award, a girl had to earn a required number of proficiency badges and be judged by the National Standards Committee on her service and character. Since 1939, two other awards were designated as the highest honor in Girl Scouting before the Gold Award was established after 1980.