

Girls Scouts achieve 'trip of a lifetime' goal



Photo Kara Navolio

The Planning Committee regularly meets at Papillon to plan their dream trip.

By Kara Navolio

What can 13 eighth-grade girls accomplish with determination and hard work? The trip of a lifetime, according to the Girl Scouts of Troop 32886.

The Troop, led by Nanette Heffernan, began raising money and planning their eight-day adventure to Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon, Las Vegas and Disneyland when they were in sixth grade. Six girls were part of the Planning Committee: Anie Heffernan, Audrey Garces, Chiara DePagne, Sarah Potter, Nia Jeyakrishnan, and Marisa Guerra Echeverria. Neither the girls nor the parents were convinced it could be done. "We just put down everything we could dream

of that would make our dream trip. There were no limits," said Guerra Echeverria. Potter added, "My mom said you guys are not going to be able to do this. None of the parents believed we could do it."

Jeyakrishnan chimed in, "but we proved we could do it!" Each girl was required, by a contract signed by all 13 girls and their parents, to raise \$1,000 completely on their own without parents contributing any money. They had to plan the entire trip, decide where to stay, and even arrange carpools. They earned money from a combination of projects that helped the community to the traditional cookie sales. Girls were also allowed to earn money separately through babysitting and

other jobs to add to their goal.

The girls, all Stanley Middle School students, started out with a Trash-a-thon. They got sponsors to pledge money for each ounce of trash they picked up. Every Wednesday after school they fished garbage out of Lake Merritt or picked up trash around Lafayette. They even unearthed a bicycle wrapped in a tarp. In all, they collected 3,000 ounces of trash and recyclables and earned \$3,000.

They also held car washes and garage sales. They collected aluminum cans and plastic bottles in their own neighborhoods and earned another \$2,000. In the three years of middle school, they earned \$7,500

through cookie sales. The troop, in total, earned \$15,000, enough for their dream trip, plus half of the cost for each of the four chaperones accompanying them.

The six girls on the planning committee all had specific jobs to do like getting T-shirts made for the trip, planning menus, getting ID tags made or coming up with a Code of Conduct. They earned badges such as "Financing Your Dream," "Budgeting," and "Public Speaking."

On a starlit night in the Narrows at Zion, the girls are planning to bridge from Cadettes to Seniors, the next level of Girl Scouting. Garces and Jeyakrishnan are making a video of memories for the occasion to document all that the girls have been through. Some of them have

been in the same troop together since kindergarten at Springhill Elementary.

The girls presented their project to a meeting of Girl Scout leaders and have been asked to help other younger girls learn to do what they have done. Troop leader Nanette Heffernan added, "They are the first troop in this area to accomplish a project this big."

Their excitement was palpable as they prepared to leave on June 8. "None of us could have done this without the others," said DePagne. "We learned how easily your mind can be changed when you believe," added Anie Heffernan. There is already talk of a senior trip at the end of high school, and no doubt these girls will accomplish whatever they set their minds to.

Hedgebrook Writing Retreat offered at SMC June 15



Photo provided

Bestselling novelist, poet, and essayist Elizabeth Rosner

Submitted by Mike McAlpin

The MFA Creative Writing Program at Saint Mary's College and Hedgebrook, the prestigious women's writing organization, are collaborating again on Bridging: A One-Day Hedgebrook Writing Retreat for woman-identified, non-binary and genderqueer writers. Held on the Saint Mary's campus on Saturday, June 15 the fourth annual retreat is rooted in the student-centered immersive writing approach of Hedgebrook and will feature a free keynote address by bestselling novelist, poet, and essayist Elizabeth Rosner.

Rosner's first book of non-fiction, "Survivor Café: The Legacy of Trauma and the Labyrinth of Memory," published in September 2017, was featured on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" and in The New York Times. It was a finalist for a National Jewish Book Award

and named one of the best books of 2017 by the San Francisco Chronicle. Her third novel, "Electric City," was included among the best books of 2014 by National Public Radio. Her poetry collection, "GRAVITY," was also published in 2014. "The Speed Of Light," Rosner's acclaimed debut novel in 2001, was translated into nine languages. Short-listed for the prestigious Prix Femina, the book won several literary prizes in both the U.S. and Europe, including the Prix France Bleu Gironde; the Great Lakes Colleges Award for New Fiction; and Hadassah Magazine's Ribalow Prize, judged by Elie Wiesel. "Blue Nude," her second novel, was selected as one of the best books of 2006 by the SF Chronicle. Rosner's essays and poems have appeared in the NY Times Magazine, Elle, the Forward, and numerous anthologies.

During the retreat, attendees can benefit from the insights of accomplished writers in a panel on publishing and participate in workshops on topics such as Bridging Character and Plot: Finding Connection; Building Worlds When We Write; and Yoga for Desk-Dwellers: A Movement Class. The retreat will be from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., with Rosner's keynote speech scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Cost: \$180 — Includes keynote by Elizabeth Rosner, choice of two of four writing workshops, happy hour reception (non-alcoholic options available), three meals with evening cake and coffee (vegan and gluten-free options available), and networking opportunities. Limited scholarships available.

For more details visit Bridging online at stmarys-ca.edu/hedgebrookretreat or contact retreat coordinators Ani Tascian at atascian@gmail.com or Mary Volmer at mvolmer@stmarys-ca.edu or at (925) 899-5117.

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