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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO SOUTHLAND GIRL SCOUTS RECEIVE NATIONAL HONOR FOR DEVELOPING FEMALE EMPOWERMENT & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN INDIA & THE PHILIPPINES

High schoolers Pooja Nagpal (Manhattan Beach) and Liza Villanueva (Anaheim) are two of 10 Girl Scouts in the U.S. named 2015 National Young Women of Distinction

LOS ANGELES COUNTY/ORANGE COUNTY, CA — Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles and Girl Scouts of Orange County are happy to announce that Pooja Nagpal (Manhattan Beach) and Liza Villanueva (Anaheim) were selected by Girl Scouts of the USA as two of the 10 2015 National Young Women of Distinction, the highest honor in Girl Scouting, for their Gold Award projects, "For a Change, Defend" and "iDream Express."

This special honor and designation by Girl Scouts of the USA showcases Pooja's and Liza's extraordinary leadership on projects that had measurable and sustainable impacts. **Both girls established nonprofits to address issues such as violence against women and the lack of education in impoverished communities in developing countries.** The Kappa Delta Foundation and Girl Scouts of the USA each generously provided a \$5,000 college scholarship to all of the 10 National Young Women of Distinction, including Pooja and Liza.

This year, Pooja and Liza will be honored at a national recognition ceremony hosted by Girl Scouts of the USA. They will also be featured in a livestreaming TED Talk-style event with their fellow National Young Women of Distinction. Both the recognition ceremony and [livestream](#) will be held on Oct. 7 in New York. In addition, Pooja will speak at [TEDxManhattanBeach](#) on Nov. 14.

Pooja Nagpal, Greater Los Angeles:

Pooja's project focused on ending violence against women worldwide by [teaching self-defense](#) to women and girls in rural villages in Himachal Pradesh, India, and battered women's shelters in Los Angeles. As a second-degree black belt in Taekwondo who is also trained in street fighting, Pooja created a two-part curriculum that not only successfully strengthened girls' and women's physical abilities, but also exercised their mental acuity through discussions and activities around leadership, community service, confidence, and education. This past year, Pooja founded [For a Change, Defend](#)—a nonprofit organization—and spoke at numerous events in an effort to raise awareness around domestic violence and female empowerment. She was invited back to India by social activist and politician Kiran Bedi—India's first female policewoman and former Director General of Police—and has since taught additional classes at villages near Delhi, which is considered to be the rape capital of the world.

"At such a young age Pooja has accomplished so much—through her Gold Award project, she has discovered a passion for empowering girls and combatting violence against women," said Lise L. Luttgens, CEO of Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles. "She is truly taking action to lead the positive change she wants to see in the world. I cannot wait to see what she will achieve as an adult."

Liza Villanueva, Orange County:

Liza [established iDREAM Express](#), a nonprofit organization that creates mobile learning centers around the world. iDREAM is an acronym for "Imagination, Discovery, Research, Education, Art, and Music," all components of the program (which also includes hygiene and nutrition). Liza launched [iDREAM Express](#) in the Philippines, knowing that poverty and the lack of education are prevalent issues there. She partnered with several church volunteers in the Philippines to ensure the program's sustainability, as well as the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Currently, the learning centers travel to two locations—Bacolod and Silay—weekly, and are equipped with tables and chairs, tablets, books, school supplies, and hygiene items. At these locations, children of all ages are washed, provided slippers, taught several subjects, and fed. They also treat wounds and are given the opportunity to participate in fun activities. In the near future, Liza plans to expand her project in order to create more learning centers in other countries and eventually across the globe.

"Liza has demonstrated remarkable leadership through her extraordinary Take Action project," said Nancy Nygren, CEO of Girl Scouts of Orange County. "She identified an issue that she is passionate about and is taking sustainable action to make a difference in the lives of countless children and families. I am so proud to recognize Liza's achievements and know that she will continue to escalate her impact as she expands her project globally."

About Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles:

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles serves more than 40,000 girls in partnership with more than 20,000 volunteers throughout the diverse communities of Los Angeles County and parts of Kern, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. The council engages girls through programs in Leadership, Business and Financial Literacy, Outdoor Adventure, STE[A]M (science, technology, engineering, art, math), and Healthy Living. To join, volunteer, reconnect, or support, visit www.girlscoutsla.org or call 213-213-0123.

About Girl Scouts of Orange County:

We're the Girl Scouts of Orange County. We're 37,000 strong—22,000 girls and 15,000 adults who believe every girl can change the world. Girl Scouts began over 100 years ago with one woman, Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low, who believed in the power of every girl. Today, we continue her vision of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place by helping them discover their inner strength, passions, and talents. And with programs in every zip code in Orange County, there's a chance for every girl to do something amazing. We're the Girl Scouts. To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit www.GirlScoutsOC.org.



Photo caption: Pooja Nagpal, a Girl Scout from Manhattan Beach, teaches a self-defense class in Himachal Pradesh, India. Pooja has established a nonprofit to provide empowerment and self-defense workshops to girls in rural communities in India. For her work, she was named one of 10 2015 National Young Women of Distinction by Girl Scouts of the USA.



Photo caption: Liza Villanueva, a Girl Scout from Anaheim, with one of her organization's mobile learning centers in the Philippines. Liza founded a nonprofit organization that creates mobile learning centers around the world equipped with books, school supplies, and hygiene items. For her work, she was named one of 10 2015 National Young Women of Distinction by Girl Scouts of the USA.