

LOCAL NEWS

Girl Scout plans library for needy

By DAVID SILVERSTEIN
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TEWKSBURY — At an age when most are concerned with maintaining a reputation for being cool, Stephanie Geiser is steadfastly focused on achieving a loftier goal.

She is one project away from completing her work toward receiving the Gold Award, the highest degree of recognition possible in the Girl Scouts.

In order to merit such an award, a Scout must complete a series of prerequisites, ranging from performing 30 hours of community service to earning a number of other badges, before even being eligible to begin a Gold Star project.

Geiser, a 16-year-old junior at Tewksbury High School, has opted to build and furnish a library at the New Hope Apartments in Lowell for her project. The apartments, which are affiliated with the House of Hope shelter in Lowell, serve as affordable housing for low-income families

and often times are the next stop for families moving on from the shelter, she said.

The project originated when a family friend who worked at the shelter told Geiser and her mother, Maryann, who is Stephanie's troop leader, that many of the tenants wish to obtain a library card but are unable to since the apartments do not technically qualify as a permanent residence.

Geiser decided that if they can't have full access to the library, maybe the benefits of a library can come to them. After her council approved of the project several months ago, Geiser began the process of pulling all the pieces together.

With the support of her family, the Girl Scout council, her employer and staff at New Hope, Geiser began the task of collecting books. So far, she has raised 384 books, but she hopes to see the collection, which she plans on gearing toward middle-school-aged kids, grow as large as possible.

"Anything anyone wants to



Tewksbury Girl Scout Stephanie Geiser with some of the books she has collected for the library at New Hope Apartments in Lowell.

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donate would be fine," she said. "I'm hoping that if we can help the children to see that learning can be fun, it will help them to build a better life and maybe help their parents to try to get back into school."

The biggest donation she has received so far came in the form of 150 books from Time Warner Publishing. Of the 25 publishers Geiser wrote to, Time Warner has been the only one to respond favorably. Still, she is under-terred as she plans on asking local libraries for donations.

In addition to books,

Geiser is still in need of the building materials necessary for the library's shelving. She hopes that area contractors will be generous enough to donate some of the lumber. Specifically, she needs a sheet of plywood, some oak-dimensional lumber and a small quantity of pine. Her mother estimated the total cost of the materials at about \$500.

Anyone interested in donating books or building materials to the project can contact Geiser at: stephanie@around-the-house.org.