

TOWN

Girl Scout Earns Gold Award with Sensory Lending Collection

The Mastics-Moriches-Shirley Community Library has a Girl Scout to thank for its newest collection.

Olivia Raineri, a member of Girl Scouts of Suffolk County, Troop 2081, created the Sensory Lending Collection to earn her the Gold Award, Girl Scouts' highest honor. To receive it, a Girl Scout must work a minimum of 80 hours on a project that meets a need in her community. The Sensory Lending Collection will offer resources that provide sensory stimulation, including toys, games, educational tools, and comfort objects, for children and adults with disabilities.

There are many items on the market for people who have autism, ADHD, and other sensory-processing disorders as well as for individuals who are recovering from strokes and other brain injuries. However, as Olivia discovered, families often cannot afford the equipment they

need. "In creating a Sensory Lending Collection in my community," she said, "I plan to provide educators, families, and caregivers of people with disabilities an opportunity to have access to therapeutic items. They will be able to learn about and try these items before buying them."

Building the Sensory Lending Collection was truly a community effort. Olivia's friends and family purchased products for the collection through an online registry. The owner of a nearby sewing studio donated space and supplies so that Olivia could create "eye spy sensory bags," pellet-filled pouches that users manipulate to make small, colorful trinkets appear in front of a clear plastic window.

From a young age, Olivia knew that she wanted to center her life around helping others. At six years old, she made sandwiches for the needy. When she was in the

seventh grade, she earned the Girl Scout Silver Award by facilitating donations of smart televisions and toys for the playroom at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson. Recently, Olivia assembled hundreds of packages of feminine-care products for homeless women. She graduated from William Floyd High School this year and is pursuing a bachelor of science in nursing at the University of Scranton. Olivia is the granddaughter of Maris Raineri, a former member of the library's Board of Trustees and a retired WFHS employee.

"We are so proud of Olivia and the work she's done," remarked Joseph Maiorana, president of the Board of Trustees. "Caring and engaged young people like Olivia are making our community and our world a place where everyone can feel welcome."

Kerri Rosalia, library director, echoed his sentiment: "This collection will be invaluable as



we pursue our mission to provide personalized learning with a caring attitude to the entire population of the William Floyd School District.

We look forward to adding to the Sensory Lending Collection and continuing the vital work that Olivia has started."