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Girl Scouts of West Central Florida Celebrates 30th Anniversary of Women of Distinction and Announces 2022 Awardees

Keynote Speaker will be Astronaut Dr. Mae C. Jemison

TAMPA, FL – December 8, 2021 – Girl Scouts of West Central Florida (GSWCF) announced it will celebrate six local women at its 30th Anniversary of Women of Distinction Awards Luncheon on March 18, 2022, at the Hilton Downtown Tampa. The Keynote speaker will be **Dr. Mae C. Jemison**, a lifetime Girl Scout and former NASA astronaut who was the first woman of color to travel to space.

The 2022 Women of Distinction are:

- **Felecia Gilmore-Long** - A financial leader who has served in numerous roles for the GSWCF Board of Directors, including four years Gilmore-Long spent as Board President. Currently, Gilmore-Long is a member of the National Board Development Committee for Girl Scouts USA.
- **Elizabeth Gutierrez** - The CEO of Enterprising Latinas, Inc. (ELI), founded in 2009 and launched as a nonprofit in 2014 to create pathways of opportunity for Latinas in Tampa Bay and address social inequities driving the gap in wages and wealth for women. In 2019, Gutierrez was appointed a Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women by Commissioner Kimberly Overman. Additionally, she was appointed to serve in the Hillsborough County Commission on Human Trafficking. She also serves on the Board of Directors of Career Source Tampa Bay and Florida Alliance for Community Solutions previously known as the Florida Alliance of Community Development Corporations.
- **Judge Irene Sullivan (ret.)** – A nationally recognized expert in juvenile justice, Sullivan is a retired juvenile and family court judge in St. Petersburg and Clearwater. Before serving on the bench, she was a general partner at Harris, Barrett, Mann & Dew, LLP, where she had a civil trial practice for 22 years and became an AV-rated trial lawyer. She is currently an adjunct professor of juvenile justice at Stetson University College of Law. Sullivan authored: *Raised by the Courts: One Judge's Insight Into Juvenile Justice*.
- **India Witte** – An expert in philanthropy, Witte currently leads the Principal Giving enterprise for the University of South Florida Foundation and serves on the Board of the Glazer Children's Museum and St. John's Episcopal Parish Day School. Witte is Immediate Past Chair and current member of the Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women.

In addition to announcing the Women of Distinction, GSWCF also named **Vanessa Maternowski** a 2022 Woman of Promise, an award bestowed to exceptional women under 40. Maternowski is a Small Business Market Manager Vice President for Bank of America who volunteers for numerous organizations, including GSWCF, Feeding America, and The Spring of Tampa Bay.

Finally, GSWCF will induct **The Honorable Julianne M. Holt**, Hillsborough County's elected Public Defender of the 13th Judicial Court, into the Women of Distinction Hall of Fame. Holt will be celebrated again for her dedication to protecting the rights of the poor and often voiceless members of our community for more than 25 years. Holt first earned the Women of Distinction in 1997.

"We are thrilled to honor our Women of Distinction for their transformational leadership in their careers and service to our Tampa Bay community," said Mary Pat King, Girl Scouts of West Central Florida Chief Executive Officer. "As part of the celebration, we are excited to welcome one of our legendary Girl Scouts – Dr. Mae Jemison, who will share inspiration from her years as a trailblazing engineer, astronaut, and STEM educator."

A lifetime member of Girl Scouts, Jemison served six years as a NASA astronaut and was the first woman of color in the world to go into space. She developed a love of science as a young girl by tapping into the curiosity she honed through Girl Scouts. Her achievements span beyond her historic time as part of NASA's space program, including founding two technology companies and the nonprofit Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence, which designs and implements STEM education experiences.

"For the past 30 years, Women of Distinction has been Tampa Bay's premier event that celebrates women – more than 200 honorees to date," said **Laura Webb, President of the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of West Central Florida**. "We are so grateful to our 2022 Women of Distinction Honorary Chairs Marion Rich, Rita Lowman, and Yvonne Fry for selecting this incredible roster of honorees."

To learn more about Women of Distinction, visit gswcf.org/WOD. For sponsorship, table or VIP opportunities, please contact Clara Moll, VP Corporate and Community Partnerships, at cmoll@gswcf.org.

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About Girl Scouts of West Central Florida

Founded in 1912, Girl Scouts of the USA is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls with nearly 2.5 million girl and adult members worldwide. Girl Scouts is the leading authority on girls' healthy development and building courage, confidence, and character to make the world a better place. Girl Scouts of West Central Florida (GSWCF) serves thousands of members across eight counties, Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Marion, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sumter. GSWCF offers every girl a chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, skill-building, community service, and personal success. GSWCF receives funding from the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, the Conn Memorial Foundation, the Florida Department of Education, Florida's Natural Growers Foundation, the Givewell Community Foundation, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County, the Mabel and Ellsworth Charitable Simmons Foundation, the Saunders Foundation, the Spurlino Foundation, Suncoast Credit Union Foundation, the Rotary Club of The Villages and United Way of Central Florida. To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit www.gswcf.org