

Quick SMART

GAI HEMLEY is the leader of Dapto Girl Guides and has been involved for more than 20 years. She is looking for more girls to join the guides.

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I became involved with the Girl Guides because my daughter became interested when she was eight years old. She's now 33. In that time, I have seen lots of changes.

We used to have more than 140 girls involved over three groups and a waiting list, with eight or 10 leaders. Now, I am on my own and we have 15 girls.

It's very hard to attract women as leaders because they don't want to commit. I have to rely on a parent roster, but many of them have casual jobs, so they can't make a commitment. Even the girls may want to come for 12 months, but not for five or six years, or even a lifetime. The girls that tend to stay now are the ones whose mothers were in the guides.

I couldn't work out why I thought the girls were different now. Then I finally worked it out - they are not used to entertaining themselves. They are used to sitting in front of computers and televisions, so it takes a while to encourage them to think outside the square and be imaginative.

We might do an activity in training and have a ball, but then you try it with the girls and it's a fizzler. It's been challenging.

Guiding allowed my daughters to do things that they would never otherwise have done. They did things like gliding, abseiling and canoeing. It gave me the confidence to get back into the workforce after 18 years.

- WILLIAM VERITY

