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ONE GIRL'S QUEST FOR
EPILEPSY AWARENESS

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Girls participate in a variety of activities at Camp Rice Moody in Reading, including games, crafts, theme programs like “Enchanted Fairy Forest” and swimming.

ADVENTURE, FUN & FRIENDSHIP

Girl Scouts’ Camp Rice Moody stands out as a gem in the woods of Reading

Tucked away on a quiet residential road in Reading is an 8-acre parcel of wooded land. From the street, it looks like an untouched lot, but just off Rice Road is a small opening to a dirt-and-gravel path. Follow it, and it will lead to a wealth of history dating back more than 100 years.

This is Camp Rice Moody, a summer day camp run by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts. For seven decades, Girl Scouts — from Daisies to Ambassadors — have been

coming to this land in the summertime to socialize, learn and grow in the ideals of G.I.R.L. Scouting: to be go-getters, innovators, risk-takers and leaders.

The Girl Scout troop of Reading celebrated its 100th anniversary this year. The troop began just six years after the Girl Scout organization itself was founded in 1912 in Savannah, Georgia. Michelle Kramer, a longtime Girl Scout and volunteer, organized the troop’s 100th anniversary party this spring.

By KIERA BLESSING • *Photos by* AMANDA SABGA

CAMP HISTORY

► **1904:** Fathers' and Mothers' Club founded by Mary Pamela Rice of Reading, with plans to bring undernourished and underprivileged city children to the country.

► **1910:** Fathers' and Mothers' Club acquires the Joseph L. Parker Farm in Reading, a 14-acre site at the corner of Grove and Forest streets from Josie and Benjamin Spiller.

► **1912:** Girl Scouts of the USA is founded in Savannah, Georgia, by Juliette Gordon Low.

► **1918:** Girl Scouts begins in Reading with two troops and 60 girls.

► **1932:** The Fathers' and Mothers' Club farmhouse on Grove Street is sold, and Camp Rice bungalow, named in honor of founder Mary Pamela Rice, is built on a portion of the remaining 12.7 acres of property.

► **1941:** Upkeep of Camp Rice becomes a problem for Fathers' and Mothers' Club; Reading Council of Girl Scouts takes over for 10 months of the year to help with finances.



Rice Pavilion was added in 2017.

► **1942:** Moody is added to the camp name in memory of Alice Moody, a Girl Scout and dedicated nurse.

► **1946:** Fathers' and Mothers' Club begins liquidation of assets and turns over the camp to Reading Council of Girl Scouts.

► **1948:** Fathers' and Mothers' Club records the deed, finalizing the gift of land and property to the

Reading Council of Girl Scouts.

► **1958:** Pool is added to complement the existing outdoor program.

► **1959:** Reading Council of Girl Scouts plants 200 baby trees and 400 evergreens; 228 girls attend summer camp.

► **1962:** Reading Council of Girl Scouts merges into Mystic Side Girl Scout Council, while Reading Council for Girls is formed to maintain

local control of the property.

► **1980:** Mystic Side Girl Scout Council merges into Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council.

► **1981:** Fire by arsonist destroys Camp Rice Moody bungalow.

► **1982:** Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council and Reading Council for Girls work with local officials to sell 4.85 acres of land to finance a new building.

► **1985:** The new Rice Moody Program Center opens.

► **2008:** Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council merges into Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts.

► **2012:** Pool lift is added through a donation from Danvers Savings Bank.

► **2016:** Building is updated, including a new kitchen, renovated bathrooms, floors, and new tables and chairs.

► **2017:** Rice Pavilion is built to serve as protected outdoor activity space for girls and enhance the site for year-round troop use and summer day camp.

— Compiled by Lorraine Horn,
a Girl Scout volunteer and donor
who lives in Reading

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"It was extremely important to be able to celebrate the girls of yesteryear, as well as the girls of today, and to see families with girls from age 2 to women in their 90s," Kramer says. "We had all of those people in attendance, and it shows how much Girl Scouts meant to those people back then."

Camp Rice Moody has been an epicenter of Girl Scouts in Reading since 1941, when the Scouts began to take over the property from the Fathers' and Mothers' Club.

Founded in 1904 by Mary Pamela Rice, the camp's namesake, the club was a grass-roots effort to get city children out into the country to experience fresh air and cleaner living. As finances became difficult for the group, the Girl Scouts troop of Reading stepped in to run the camp 10 months out of the year.

By 1948, the Fathers' and Mothers' Club formally gifted the land to the Reading Council of Girl Scouts, and the space had taken on the name of Alice Moody, a Girl Scout and dedicated nurse, to become what it still goes by today: Camp Rice Moody.

The camp has undergone many changes since then — an in-ground pool was added



Youngsters play games at Camp Rice Moody, a day camp in Reading run by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts.



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BEST OF Readings 2018





Renee Doucette, left, and Amanda Michienzi are the directors of Camp Rice Moody in Reading. Both were Girl Scouts when they were younger.

in 1958, and the following year, the Girl Scouts planted 600 trees on the property to create the lush, wooded haven it is today.

After an arsonist lit a fire that destroyed the camp's bungalow in 1981, the council

sold some of its land to raise funds and rebuilt the Rice Moody Program Center, which opened in 1985.

Just last year, Lorraine Horn donated the money to build the Rice Pavilion, the long-anticipated second structure on

the property.

As Kramer explains, that resilience is just the Girl Scout way: "The group of women that Girl Scouts has created tend to be very independent women who just make things happen."

An empowering retreat

On a cloudless summer morning in July, Camp Rice Moody's Brownies were celebrating "Enchanted Fairy Forest" week.

While some girls donned handmade fairy crowns and elastic-band wings before heading out for a nature walk, others changed into swimsuits and headed for the pool. The older girls were on a field trip for the day.

The camp caters to the entire age range of the Girl Scouts, from Daisies in kindergarten to Ambassadors in their senior year of high school. Camp enrollment continues to increase each year, from 505 girls attending in 2016 to more than 630 campers in 2017.

Camp directors Renee Doucette and Amanda Michienzi say that one of the highlights of Camp Rice Moody is that all of the girls get to participate in the same activities, each catered to their ages.

"We're a starter camp. That's what we're known as, within the council," Michienzi says. "The way our program is set up, every group gets the same components ... it's very universal, whether they're entering first grade or entering fifth."

Both Michienzi and Doucette are teachers by trade, and both were Girl Scouts in their youth. Doucette says that the Girl Scouts organization is "changing with the times, but staying with traditions," and is vital in its endeavor to empower young women.

"It gives girls the chance to shine in an all-girl environment. Sometimes, some girls are so shy that they don't want to participate," Doucette says. "Everyone needs a voice in the world. It's nice working for an organization (that enables) the girl empowerment."

Kramer says that empowerment — especially encouraging the older girls to act as role models for the younger ones — is crucial to the Scouts' future.

"It's about more than just crafts. It's about more important things, like being on a board of directors, climbing a mountain, building a robot, going to MIT and participating in courses ... for Girl Scouts," she says. "Where else would they have been so exposed to so many different things?" 🏔️

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