Sisters Amy Gilhooley of Port Washington, Joy Bloemer of Grafton and Kay Rego of Jackson were Girl Scouts when they were young, as were their mother, aunt and grandmother. Their children are now the fourth generation of Scouts.

The Girl Scouts of the United States is celebrating 100 years, something that prompted the sisters to think about their Scouting heritage.

Their grandmother Hope Smith Huwatschek, who was secretary of Smith Bros. Restaurant, once handled the finances and organization of all the Girl Scout troops in Port Washington.

Their aunt (Hope's daughter) Lenys Huwatschek Walden was in Girl Scout Troop 15 in Port Washington, one of the first in the city.

The girls' mother Anne Rassel Huwatschek, who died of breast cancer in 1988, was a Brownie and Girl Scout leader in Port Washington even before the girls were old enough to join.

So when their children — girls and boys — wanted to join Scouts, they volunteered their time.

Bloemer has been co-leader of her daughter Sarah's Grafton troop for three years, the first year as a Daisy and now as a Brownie leader. Sarah told her mother she wants to be a Girl Scout leader someday.

Bloemer's daughter Jenna, 4, will soon be old enough to be a Daisy Scout.

Gilhooley is a Brownie leader for her daughter Ella, 7, a second-grader at Lincoln Elementary School in Port Washington. Her youngest daughter Hope, 4, will be a Daisy Scout next year. She also has a son, Simon, 2, who may be a Cub Scout when he's old enough.

Rego, who has only sons, has become involved with Boy Scouting, serving as a Cub Scout leader for her youngest son Michael. Her son Adam is a Boy Scout.

The sisters said their mother's devotion to Girl Scouts and community service influenced them to continue the tradition.

"Absolutely," Rego said. "I have so many fond memories. I think we all inherited that

leadership, teaching ability from her. I know she definitely enjoyed it and was such a good teacher. She enjoyed teaching the core values."

Gilhooley doesn't think her mother was her troop leader, but she remembers being with her mother at her sisters' Scouting events.

"Being the youngest, I have memories of tagging along quite a bit to everything they did and doing a lot of the (Scouting) events with them," Gilhooley said.

"My mom was such a talent. She did so much, not just for Girl Scouts, but for her church and at school. She did so much sewing and cooking.

"I think I wanted to become a leader for the same reason my mother did — to support my daughter and other girls. I believe in what Girl Scout stands for — developing self-esteem and the empowerment of young women. I feel strongly it's a good thing to do with my daughter."

Bloemer said no one else volunteered when leaders were sought for Sarah's Daisy troop, so she and Karen Ruona, who was a Girl Scout in Mayville and whose mother was a leader, joined forces.

"I work full time and it's time consuming, but it's very, very rewarding as well," Bloemer said.

"We had 24 kids on our first camping experience last September at Camp Evelyn in Plymouth. It hasn't changed since I was a Girl Scout.

"My Aunt Lenys went there when she was visiting last year and said it hasn't changed since she went there."

One of Bloemer's favorite events is Girl Scout Thinking Day, a worldwide event that is celebrated in various ways. When she was a Girl Scout, a foreign exchange student would meet with her troop to tell them about his or her country.

In Grafton, troops from throughout the community focus on learning about another country. Last year, it was India. This year, it's England since that's where Girl Scouting originated.

The founder of Girl Scouts, Juliette "Daisy" Low of Savannah, Ga., was 46 when her husband died. She went to England to study the arts and was introduced to Girl Guides there.

She was so impressed by the organization that when she returned to Savannah, she started the first Girl Scout troop on March 12, 1912, with 18 girls.

Wanting to get girls outdoors and involved in community service, her Girl Scouts hiked, played basketball (behind fences because they weren't allowed to be seen playing sports), went on camping trips, learned how to tell time by the stars and studied first aid.

Low believed that all girls should be given the opportunity to develop physically, mentally and

spiritually. Today, there are more than 3.4 million Girl Scouts in the U.S.

The history of Girl Scouting locally and in the United States is featured in an exhibit at the Wisconsin Museum of Quilts and Fiber Arts in Cedarburg. Girl Scout uniforms through the ages are displayed along with other troop memorabilia.

Lenys Huwatschek's sash with all her badges is in the exhibit, along with Bloemer's and Rego's Girl Scout uniforms and berets and Gilhooley's Brownie beanie.

"I was really proud when we went to the exhibit and they had quite a bit from our family," Gilhooley said.

An exhibit featuring 100 years of Girl Scouting will on display at the Wisconsin Museum of Quilts and Fiber Arts through April 15. Workshops for Girl Scouts are also being held. The museum is at N50 W5050 Portland Rd., Cedarburg. For more information, call 546-0300 or visit www.wiquiltmuseum.com.

Image Information: Sisters and Scout leaders (from left) Joy Bloemer, Kay Rego and Amy Gilhooley showed one of their Girl Scout sashes and their Aunt Lenys Huwatschek's sash to daughters Ella Gilhooley and Sarah Bloemer, who are Brownies. Photo by Sam Arendt