



Photo: courtesy Allison Sephton

# Daring and Determination

## A Young Guider on the Go

BY MAE LEFRANÇOIS

Allison Sephton (shown at bottom left in the above photo) is an outstanding example of the young women across Canada who have dared themselves to set and achieve personal, educational, professional and Guiding goals. From her days as a Brownie in her native New Brunswick, Allison continued to take on the challenges and adventures our organization has to offer throughout her girlhood, eventually earning both the Canada Cord and the Chief Commissioner's Gold Award.

While working on her B.A. in International Relations, which she received in 2006 from Mt. Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Allison remained active as a young Guider working with Spark, Guide and Senior Branches (Ranger) Units. Now a Guide leader with the 255<sup>th</sup> Toronto Guides, she also sits on the Girl Guides of Canada (GGC) National Governance Committee.

After completing her B.A., Allison spent five months in India, as one of two youth observers in a Canadian delegation to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) World Centre, Sangam. There, she worked in a

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community volunteer program at the rural Maher Women's Shelter, teaching English and leadership skills, among other duties.

### International Commitment

Upon her return from India, Allison started law school at the University of Toronto. She is focussing on international law, and says her thesis will be on the empowerment of women in India.

During the summer of 2008, she participated in a conference on human trafficking, hosted by the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Throughout the sessions, which she attended in her capacity as a WAGGGS World Bureau intern, she wore her Girl Guide uniform and spoke about WAGGGS' advocacy work regarding HIV/AIDS, girl education, and child trafficking. Before hearing her speak, many of the other delegates had no idea of the breadth and depth of the Girl Guides/Girl Scouts international agenda.

When she graduates from law school, Allison will be articling for the federal government's Department of Justice. She is also pursuing an M.A. in International Relations, with a view to working for UN human rights agencies. This past summer, she returned to India to work on the legal aspects of human trafficking, the rights of women and children, and other humanitarian issues.

### Inspiration and Dedication

Allison credits her Guiding and WAGGGS experiences with having a profound impact on her choices in education, volunteer work and profession. Her desire to travel and learn more about life beyond her middle class upbringing in New Brunswick began in 1997, when she was a Pathfinder, participating in an inter-provincial Girl Guide trip to Saskatchewan, where she spent two weeks at a camping event.

As a Ranger, in 2000, Allison was selected to join the Canadian delegation to Pax Lodge, the WAGGGS World Centre located in London, England. This marked her first trip outside of North America and her first taste of the many opportunities WAGGGS offers to girls and women around the globe.

"That taste of World Guiding stayed with me," she says. "So, in 2005 I returned to England as an adult to volunteer for three months at Pax Lodge. And the following summer marked my first visit to Sangam."

### Guiding Influences

Allison says Guiding has given her great planning and leadership skills, both of which she applies at meetings, events and camps. "I can also plan a professional event at the drop of a hat," she boasts.

"Of course, my Guiding peers may not think that's extraordinary, but people outside Guiding often don't find it easy or natural to coordinate complicated logistics for an event the way we've learned to."

Guiding also provides Allison with an escape from her university work, in an environment that lets her both inspire, and have fun with, girls. "If it isn't fun, it isn't Guiding," she quips, adding that Guiding will always be a part of her life. Indeed, volunteering in general is a priority for her. As an undergraduate student, she was a vice-



Photo: courtesy Allison Sephton

president in her students' union, and she currently volunteers for a legal aid clinic and as co-chair of a committee on human trafficking in a student international human rights program.

Perhaps the most vital quality Guiding has nurtured in Allison is her keen desire to understand, respect and help others. Working with WAGGGS opened her eyes to the world, which in turn has enabled her to open the eyes of others around her. "Whenever I make a presentation, the response I receive from people is wonderful," she says. "So many of them tell me they had absolutely no idea about some of the things I bring to their attention from my first-hand experiences." 🌍

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