Since joining the Girl Scouts as a Daisy at the age of 5, Rachel Carey has wanted to earn the

Girl Scout Gold Award, and this past summer she did just that.

Rachel followed in the footsteps of her father, Ronald, and her older brother, Joshua, who both earthed the Eagle Scout award in the Boy Scouts.

Rachel, 18, of Girl Scout Troop 30092, was awarded her Gold Award at the Girl Scout Dos Pueblos Service Unit Award Dinner in San Lorenzo in June. Rachel will be honored, along with other Gold Award Girl Scouts, at a special Ceremony by Girl Scouts of Northern California in January.

Rachel's Gold Award project had to fulfill a need within her community, something that is ongoing and encompasses organizational, leadership and networking skills.

Rachel's project, "A Fresh Start to a New Year," addressed the hunger and poverty in her San Leandro community. The first part of her project involved collecting donations of food from houses in the community and placing bins in local businesses.

The food collected was used to help establish and sustain a food pantry in the Mulford Gardens neighborhood of San Leandro. This food pantry continues to operate with the help of volunteers and Girls Scouts from the Dos Pueblos Service Unit.

To address the poverty issue Rachel collected clothing and shoes to be donated to April Showers, a local non-profit group that showers and clothes the homeless. Rachel achieved her goal by leading over 40 volunteers including Girl Scouts, adults, family and students from San Leandro High School's Interact group.

Rachel has been a member of Troop 30092 in San Leandro for the last 5 years of her 12 years in Girl Scouts. She has served as a Girl Scout Program Aid since 2006, assisting in many Girl Scout activities. Rachel is known to Girl Scouts throughout the Dos Pueblos Service Unit as "Chocolate Chip."

Rachel graduated from San Leandro High School in June 2012. She is currently attending San Jose State University, studying nutritional science and dietetics.

CAPTION: Rachel Carey of San Leandro worked her way up to the Girl Scouts highest award with her project to help the poor and hungry.