

## **Remarks from Anne Hayes, National Delegate and Board Member-at-Large, about attending the National Convention**

Hello everyone – My name is Anne Hayes – I'm a former leader, current board member, and longtime Girl Scout volunteer. I'm also a National Delegate, and we recently returned from the 2008 National Council Session and 51<sup>st</sup> Convention, held this year in Indianapolis.

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience – and there was a lot going on – meeting and spending time with the other members of the Connecticut delegation, including 12 amazing girl delegates, meeting other Girl Scouts (girls and adults) from all over the United States (there were WAGGGS members from other countries as well), meeting National Board Members, participating in the democratic process, and learning more about what is to come for Girl Scouts of the USA. My roommate (who I didn't know before the conference) and I discovered that we have a lot in common and had a great bonding experience. We saw exciting exhibits from NASA, the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, the World Centers, cookies and other products; the list goes on and on. It was very interesting to speak with people from other councils who realigned when we did, some who realigned after we did, and some who are going through the process now.

There were a number of proposed changes to our constitution (in fact, two were tabled for another time so further information could be gathered), there were some topics that we thought would be very controversial and others that were not. There was certainly a lot of discussion during the sessions and it was very clear even in the wake of realignment how much local pride and feeling is still very evident in this organization.

A couple of the changes involve the increase of national dues from \$10 to \$12 effective with the 2010 membership year, beginning October 1,

2009, and the fact that the National Council will consist of a smaller number of delegates going forward. (The total membership of the National Council will now not exceed 1,500 when previously it was 2,000.)

I felt that the work that we did before we went to Indianapolis was good preparation for things that occurred there. We were familiar with parliamentary procedures, we knew what the issues were, and we had some idea about how our constituents in the state felt about those issues.

I think the single most important thing that I did in Indianapolis was to attend the Open Space session on Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Open Space is when participants gather in self-organized groups to discuss topics of their choosing and common interests. The session was optional (and a number of our delegates also attended) but I personally I felt that I learned and heard more from the other participants there than probably anywhere else during the council session. It was so interesting to see that although we were one of the “early adopting” councils, there are many councils who have already experienced or are currently experiencing what we are on many levels. It was validating and a “reality check” to hear that some of what we are going through in Connecticut is what other councils are going through. It was encouraging to hear that things can get better with time and challenging to know that although we have completed the actual “realignment process”, the “integration process” could go on for a few years, just like with a corporate merger. The facilitator, Lisa Heft, was very positive and kept things moving. Her key guidelines, which were great, were:

Whoever comes is the right person

Whenever it starts is the right time

Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened

When it's over; it's over

A big thanks should go to Jennifer and her staff who worked so hard to make this a great experience for us and for our girls. I would do it again in a heartbeat and I would encourage any of you to apply as a delegate. The next council session will be in Houston and even if you don't go as a delegate, you should try to go as a visitor!