

January 25, 2008

Dear Friend in Girl Scouting,

I hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season, although now it seems like a faint memory. The New Year has begun with a rush of activity as the first cookie program for Girl Scouts of Connecticut was launched on January 11th.

Mission Moment - I define this as an opportunity to interact directly with girls. Last month I spent a Saturday morning with a troop at Hartford Association for Retarded Citizens (HARC). This is a troop of special needs girls ages 8-16. They meet every other Saturday at HARC. This particular day they were making Christmas cards and snowmen using white socks and rice. The leader gave me background information about each girl, noting how their involvement in Girl Scouts has enriched their lives.

It was inspiring to be with the girls, many of whom struggle with basic communication and mobility skills that most of us take for granted. These moments are refreshing, and remind me why I have undertaken this leadership role with GSOFCT.

Cookie Program - I trust you had a chance to vote for your favorite cookie at www.cookievote.com. As of today Thin Mints are well in the lead with over 30% of the vote. We have a number of Connecticut notables who have discussed their favorite cookie, such as Geno Auriemma and Susan Bysiewicz, Secretary of the State of Connecticut. In April we will announce the winner that will be proclaimed as "Connecticut's favorite Girl Scout Cookie". Watch for more announcements on this front.

I hope you have seen the TV commercial spots "What's inside a box of cookies besides cookies?" that are running on stations across the state. They are fun spots that highlight the opportunities our girls realize as a result of their work with the cookie program. Recently two Girl Scouts (Allie Otlowski from Cheshire and Nina Best from Bloomfield) and I appeared on the Scott Haney show "Better Connecticut". It was a fantastic opportunity to promote the cookie program, ask the audience to vote, and to provide information about GSOFCT. Nina and Allie actually sold several boxes of cookies in the studio to other guests on the show—true entrepreneurs that our Girl Scouts are.

Next week you will begin receiving posters from the Membership Department about the cookie vote site which helps promote the cookie program in general. It will be exciting to see our posters in storefronts across the state to give the troops another tool to assist them as they are out selling. The media activity is creating a real buzz about the cookie program. We are pleased to announce that we are partnering with Webster Bank and Eastern Mountain Sports to hold booth sales at their business establishments statewide. Your Product Sales Team will follow up with you regarding these opportunities.

The five legacy councils had substantial differences in their cookie programs in almost every aspect. These differences needed to be ironed out and this year everyone is dealing with something new. Not necessarily better or worse, just different.

The challenge to Girl Scouts of Connecticut is to make this year a success. We need to solve problems as they come up, implement the changes, be patient with one another, remain positive and keep the channels of communication open so that next year will be even more successful. We welcome your suggestions and comments. Your feedback will be an integral part of the planning for next year.

Daisy Seed Money – In December I announced the availability of this program and am pleased to share that as of today 28 troops have taken advantage of the funds.

Council Patch – We have received over 300 applications to design our new Girl Scouts of Connecticut patch. Thank you to all who contributed. We are in the process of narrowing the selection and will notify you soon.

Summer Camp – We are putting the finishing touches on the 2008 Summer Camp Brochure. You can expect to see it online and around the state in Service Centers and in libraries within the next few weeks. More important are the great programs that will be available at our day and residential camps this summer. The camp staff are excited about the program offerings and believe the campers will have truly enjoyable, and meaningful, experiences at whichever camp they choose to visit this summer.

We are looking for volunteers to assist with the setup of tents at camp Camp Laurel, Camp Murray, Camp Pattagansett, Camp Anseox, and Camp Aspetuck between the last week of March 2008 and the first two weeks of April 2008. If you or an organization you are involved with has the interest and time, please let your Membership and Marketing Manager know.

Our property staff has done an assessment of the needs at all camps from tents to major construction. We will be replacing items that are old, fixing equipment that isn't working properly, and doing a general cleanup of the properties so that everything is in good shape by summer. One major project will begin at camp Candlewood next month with the new addition and renovation to Sick Bay.

Staffing – Our organization continues to evolve, and as it does we learn more each day about what our needs are to provide quality services to you and the girls. With this in mind, we are adding an additional Product Sales Manager position and several temporary positions to help answer your many questions during this cookie season. Four additional Youth Development Coordinator positions in our Membership Department will help increase girl services in the Hartford, Greater Middletown, Bridgeport and Wilton areas. And we are increasing staff in registration too.

National Conference – The delegate nomination/application form for the National Council Session will be available in February. The Convention will be October 30 – November 2, 2008 in Indianapolis.

Fund Development – A good deal of my time is spent telling the story about Girl Scouts of Connecticut around the state and seeking new funds for our programs and facilities. While I can't share specifics yet, know that there are several large corporations and foundations with whom we are in active discussions to obtain significant funding in support of our programs. One area of focus for me is camperships. Because it is important that all girls have the opportunity to have a camp experience, we need to obtain additional financial support from private sources for those families who may not be able to afford the cost of camp. As these discussions continue – to what I hope will be a positive result – I'll share more information.

Please note, the board of GSOFACT recently passed a Troop Gift Acceptance Policy. Basically the policy states that troops cannot accept any gift over \$250 and that any gift to a troop needs to benefit the entire troop, not just one member of the troop. The specific language will be shared as part of the Volunteer procedures. If you have a question about this, please contact your Director of Membership Services. It is important to keep in mind that troops and service units are not legal 501(c)(3) organizations and therefore cannot issue charitable gift receipts to donors. Under the new IRS tax rules governing deductions for charitable giving, the donor must have proof of any size gift to a legal non-profit entity. So if a donor requests a gift receipt for tax purposes related to a donation to a troop, it is GSOFACT that must issue this documentation. Additionally, the board policy states that in-kind gifts cannot be accepted without first communicating with your DMS for review and approval.

Each month new and exciting changes take place across the state as Girl Scouts of Connecticut grows. Thank you for being part of such an historical moment in Girl Scouts. Your input, efforts, and ideas are creating this incredible leadership development program for girls today and for future generations.