

Regional Meeting Responses

In the first quarter of the year for Girl Scouts of Connecticut, CEO, Jennifer Smith Turner and Board Chair, Peggy Jerrell, hosted several Regional Meetings around the state to meet members, share plans for the Governance structure of the organization, and address member inquiries.

Below are answers to the outstanding questions compiled from all the Regional Meetings.

Operational Questions

Membership:

1. *May we have a list of the volunteers to car pool with to local meetings?*

With individual permission, Regional Representatives or Service Unit Managers may compile a list to share with their volunteers.

2. *Many parents are accustomed to drop-off and pick-up. How can parents be encouraged to participate at troop meetings, functions and events?*

Orientation courses have information on family meetings, etc. Ideas include having a sign up sheet available at family meetings for snack sign up's, have newsletters available, have parents complete registration forms and see where they work - ask them to volunteer their "skills" (don't ask if they want to help, say you need them and ask what day is good for them), be sure the girls don't arrive at or leave the meeting area without the pickup person coming in (be sure they "sign" for the girl). The course "Leader Basics" from Volunteer Development is also helpful here

3. *People know who we are but have no idea of what we really do besides sell cookies. How will GSOFCT educate and better communicate the various roles, positions and responsibilities of GSOFCT troop members, volunteers, staff, etc.?*

Concise and frequent communication on the variety of girl program opportunities, the leadership skills which we teach girls and the critical need for volunteers in Girl Scouting is essential. Creative and pro-active marketing efforts are being developed and utilized. An example being the cookie program television campaign, which included ads sharing some of the interesting programs available to girls, in addition to promoting the cookie program.

Realistically our volunteers are our largest communication ambassadors and our best advocates. It is important to assure that they have a clear understanding of the benefits of Girl Scouting for girls, the importance of their role as a

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representative of our organization, what roles and positions are needed, incorporate the recruitment efforts into trainings, and discuss the need when attending organizational meetings.

4. *How often are background checks done?*

When a volunteer application is received, a background check will be run. Once a volunteer is in the system, their background check will be rerun every three years.

5. *How is the Volunteer Application Packet process coming?*

The Volunteer Application Packet is complete and each Service Center should have a supply on hand. They are also available on the website in the forms library.

6. *Where do we need to have a Certificate of Insurance?*

A Certificate of Insurance is required at all meeting sites, cookie booths, and event facilities that request it. The form can be located through your Membership and Marketing Manager.

7. *Why have Service Units been put into regions that are farther away when there are areas closer to us?*

Regions were developed based on the amount of girls serviced in that particular Service Unit area. An effort was made to construct Regions that were fairly comparable in number of members.

8. *What is the status of the Council patch contest?*

Finalists are currently on the website to be voted on by February 29, 2008.

9. *Why can't we publish and hold events more locally?*

Currently, program events are being hosted all around the state and our goal is to expand the number and variety of those events. Some areas of the state already had volunteer teams in place to run events. The intent is that this will occur in all areas and that soon there will be a comparable number of exciting events taking place in every region.

The Program staff is looking to make contacts and find locations suitable for programs in all areas. In the interim, they are implementing a mix of programs planned by the past legacy council staffs as well as creating new programs.

If you are interested in organizing programs in your area, please contact the Program Department at 800-922-2770, ext. 3310.

10. Last year Camp registration was \$30, this year it is \$60. Why the increase?

Prior to October 1, each individual council had different deposit rates. In an effort to create a clear and consistent system, we applied a deposit rate that we felt was best for the new council at the time.

11. Can Program boxes be made available at the local service centers instead of incurring shipping costs?

Maintaining the Program boxes is a laborious process. Most of the boxes share similar items for restocking, which are stored in one place and bought in bulk to save money. In addition, Storage for our 100+ boxes is scarce. Currently the boxes are stored in North Haven. One staff member in the Program Department is now responsible to schedule, and care for the boxes. This way one person can let the volunteer know if the box they are looking for is in-stock or if another similar box is available.

If troops do not want to travel to pick up boxes, they can decide to share the expense of shipping a box, and then each troop can use it at their meeting. Also, troops can ask membership or other staff/volunteers if they are traveling to the North Haven office and would return boxes. The cost of the box plus shipping, divided by the average troop size, typically means a minimal per-girl expense for the troop in comparison to the cost of program supplies purchased for similar activities.

In addition, Program Boxes are now available for up to 4 weeks.

12. When registering for a program/event/training, the deadlines are too short. Can they be extended to allow for more time to register?

Training deadlines are scheduled 2 weeks in advance to help volunteer trainers plan for the courses. It also guarantees Registration the time to input and prepare all the necessary information for the program.

Both volunteers and staff need to plan ahead for these events in order to ensure quality program.

13. When will registration cards arrive?

Registration cards are processed through GSUSA, and at this time they cannot confirm when they will come in. Until the cards do arrive, copies of the girls' registration forms would be appropriate to use when out of state.

Camp:

14. *Currently camp facilities are being booked out 1 year at a time. Can this be limited to a shorter period of time to accommodate newcomers, non-seasoned troops/individuals who need to schedule events?*

Unfortunately, the one-year time-frame is necessary as a significant amount of planning must be done for camporees/encampments. This doesn't mean that every facility is fully booked, all year. You can check with the Registration Dept. for availability.

15. *Some towns need to have the company/organization name on "no trespassing" signs. What can be done to obtain new "No Trespassing" signs?*

All signs are scheduled to be replaced with Girl Scouts of Connecticut. This will happen over the course of time as they are ordered and staff is available to change them out.

16. *What's the cost of camping?*

Camp use cost varies by season and type of use. Each summer camp program has a different cost associated to the program. A list of programs with costs is available on our website and in print in the "Summer Camp." brochure. Registration for Summer Camp begins March 10th. Assistance is available in Spanish upon request.

If you are interested in making camp reservations outside of the summer camping schedule, you must contact the Registration Dept., 3 weeks in advance, and the cost is based on the request.

17. *Members of the legacy council, CT Valley still have camp credits, can we still use them?*

Those camp credits had an expiration date of 12/31/07.

18. *We used to be able to use the camps for troop meetings. Now with a 3-week advanced notice we may choose not to bring this additional experience to the girls, weather plays in on a last minute decision.*

The camps/program centers belong to our Council and we encourage members to use the sites as much as possible, yet we do understand that weather can affect many decisions. It's best if you monitor the predictions as best as possible and contact the Registration Dept. if there is a chance you will need to cancel. The advanced notice is important to make sure the property is available and ready for your arrival, to assure that a variety of troops have the chance to use the camps and to give the Property Management department the ability to

schedule their staff appropriately.

Program

19. Would the Girl Scouts consider more technical experience and exposure for Girl Scouts similar to the relationship Boy Scouts have with Sikorsky surrounding their Eagle Scout Projects/Badge?

Yes! Girl Scouts of Connecticut is happy to work with professionals that can offer educational and creative program for our girls. As we establish procedures and look to new programs we will be seeking short term volunteers to help. We always encourage any volunteer who has professional or extensive background experience to make themselves known to help us with this cause! In addition to the standard volunteer experience there are short-term, episodic roles available in our Volunteer bank.

20. We lost good things and no replacements – haven't seen anything "new" coming our way.

The Program Dept. is currently running programs that were planned in fall, planning new programs for the spring, and by April will be planning for 2008-2009 year. In addition, they are also involved with a lot of the "behind the scenes" work; updating vendor information, award standards, forms, program boxes, camp information etc. As new programs are planned, they are posted on our website. Check Current Events for up-to-date information.

21. The Program Book is overwhelming and not very user-friendly.

There was a survey listed on the website for specific input. Based on this, certain things will be changed in the future; events listed only by single level and only one "multi" section for those events open to more than one group. Each of these areas will be listed in alpha order. Also, next years book will cover the entire year, making planning easier for troops.

Training and Volunteer Services

22. We need more local trainings as we are short of trainers.

Volunteers have a variety of choices and ways to complete their training. Training can be done locally through classroom trainings or at large training events throughout the state and scheduled throughout the year. In addition, volunteers can take self guided trainings through a self study or online courses on our website. Trainers are volunteers who lead troops, service units, or are cookie managers as well. Many of them work full time jobs and schedule training when they can, to serve the volunteers locally in their area. New trainers are always

being recruited and we are always eager for referrals.

Financial

23. Girls and families are being put off too long to receive financial aid. What can be done?

The financial aid applications have been finalized and are now available through Membership and on the website.

24. Will the financials for GSOFCT be available at the Annual Meeting?

Yes, there will be a discussion of the total operations at the annual meeting.

25. Is Daisy Seed Money gone?

Daisy Seed Money is available for this membership year. Applications are available under the forms section of website.

26. QSP Sales - Can we have T shirts as a prize for older girls?

Each year, the available incentives are reviewed and “voted on” by girls, and incentive levels are determined by response.

27. How much money was made from the QSP sale?

QSP sales generated over \$1 million dollars thanks to everyone’s hard work.

28. QSP is too close to the beginning of school/registration year, is there any chance the dates can be adjusted?

Each year we will review our schedules and adjust in the way that seems best for all. Although we do recognize how close the sale was to the beginning of the Girl Scout year – we also need to leave an appropriate amount of time between QSP and the cookie sale, so our members can focus on other program activities, the sales don’t over-tax our customers, and our volunteers and staff can have the time they need to manage both sales.

29. What are you doing with the money that is earmarked for specific things such as Capital Campaign?

Any funds that were designated for specific things by the legacy councils will be reviewed and those gifts that were accepted as designated dollars for specific projects will be set aside as such. Girl Scouts of Connecticut has a legal obligation to respect the wishes of donors that gave gifts with such stipulations.

30. The money that was earmarked in a capital campaign for specific camps, will those funds be used for those camps?

We will respect the wishes and intent of our donors. Girl Scouts of Connecticut intends to maintain and repair our properties to the best of our ability with the funds available.

31. Over \$1 million has just been raised in the Capital Funds for SWCT, will the interest go to SWCT?

Currently, any invested funds have remained in the accounts in which they were originally held.

32. In regards to Camp Candlewood, are there zoning issues? Are you waiting to order the building? When do you feel the money will be available for use? Will it be used in another year?

The addition to sick bay is moving forward. The zoning change was passed and the ground has been broken. The building has been ordered and is currently being built.

33. A number of troops had to purchase new checks when changing banks why were they not reimbursed?

Each troop has a bank account which should contain enough funds to support administrative needs such as ordering checks. Because Girl Scouts of Connecticut is incorporated and the five legacy councils ceased to exist, it was mandatory that all checking accounts be closed out and reopened under the new corporation's name. Unfortunately, some financial institutions charged for this service.

34. Does GSUSA have any financial matters on a local level?

GSUSA requires a \$10 Registration fee to be a Girl Scout member.

Governance

35. Will the recognition piece still be done at the Annual Meeting?

Given the size of our membership, it's highly unlikely we will have the time to recognize our members at the Annual Meeting as many have done in the past. It has been suggested that regional recognition ceremonies may take place instead.

36. Why is the Annual Meeting in the fall rather than the spring as in the past?

Given the newness of GSOFCT, the timing of the meeting in the fall allows us to have one full year of operations before the meeting.

37. Will these round table discussions be enough to educate people?

Communicating to members is critically important and will be done in a variety of ways. Meetings such as these are a great way to have conversations and get input from attendees. The website is another way we are getting information out to our members in a timely manner.

38. Why are Service Unit Meetings held monthly?

SU meetings are another important way to deliver current information and to answer questions. It's also an opportunity for networking, getting program ideas and enhancement trainings.

39. May we see a managerial flow chart that includes Board Members, Service Unit Managers, Regional Chairs and Delegates, with descriptions of responsibilities?

As many of these important volunteer roles are defined and filled, we will develop an organizational chart that clearly shows the flow of the positions. This chart will be in the volunteer manual and on the website.

40. Can Service reps also serve as a Delegate?

Yes. Delegates must be members over 14 years of age and willing to complete a variety of responsibilities. An application and list of responsibilities is available on the website.

41. Does a Service Unit Manager represent a group vs. being an individual rep?

Yes, a Service Unit Manager is a volunteer position that manages a geographical area comprised of many troops. They will typically work with a Membership Marketing Manager and bring information back to their team and many Troop Leaders.

42. Is New London County with Windham Service Center? Will this change in the future?

No it is not. New London County is a part of the New London Service Center and the Region defined as New London County.

43. How do you elect Delegates?

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Any member over 14 years of age can apply to be a Delegate. Delegates will be elected by the areas Service Unit representatives during a regional meeting held by the Regional Chair.

44. Service Unit Managers have held round tables. May they still have them?

Service Unit Round tables are now being called Service Unit Manager meetings and are initiated by staff each month. The Membership staff is using this meeting time to pass on much of the important information being determined each day.

45. Will Service Unit Reps serve for three years?

According to the Bylaws of Girl Scouts of Connecticut, the position holds a three year term.

46. When will the applications to be a national delegate come out?

Applications are being distributed now and are also available on our website in both an interactive or downloadable format.

47. What are our action items at a regional meeting?

These will be decided by the Region Chair.

48. If a Representative is not elected are you merely transferring information to and from individuals?

Given the size of our council, Regional Representatives are very important in assisting the staff to share all the timely information. If an area does not have a representative, it will be the responsibility of the staff to pass on information.

49. Is SU Representative an operation or a policy position?

A Service Unit Representative is a governance position which acts as a liaison between the Service Unit and the Region's delegates. Additional details concerning the responsibilities of this position can be found in the Bylaws.

50. Since some areas will have less SU Representatives for their area of the state then before, there is a concern that their voices will not be heard.

All input is equally important and will be heard. Girl Scouts of Connecticut is a democratic organization and recognizes the importance of the process. This is why so much time has been spent on developing a fair and equal governance system, based on membership numbers, by which to vote and pass resolutions.

Communication

Where to find information:

51. Where can we find telephone numbers to reach various areas of Girl Scouts of Connecticut?

A Service Center directory is located on our website. In addition, there are Service Center lists showing who is located in each Center, their area of responsibility, and their phone extension.

52. There is trouble downloading most of the PDF forms and documents from email. Is there any other way for those without computers to access documents that are sent via email?

Forms and documents are shared as PDFs because it is the most universal format available and Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from the internet for free. If a member is experiencing difficulty, the Service Unit Manager may contact the Membership and Marketing Manager for hard copies to be brought to the meeting.

Web

53. Would GSOFCT consider adding a Regional News area on its website where towns/troops could post related events and information?

Definitely. Our entire website is being reworked and redesigned. The areas currently being redone will be those existing on the site now. But new ideas are being developed and a “message board” area for regions, Service Units or Troops is already a part of the plans. It will be developed in phase 2 or 3 of the overall redesign.

54. Does the sign-on for online training need a password?

Yes - online training is hosted by Blackboard – a web-based classroom program. When a volunteer registers for a course through the Registration Dept., they receive a link with directions back in 7-10 business days from the Training Department. This process is in place to assist in tracking each volunteer’s training records.

55. Can there be a link on the web to the trainer?

As the website continues to evolve, contact emails, etc. will grow. The training department will definitely have a link, however, most of our trainers are volunteers and use their home email as contact. We could not publish their home email in a public venue such as our website without their permission.

56. Are all members on email?

The iMis database will save and track email addresses if the user provides them. At this point, we have approximately 50% of our adult member emails.

57. When new forms are added to the website, can we get a list of what they are via email?

The new forms should be listed in the weekly e-blast newsletter which is shared via email.

58. Can a search engine be added to the website?

A search engine is incorporated in the new design.

59. Can new leaders sign on to the website?

Leaders can sign into the Members only section with a username and password which is provided from iMis when their registration is put into the system. This information should be covered in Orientation.

60. Is there a possibility of an interactive website?

Much of the website is interactive – including several forms, calendars, and registration. The new website, currently being designed, will include many more ways to interact.

61. What about people with no access to email or computers?

Service Units should be identifying those that do not have access and setting up a system of communication. Your local library and Service centers also offers free computer access.

62. Websites can be confusing – where do I go, how do I find out?

The new website is being designed to be more user-friendly and contain a search feature to assist the user.

63. Availability of trainings is no longer there?

Online trainings still exist, but must be registered for through the Registration Dept. They will then be provided a user name and password.

Communication

64. What happened to the weekly newsletter?

Several of the legacy councils had newsletters distributed in a variety of ways. In an effort to get information out in a timely manner – a weekly e-blast newsletter is being used. If you are not receiving the email, please speak to your Service Unit Manager.

65. Why did you get rid of the Friday Flash and “In the Loop”? Will you re-implement? Post on website? Essential tool to communicate new ideas to leaders.

There are plans for the future to produce a printed newsletter, although the timing and content has not yet been determined. Weekly information for leaders and Service Units are currently being shared through email as the E-Blast newsletter and then posted in the Members Only area. In the future, there are plans for “idea exchanges” and Service Unit “message boards” for leaders to exchange information.

66. Who do we contact to update our own contact information like email addresses, address, phone, etc.?

You can provide your information to a Service Unit Team member or contact the Registration Dept. directly.

67. New leaders are lost. Where can they find out new ideas, community service projects, or older leaders for references?

New ideas and projects can be found at Service Unit meetings, roundtables, sister troops, mentors/consultants, and with seasoned volunteers. Don't be afraid to ask questions! Additionally, as the new website is developed, there will be areas that include tips for leaders and others.

68. Why can satellite offices only publish local information?

All of the satellite offices should have information pertaining to the entire council. In addition, the website is an excellent resource for state wide information.