Social Media Guidelines

Social media is a great way for volunteers and families to connect online. By definition, social media is a combination of organization-developed and user-generated content that can take many different forms. Some types of social media are forums, message boards, blogs, wikis and podcasts. Some social media applications include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. Many social media sites are now also accessible on smartphones and tablet computers.

Social media provides a great way for staff and volunteers to share information and advocate on behalf of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Your cooperation with the social media guidelines will help ensure that we can create and maintain a positive image of Girl Scouts of the Connecticut, while providing a valuable service to current and future Girl Scouts, volunteers, families, and community partners.

While other social media applications may be used in the future, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are now serving as our first phases in developing an official social media presence for the council. We have been following and monitoring the postings and messages by other related users of social media to keep up with news and trends. All of this effort is being exerted with certain purpose in mind:

Goal: To share our mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place, and give evidence that we are delivering that mission; to invite the audience to join, volunteer, or support us financially through donations and product sales; and advocate for girls in our state and around the world. We will also enhance the visibility of our council as a "united front" and reach out to the community at-large and media regarding council programs and how GSOFCT is changing the state of girls in the council area.

Practical uses:

- Send event reminders.
- Connect volunteers and girls with peers across the state.
- Inform girls/volunteers/parents of important dates, new resources, etc.
- Drive traffic to the council website.
- Connect story ideas to media who are connected to social networking.
- Share Girl Scout success stories.

Plan of Action: The Girl Scouts of Connecticut Communications Department, primarily the web content specialist, will serve as official administrators for the GSOFCT Facebook profile and group pages, GSOFCT Twitter account, and any other future social media tools. Duties include: updating information, monitoring comments/conversations, and following up with questions/concerns. Other administrators may be added in the future.

Guidelines: Following are the guidelines for social media at Girl Scouts of Connecticut*. We expect all who participate in social media *on behalf of GSOFCT* (or in relation to GSOFCT) to understand and follow these guidelines. These guidelines will continually evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.
Children under 13 should NOT be encouraged to use social networking sites, as this violates the terms of service for most sites and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). You

should only engage adult volunteers and older girl members (generally, Ambassadors, Seniors, and third-year Cadettes).

Use common sense: Review the GSUSA [Internet Safety Pledge](#), our online Website Guidelines, and the Microsoft Let Me Know websites for some common-sense tips about exploring the internet. (See end of document for a list of links)

Be mindful of how you look and act by living the Girl Scout Promise and Law: Your online presence can reflect positively or negatively on Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Be wary of your actions captured via images, posts or comments. It is always recommended to set your profile to "private" (only your "friends" can see it), especially if you have Girl Scouts of Connecticut listed as an organization for which you represent or volunteer for. Please remember that your profile picture is open to the public, so use discretion when choosing how the world sees you.

> **Be honest and fair:** Be transparent about your role as a Girl Scouts of Connecticut volunteer when communicating about Girl Scout-related issues online. Also, there may be times when another volunteer, girl, parent, etc. may post a negative complaint/concern, and that's (usually) okay. By engaging in social media, we can be there to dispute/dispel their message, and we are one step ahead. (If the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating or completely out of context then we typically delete the content and possibly even block the user, in accordance with our comment policies.)

> **Be friendly and helpful, considerate and caring:** Treat others as you want to be treated; do not use the internet to attack or abuse colleagues or other volunteers.

> **Be courageous and strong:** Careful monitoring of social media is important in maintaining a positive image of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. If you see posts/comments/behavior that you are concerned about, please notify your membership and marketing manager or the council web content specialist **. Don't be afraid to speak up or ask questions.

> **Be responsible for what you say and do:** Remember that what you post online will be around for a long time, and nothing is really "private" anymore. Use discretion and if you have questions about whether or not you should post something, ask your membership and marketing manager or the council web content specialist.

> **Respect yourself and others:** Respect other people's privacy and your own personal boundaries by using discretion when choosing to accept or invite a fellow volunteer or parent as your Facebook "friend." Don't feel obligated to open your personal life up to those with whom you have professional relationship.

> **Respect authority:** The CEO and/or CCO and their agents reserve the full rights to block/delete any postings, administrators, group members, etc. or restrict volunteer access to social media sites within council control. Also, if contacted by a member of the media through social media and asked to comment on an issue, please refer them to the council's public relations and communications manager**.

> **Use resources wisely:** Your time is a valuable resource, and social media activities should not interfere with your volunteer commitments.

> **Make the world a better place and be a sister to every Girl Scout:** This holds true regardless of how you're communicating (telephone, e-mail, in person, etc.).

Deliver effective and deliberate communication to internal and external customers.
Respond to questions and concerns in a timely manner. Be a valuable resource for information (i.e., don't just "push" events and programs).

Take advantage of privacy controls: Most social networking sites allow for a range of privacy controls. We suggest that if you create groups, you set the controls so they are "closed" groups – Only approved members can see and/or comment on content. As mentioned before, it is also suggested that you make your profile "private." This way you can manage who is looking at your information and make sure it is getting to the right people.

Be very careful about any information made public: Make safety and privacy a priority for public information. Never use personal information (address, last name, phone number, school, or meeting location) about any girl or adult. If you will be including photos of girls, make sure each girl's parent or guardian agrees that photos can be used and signs a permission slip (Annual Consent Form). Although it might be tempting to share lots of information about upcoming Girl Scout events, in the interest of keeping girls safe, remember to never post the location of Girl Scout events, programs, Troop meetings or camps unless it is under a strict privacy control.

Avoid location based social networks: Some social networks allow people to "check in" at locations and events from mobile phones. Some of these services include Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, and Facebook Places. Keeping in mind the two previous points, we strongly discourage the use of these location-based networks in relation to Girl Scout troop events. If you check in at regular meeting places and/or individuals' homes, that information becomes public.

* Blogs or websites which do not identify the blogger as a Girl Scout volunteer, do not discuss the Girl Scouts, and are purely about personal matters may fall outside this guidance.

** Your current council web content specialist and communications manager contact information can be found on the council Web site: http://gsofct.org/about/staff.php

Online resources

GSUSA Internet Safety Pledge

 http://gsofct.org/pages/InternetSafetyPledge.php

Website Guidelines for Service Unit Managers and Website Guidelines for Leaders

Resource and Form Library (http://gsofct.org/membership/form-library.php)

> Communications

> Website

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

http://www.coppa.org/