

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio
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Date: September 4, 2008
To: Board of Directors
From: Nancy Dawes, Chair
Subject: Preparation for National Council Session

Attached, for your review are the white paper and talking points that were developed to communicate our concerns with Girl Scouts of the USA. I would like to discuss these documents, and the other actions that we have taken (or will be taking) between the June and September board meetings.

August 15	White paper drafted
August 19	Barbara and two other CEOs meet with Kathy Cloninger, National CEO, to discuss common concerns
August 28	Nancy communicates with five other Board Chairs to determine interest in taking action at the national council session. Talking points are developed for our national council delegates, as well as templates of arguments which can be used at the microphone during debate.
September 4	Nancy talks to Black Diamond Girl Scout Council board
September 5	Meeting with Roxanne Qualls, former mayor of Cincinnati and former Girl Scout board member, to discuss possible strategy for affecting change
September 8	Nancy and Barbara meet in Chicago with potential alternate candidate and to discuss a strategy for communicating concerns at the national council session

I would like to spend time at the September board meeting hearing the board's input on next steps. This information is intended for the board only at the present time. Until we determine our plans, we are not ready to disseminate our strategy to others.

Our Mission

*Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character,
who make the world a better place.*

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Subject: Call for Action

Traditional GSUSA-Council partnership has broken down. Girl Scouts of the USA's mission is to serve girls, and its only delivery system is through councils. Yet councils, whether yet realigned or not, aren't getting what they need from Girl Scouts of the USA. The traditional partnership relationship between GSUSA and councils is not working. In its zeal to modernize, a challenging and necessary effort, GSUSA has stopped providing a reliable support system for councils. It seems to be taking council ability to function at a high level for granted.

GSUSA needs to follow through on details essential to realignment success. With large numbers of experienced council staff leaving the movement, the advent of many new-to-the-movement council CEOs, major reorganization challenges within councils, volunteer base erosion and an extremely challenging funding environment, councils need a GSUSA they can count on as a true partner. More specifically, councils need GSUSA

- 1) to provide programming material as promised,
- 2) to support mobilization of volunteers,
- 3) to offer strong, consistent leadership on branding,
- 4) to lead the strategic (and necessary) shift to an outcomes based fundraising model, and
- 5) to define and be a role model for a 'high capacity/high performing' nonprofit.

Without adequate GSUSA support on these and other basic concerns and faced with relentless demands of constituents and environment, each council is forced to 'reinvent the wheel' on too many topics - not a path to high performance functioning nor to a strong brand. In fact, we believe that it is a recipe for disaster.

Recommendations:

The attached 'White Paper' more specifically sets forth our concerns and suggested courses of action. We look forward to constructive dialogue and action upon which a renewed, mutual commitment to GSUSA/Council partnership will be based.

Our Mission

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A White Paper for the Girl Scouts of the USA

Introduction:

In 2005 two national leaders; Kathy Cloninger, Chief Executive Officer, and Cynthia Thompson, National Board Chair; communicated to Council leaders about work undertaken to address the "Brutal Truths that face Girl Scouting". The memo told all that "...we must make bold leaps. Incrementalism won't achieve the Movement-wide transformation that girls need. The status quo really does have to go."

This communication followed the work done in 2004 by consultant Willie Pietersen to develop a strategy that would address five key areas whose transformation would be pivotal to success of Girl Scouting:

- Program and Pathways
- Volunteerism
- Brand
- Funding
- Governance and Organizational Structure

In the four years that have passed since Pietersen's work there has been much churning, but little progress:

- While most councils have reorganized, little support has been offered or delivered from Girl Scouts of the USA to achieve the goal of reorganization – the establishment of High Capacity Councils – nor have standards been set to clarify or define "high capacity council".
- Work has progressed on Program and Pathways, but because of the slow pace of Girl Scouts of the USA, local councils are developing their own program. This has confused both internal and external audiences and has drawn fire from the media, funders and partners.
- Minimal work has occurred for Volunteerism (single entry system), with clearly missed deadlines.
- Partnerships and co-branding programs have been undertaken to heighten the visibility of Girl Scouting, but in the minds of many the visibility achieved has only served to exacerbate perceptions that challenge the brand.
- Funding continues to be an issue at both the national and local levels – as shown by Girl Scouts of the USA's desire to raise dues in the face of declining enrollment and the projected deficit budget in 2008.
- Apart from "measuring" the number of councils that have realigned, Governance and organizational structure has minimal focus from Girl Scouts of the USA.

This paper will provide a more details on the current status and an overview of actions needed to move Girl Scouts of the USA from its current state – unfocused and unaccountable – to a high performance, well managed, member- and council-responsive, audience-relevant and financially sound national organization.

Issue #1: Program and Pathways

Gap Team Statement of 2005: Building the best-integrated personal leadership development model that defines activities and outcomes, differentiated by age-level for girls 5-17 and offers flexible pathways.

From the July 12, 2005 Update on Core Business Strategy Gap Team:
Girls from everywhere in America will be attracted to a unified, nationwide core Girl Scout experience built on a model of personal growth and leadership development.

Where we are today:

Excellent (but slow) work on the Program Model has occurred. From the vote at the 2005 National Council Meeting defining the Girl Scout Program ("Girl Scouting is a nonformal, experiential and cooperative education program that promotes girls' personal growth and leadership development") – work has been done to define outcomes (Transforming Leadership book), define the model vetted by youth development experts, and develop "Journeys".

However, Girl Scouts of Arizona Pines have developed and published their own Program Mission* built on new age principles "which sustain the biology of love". Girl Scouts of the USA has publically supported this work via Kathy Cloninger's appearance as CEO on a promotional tape. This support of a different program/mission statement than that voted on by the National Council creates clear misalignment and expectations of a unified Program Model for Girl Scout councils across the U.S.

Finally, outcome measurement – a key component to guiding councils in the new program model – will not be available until 2011.

What we need:

1. Clear statement from Girl Scouts of the USA indicating that there is one unified program model, with a message to Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pine that their program model is NOT consistent with the Girl Scouts of the USA's direction. Despite the urgent need presented by our challenges, we cannot waver from our Constitution or our democratic processes.¹

The Girl Scout Constitution states that, "We govern by an efficient and effective democratic process." The adoption of any proposed amendments to the Constitution or the policy of the Girl Scout Movement or Program are the responsibility of the National Council. Two hundred members present in person constitute a quorum.

¹ Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pine Program Mission: Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place, while helping each girl reach full potential; Releasing the human spirit and our collective human potential; self-organizing systems that support social networks and organizational culture which sustains the biology of love; High quality relationships between people with shared and individual accountability, responsibility and collective collaboration; Individual self-organizing, creating opportunities for deep understanding of oneself supporting leadership and action, sourced from inner 'knowing'".

If the significant changes represented by the Oxford Leadership Youth Program or the program advanced by Cactus-Pine Council are to be adopted, a Council Vote is required. But before a vote, an organization-wide debate is called for.

2. Outcome measurement available in 2009 – with clear plan on how the information will be acquired, synthesized and shared back with councils; budget information and help from national in coding and tabulating the data.

Issue #2: Volunteerism

Gap Team statement of 2005: Developing a nimble, state-of-the-art model of volunteerism that mobilizes a variety of volunteers committed to the Girl Scout Mission is the goal.

Where we are today:

The “Barriers to Volunteer Recruitment and Retention” – inconsistent volunteer processes, current culture and volunteer needs – that were presented in January 2007 still exist. This issue has not received appropriate attention or staffing at the national level. A robust volunteer program is closely tied to an effective Program Model rollout. And without a volunteer development system, chances for success are remote.

Where we need to be:

1. By Jan 1, 2009, a clear blueprint and timeline for development of a National Volunteer System, including recruitment, selection, preparing (training), support, evaluation, reappointment criteria, and recognition – built on requirements tied to delivery of the Program Model. Specifically:
 - Definitions of competencies needed in a troop leader to effectively deliver the Program Model? How should these competencies be assessed? (i.e. interview process?)
 - Nationally-based, unified criteria defining what precludes someone from being a member/working with girls based on their background check?

Issue #3: Brand

Gap Team statement of 2005: Transforming the Girl Scout image with a compelling, contemporary brand.

Where we are today:

Co-branding programs have been developed and opportunistic public relations efforts have been implemented. Although there have been at least two senior vice presidents with responsibility for Girl Scouts of the USA brand, communications, publishing, marketing and Web-based initiatives, as well as a MarComm network of members, the overarching message has been on a narrow brand element – cookie sales or badges – rather than promoting a message based on the core brand – building girls of courage, confidence and character.

For instance, in the 2007 Annual Report, it states (p.g10) "The image that we want the words Girl Scouts to bring to mind is leadership". However, later on the same page, it shares the launch of "Groovy Girls Dolls" – without any clear link to our "leadership" message; GSUSA also ran a Dairy Queen thin-mint blizzard promotion – reinforcing the negative aspects of Girl Scout Cookies: Center for Science in the Public Interest published "Thin Mint Blizzard merits a badge of shame for Girl Scouts of the USA and Dairy Queen".

Where we need to be:

Immediately....

1. Girl Scouts of the USA should ensure that all co-promotion/branding activities are clearly and explicitly linked to our "girl leadership" message.
2. Focus on delivery of the new Program Model and Volunteer Management structure, because without these basic changes, the brand will remain static.
3. Do not spend advertising money on a new tag line until the Program Model and Volunteer Management structure is underway. A simple change to a tag line is only cosmetic and will not contribute relevance or create a brand experience that has contemporary appeal.

Issue #4: Funding

Gap Team statement of 2005: Substantially increasing contributed income to fund a vibrant Girl Scout organization.

Where we are today:

Other than a pilot project on funding, this appears to be essentially a forgotten priority.

In the 2007 Annual report, Girl Scouts of the USA reports funding of \$3.4 million over 5 years – a paltry amount given the overall budget of \$84 million dollar budget. Additionally, "gifts, grants, and bequests" decreased by almost one million dollars between 2006 and 2007. It has not been disclosed to membership the financial benefit of co-branding with Dairy Queen.

From a National Perspective, there appears to be no accountability from GSUSA on value/action steps gained from their use of consultants.

Developing "high capacity" (realigned) councils with better systems is costly: realigning councils have incurred consultant costs because GSUSA was not prepared for the merger – human resource consultants, attorney fees for governance issues, audit firms, etc. Councils have incurred additional travel costs due to the much larger geographical areas as realigned councils start-up. GSUSA was not ready to support councils with technology (Personify, Sage, RMS) and there is not a solid plan to support/training of councils. Councils were expected to have new positions on staff, with higher salary than in the past,

yet there is not additional revenue to support these added expenses. A majority of realigned councils will likely have a deficit in year-one in addition to membership loss. Finally, actions taken by a few councils such as Cactus-Pine threaten sources of funding in other areas of the country, putting at jeopardy not only our brand's reputation but our financial stability.

Where We Need to Be:

1. Immediately Girl Scouts of the USA needs to recognize that it will likely be operating on reduced budgets for the next several years, given the ongoing decrease in membership. We believe focus and priority needs to be given to the Program Model and Volunteer Management System, because if this is not delivered, we will not reverse the negative spiral.
2. Girl Scouts of the USA needs to give priority funding to council-based pilot funding projects that move the Program Model and Volunteer Management Systems forward in a timely manner (fully operational by 2010)

Issue #5: Organizational Structure and Governance

Gap Team statement of 2005: Creating an efficient and effective organizational structure and democratic system.

Where we are today:

The Organization Structure initiative has been the number one priority, but inconsistent help was provided to realigning councils. The definition and enabling of "high-capacity councils" was never determined – there were never benchmarks provided for defining what a High Capacity/High Performing Council is. Regarding realignment, the messages are not consistent with reality: the talking points from Girl Scouts of the USA were membership growth, increased fund raising and saving money while the realities are membership loss, mergers that cost money and donor confusion (which creates additional expense to communicate with them).

Efficient organizations are, by definition, void of silos. This is not the case with the national staff. If a question asked or a need expressed doesn't fall into the purview of the staff member consulted, finding the appropriate staff member to respond is a tedious process. Additionally, staff appears not to have autonomy – even in their areas of expertise. The result is a sluggish response to requests – even when issues are pressing.

There is not a clear partnership between Girl Scouts of the USA and local councils – council CEO's are not able to communicate openly with the National CEO without fear of reprisal or without being patronized.

Other than the Governance "white paper" presented at realignment trainings, no work on Governance has been accomplished. The result is some realigned council spending time and money developing their own systems. While this has been a necessity, it also contributes to inconsistency and threatens to weaken the organization.

The National Board has not held the National CEO accountable to deliverables and expectations. For instance, by December 2007 we were supposed to have the development and launch of the new volunteerism systems/tools and support and training of council staff, as well as further development of governance models.

Where we need to be:

By Jan 1, 2009:

1. National board should take an active role in setting CEO deliverables and managing accountability in regards to the five program areas. These defined deliverables should be communicated back to councils by Jan 2009.
2. The National Board should require the National CEO/organization to actively partner with councils (i.e. share the national staff structure chart with clear authority/responsibilities of each person; establish an expectation that National Staff returns Council phone calls/emails within 48 hours; create an advisory board of council CEO's to provide input into the operational work of GSUSA;)
3. Allow two Council CEOs to serve as ex-officio members to the National Board. These should be selected by their peers and report back to their peers following Board meetings.

Talk Sheet for Girl Scouts of Western Ohio Delegate Meeting (Draft 8/29)

The purpose of this document (discussion) is to provide some information on the concerns that the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio has on the direction of the National Girl Scout Movement. As a delegate to the 2008 National Council meeting, your role (as outlined in the Blue Book) is to “give guidance to the National Board upon general lines of direction of the Movement and Program”. The Board of GSWO is dissatisfied with failed promises and lack of direction provided by GSUSA – and we are requesting your consideration of these concerns and assistance in obtaining “corrective action” from the National Board.

Background

In the 2005 the National Council voted on the following definition of the Girl Scout Program: “Grounded in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, Girl Scouting is a nonformal, experiential and cooperative education program that promotes girls’ personal growth and leadership development.” (*Blue Book Art. 3*)

In 2005, Kathy Cloninger, CEO and Cynthia Thompson, National Board Chair, communicated to Councils that a “movement-wide transformation was needed” to address the brutal truths that face Girl Scouting. Over the past 3-4 years, they forced realignment of smaller councils into larger conglomerates with the promise of creating “high capacity councils”; however, GSUSA has not clarified the definition of “high capacity councils, nor have they delivered on promised programming material. We are concerned that the National Board has not provided adequate oversight to GSUSA to ensure the survival of our movement.

Current Status

There were five areas GSUSA identified whose transformation would be pivotal to the future of Girl Scouting: Program and Pathways, Volunteerism, Brand, Funding, Governance and Organizational Structure:

- Work on Program and Pathways has progressed, but because of the slow pace of GSUSA, local councils are developing their own programs. For instance, Girl Scout of Arizona Cactus Pine has developed their own mission statement built on New Age movement: “releasing the human spirit and our collective human potential.”
- Minimal work has occurred for Volunteer Management (Single Entry System) with clearly missed deadlines. This jeopardizes the recruitment and training of new volunteers, making it difficult to run the organization in today’s modern society where volunteers are busier than ever.
- Partnerships and co-branding programs have been undertaken to heighten the visibility of Girl Scouting, but there has been no oversight in linking the brand promotions to the “leadership message” of Girl Scouting. In the 2007 annual report, GSUSA stated “the image that we want the words Girl Scouts to bring to mind is leadership”, but it is totally unclear how the “Groovy Girls Dolls” or the “Dairy Queen thin-mint blizzard promotion” communicates “leadership”.
- Funding is an issue at both the national and local levels – with ongoing declining membership and donor confusion due to branding messages and realignment.
- Apart from “measuring” the number of councils that have realigned, governance and organization structure has minimal focus. GSUSA told councils “how to combine geographically”, but did not provide direction or directives on becoming high capacity councils. Budgetary implications of mergers are unclear – most councils are experiencing cost increases in the face of membership loss and donor confusion. National Staff has been re-organized three times – and still does not have autonomy in their area of expertise, resulting in sluggish response to requests from councils.

Requested Action from our Delegates:

1. Communicate our dissatisfaction to the National Board of their inadequate oversight of the National Organization/National CEO during Realignment, which is putting the organization as a whole in jeopardy. We want them to take immediate corrective action as follows:
 - a) Hold the National CEO accountable to defined deliverables and deadlines with regards to the five program areas. The defined deliverables should be communicated back to Councils by January 2009.
 - b) Ensure and GSUSA co-promotion/branding activities are clearly and explicitly linked to our “girl leadership message”.
 - c) Require the National CEO/organization to actively partner with Councils (i.e. share a national staff structure chart with clear responsibilities of each person, create an advisory board of council CEOs to provide input into the operational work of GSUSA).
 - d) Allow two Council CEOs to serve as ex-officio members to the National Board, with accountability to report back to their peers following Board meetings.

How to Do This – Specific Actions:

1. Speak out (informally with other National delegates or at the microphone) and vote AGAINST:
 - a. Proposal 2C Special Session: Amend motion to change “or twenty percent (20%) of the membership of the national council, which shall represent at least twenty-five (25%) percent of the councils” to read “or twenty percent (20%) of the membership of the national council OR twenty percent (20%) of the councils”. – We want the national councils or national board to be in position to call a special meeting if the changes we continue to experience lack of oversight by the National Board”.
 - b. Proposal 3 “Membership Dues Increase”: we don’t feel that GSUSA has partnered effectively in providing resources to councils with the dues money we send (In the past three years, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio -through its legacy councils - has sent over \$2 million dollars to national) or that GSUSA has been fiscally responsible in its management (hiring multiple consultants without clear outcomes/actions, reorganization/inefficiencies of national staff).
 - c. Proposal 4 “Ballot Requirement” (note: this is the amendment that gives National Board control over setting dues”. Amend motion to include “Decision on annual membership dues shall be made by the National Council and require a majority of votes cast.” -- given the National Council’s poor oversight of the Realignment process, they have not earned the right to set dues. This change also clarifies that dues increase must be approved by the National Council.
2. Support Girl Scouts of Western Ohio’s nomination of a candidate from-the-floor to be on the National Board. We want a candidate on the Executive Committee who has experience with Council-level volunteer work and has a proven record of success as an empowered Girl Scout volunteer.