

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio

Girl Scouts of Western Ohio
4930 Cornell Road
Cincinnati, OH 45242-1804
513-489-1025 or 1-800-537-6241
Fax: 513-489-1417
www.girlscoutsofwesternohio.org

Date: September 4, 2008
To: Board of Directors
From: Sue Matz, Board Development Committee Chair
Subject: Summary of Table Input: June Parent Consumer Direct

The attached Summary of Table Input from the June Parent Consumer Direct is for your review. We will have a second Consumer Direct with parents at the September board meeting in Toledo. Following this interaction with parents, we will debrief and collect the parent answers and insights that have surfaced. We will also be comparing our findings from the June Parent Consumer Direct with this new one to determine the similarities and any differences.

Generally, the themes that we were able to pull from the June discussion were as follows:

1. Current image/public understanding of Girl Scouting in the community
2. Gap in understanding of Girl Scout ends/outcomes by community, parents, leaders
3. Leaders – lack of diversity, support needed, training needed
4. Girl transformation due to Girl Scouting – outcomes/ends
5. Girl retention – due to view as young girl organization and uncool
6. Tradition (strong heritage) versus expanding program to more diverse audience

We will be revising the questions, slightly, for the September meeting, to understand a little more about some of the issues. Table facilitators will again be solicited for assistance and will be sent information prior to the board meeting. The revised facilitator's information will include June's probing questions.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

Our Mission

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

SUMMARY OF TABLE INPUT – June 14, 2008 Cincinnati Parent-Direct

	Table 1/5	Table 1/2	Table 3		Table 4		Table 5	Table 6
Daughter's grade	K/2/4 - current	K-2	4-6		6/7 th – 1 current, 1 lapsed		7 th - current	9-11, current
Written by	Carol Sanders	Jerry Brose	Sharon Smith	Mary Ann Knoop	Christi West	Nancy Dawes	Sue Matz	Jodi Wainscott
Overall perception of Girl Scouts	Very Positive; need to work on “green uniform” with a “cookie box picture. Keep historical integrity, but modernize to bring more girls into the group.	It's a very worthwhile activity for their girls.	Girl Scouting is fun and an all girl function. Girl Scouts are represented as positive and active with quality behavior. Parents believe girl scouting will provide a safe environment along with the value system necessary for a girl to grow and become a contributing member of society	Positive; place for girls to be themselves in an all-girl environment	Great organization. Focus is camping, cooking, cleaning & hiking as well as cookies. Overall, a unique girls-only organization.	Positive; skewed toward younger girls; talked about Girl Scouts relative to Boy Scouts (one parent had son) – Boy Scouts is more family-oriented and has more multi-age interaction.	Perception is positive. Impact on girls is that they have seen daughters grow in confidence, leadership, caring about others and community. Community still thinks of cookies and they would like to see perception changed about GS	Positive influence on girls; enthusiastic about GS; would like to see GS receive expansive recognition for their program and the results achieved for girls; would like the Gold Award to be recognized as widely as Boy Scouts Eagle Award; would like GS to be known for more than cookie sales; perceived as a little girls organization
Advantages of Girl Scouts	Provides multi-use activities that help girls grow in more than one way within one activity. Provides skills and social-growth-tools. Widens the horizons for all girls no matter their background. Provides family involvement at different levels.	Girls learn by doing. Girls learned to help others - give to the community	All girl centered. Girls want to be with other girls. Girls overcome shyness and look forward to trying new things. Girls seem to be more comfortable around new girls.	All girls; builds self-confidence; safe place to be themselves; girls have the freedom to try new things	Provides opportunities and offers activities many girls never have the chance to experience. Offers a sense of belonging. Girls earn recognitions, make them feel proud of themselves & their achievements.	For daughter who stayed, there was leadership and exposure to activities which were important and broadened her daughter. Safe environment for daughter to try new things. Lots of talk of “activities” vs. “benefits” – needed to probe to get to benefit language	All girl environment, one organization where girls learn to plan, carry out projects as teams, be leaders. It is a safe environment to try new things and grow.	Open to everyone; provides opportunities to build friendships beyond schoolmates; builds self-confidence and leadership skills; teaches planning skills; provides opportunities to try new things and to be adventurous

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Disadvantages of Girl Scouts	Some stigma still remains with what Girl Scouts really give to its members and the community.		Sometimes girls are excluded and do not make friends. This seems to be a leader deficiency. Although some troops actually use exclusion tactics. In addition, there are not enough available troops for girls wishing membership.	Sometimes leaders either do not recognize or choose not to deal with problems within the troop, ex. girls who are not included by their peers need adult intervention	"not cool" image; lack of leadership and personal development opportunities. Safety Wise limitations. Level distinction distracts from program continuation.	Not clear that Girl Scouts was more than activities. "Uncool" image for junior high transition Loss/disbanding of troop at age-level change point (junior to cadette) – it was difficult to hold the troop together.	Delivery of GS program is uneven, very dependent on troop leader. Some of the girls have moved troops because of this and others realized it after moving to new community and seeing how different the program was. It is not seen as global (i.e. girls do not think beyond their community very often) and they would like Council help with this. Also, girls in middle school would prefer to do little and be social and it is difficult to get them to want to stretch sometimes. It was brought up that the girls spend a lot of time on fund raising and less time on carrying out projects.	Older girls programs seen as rigid; perception of GS by non-GS peers is that it is an organization for little girls; too few qualified adult volunteers
What are Girl Scouts core competencies?	Confidence, leadership abilities, well-rounded growth in life skills and socially strong in any setting. Gaining trust with group togetherness.	Girls learning about themselves and being happy with themselves. Girls working as a team and giving to the community	Girls to develop to full potential. Develop leadership skills. Become outstanding community members.	Helping girls build self-confidence; giving girls opportunities they do not find in other organizations	Developing self-confidence, positive values and leadership skills; providing service opportunities.	Socialization for young girls; exposure to activities they wouldn't otherwise get. Needs: clearer articulation of the mission and benefits.	Leadership, teamwork, safe environment for girls to grow and have fun, acceptance of all, friendship.	GS provides a comfortable and safe atmosphere girls

Daughter's grade	Table 1/5 K/2/4 - current	Table 1/2 K-2	Table 3 4-6		Table 4 6/7 th - 1 current, 1 lapsed		Table 5 7 th - current	Table 6 9-11, current
How does Girl Scouting help develop their girl?	Helps shy girls become accepted and more extroverted; provided a platform for girls with special needs to be accepted and understood better by others. Builds confidence and the ability to say "Yes, I Can" and mean it.	Brought her out of her shyness. She felt accepted by others, even though she has ADD. She is happy and has made new friends. Leamed to "share" Mom.	Girls overcome shyness by learning to be more assertive. Girls soon realize they are eager to try new things. Developing leadership skills seems to follow. The high ropes course was mentioned.	Learn about business through such activities as cookie sales and other fund raising; opportunity to participate in activities beyond what their families can/will do often leads to more self-confidence; having responsibility for an activity/event helps organizational skills	Offers leadership opportunities, teaches self-confidence, provides learning experiences in an informal setting, a fun outlet. The leader makes the difference by allowing girls to take on more responsibilities as they grow and move up in the organization.	Girl Scouting developed "Self-reliance" - from camp and other experiences that were outside the "norm"; daughter has "love of outdoors" and liked the outward display of achievements (patches); self confidence (speaking in front of other people); community service - giving to community. Mother of lapsed daughter talked more about the activities vs. "what her daughter learned".	Girl/adult planning. Environment and activities where girls grow and learn new things, learn to work with others, learn to lead others while having fun.	Builds self-confidence and leadership skills; exposures girls to experiences beyond their school and neighborhood; teaches girls to care for others and their communities
Why do girls leave?	Drawn to other activities that are more accepted by their peers; More publicity given to other activities, such as sports or musical endeavors.	Other things to do. Parents don't understand what we are all about so they don't encourage their girls to stay in.	Older girls find Girl Scout image is of the younger, cute cookie sellers. Older girls do not see a good image of themselves in scouting. In addition there was some complaint that older girls do not always find any interest in their troop activities.	Time constraints; troop may no longer meet needs of individuals; girls go to other schools so they don't have a frequent connection with other troop members; may not feel accepted by other members of the troop; the name Girl Scouts implies that it is an organization for younger girls; leaders do not always actively encourage girls to continue	Time limitations due to conflicts with sports and school activities. They see GS as organization for younger girls, some embarrassed about "not cool" image when they get to middle or high school.	Girl Scouts isn't "cool"... after girls did it for younger years, they left in Junior high as they were discovering new things. The troop disbanded moving to 7 th grade - so no troop and no leader; too much work for find another troop.	Too many competing activities. The parents do not understand the benefits of the organizations. These parents are usually not involved in the program and are not very supportive.	Older girls leave because of they become embarrassed to wear uniforms among non-GS peers; lack of family support/encouragement; older girls or their families feel they are too old to be selling cookies

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What needs to be true about Girl Scouts for girls not to leave?	It is "cool" to be a Girl Scout and it is accepted by the public at-large as a character and leadership building group that has fun and makes life-long friends.	Keep the meetings interesting. Encourage the girls to make the decisions.	Programs developed to meet the interest of older girls. Programs such as math and science and green (environmental) along with non-traditional programs. More recognition of different life styles such as one parent homes, etc. Also include more fathers in activities if appropriate. In addition, the Girl Scout organization should develop positive PR to include older girls. Some believe Girl Scouting should develop an image of Girl Scouts that shows a natural, healthy girl.	Leaders need to be aware of situations in which girls are not accepted by the other members of the troop and take steps to help girls learn to be more inclusive; girls need to be able to find troops that have similar interests (ex. some girls want more outdoor activities)	Offer unique opportunities, maintain positive image. Leaders need to work around girls' schedules (conflicts with sports) & changes in their life styles.	Clear understanding that Girl Scouts brings their daughter more than just activities. Girl in Junior High wanting to belong – how to "negate" the "it's not cool" factor. Easy transition into another troop when one disbands. For retained girl, there was a service unit with about 60 older girls who were active. Having more adventurous activities for older girls (mentioned constraints of safety-wise) Boy scouts has specific "leadership development structure" – with training and camps – an idea for Girl Scouts to be more overt about "leadership training"	For older girls – continue to offer opportunities to have new experiences, allow them to grow. Council help with opportunities/a ctivities that are more global (outside of the girl's community). Parents need to be involved. Older girl troops have girls whose parents/mother s very much support the program.	GS needs to overcome the perception that the organization is for little girls; improve perception of the Gold Award among non-GS members and colleges; consider changes to funding activities
Parent role/view of funding Girl Scouts	We didn't have a lot of feedback on the funding of the Scouts. The parents felt it was very important to be helpers and to help within the community and to help in neighboring communities that needed extra help.	Didn't ask	Cookie sales are a plus in raising money.		Did not discuss funding.			Not discussed other than parents want less stringent rules about products girls can sell to earn money for their troops

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What attracted them to Girl Scouts?	The parents and grandparents had been Girl Scouts. It was in their community area and they wanted to help within their own community.	Mother had been a Girl Guide and remembers the warm "feeling" she had and wanted her girls to have the same. To do something together - bonding time. Middle child needed extra attention. Not athletic so wanted something just for her. Wanted daughter to have friends and to be happy.	They want to become part of a troop to do fun things and enjoy new experiences.	The activities were fun; their friends were members	Their friends were Girl Scouts; not as many opportunities to choose from twenty years ago so it was easier to stay in the program.	They saw that other girls their daughter's age were in Girl Scouts. Moms were adults as girls and wanted the experience for their daughters.	Many had been involved in scouts, had wanted to be involved, or already had a positive image of scouts. When girls came home from school with information about scouts, the parents thought that this was a positive environment for their daughters.	Some parents were GS themselves and want their daughters to have similar experiences - friendships, camping, travel
What attracted their daughter to Girl Scouts?	Their friends were going to the first meeting and their mom was going to help with the troop. Some girls saw it as an alternative to sports, since they were not athletic. Family members were former girl scouts.	Mother wanted them to be scouts	Peer pressures plus PR about scouting. And then there are some who really want to sell cookies. Another mentioned her daughter's best friend was in scouting and the daughter wanted to join to be with friend.	Parents wanted girls to have interactions and activities that they could not provide; safe place to be a girl	Both ladies said they were Girl Scouts and wanted their daughters to have the experience. Also, girls' friends were involved so they wanted to join.	A lot of their daughter's friends were Girl Scouts...so it was the "thing to do" when they were in K or 1 st grade. Sense of belonging	Encouragement from parents especially from those who were a member of GS; perceived as fun and a place to be with friends;	
How do parents hear/learn about Girl Scouting?	School announcements and word-of-mouth. One mother mentioned seeing a poster or sign in the school.	Was a Girl Guide. A recruitment meeting.	Mostly from their girls although many parents become involved through volunteering or prior experience with Girl Scouts as youth.	Some had been Girl Scouts; girls brought home information from school; other girls	Flyers, word of mouth at school, friends	Flyer sent home from school.	Not discussed	

What implications does this have for us as Girl Scouts of Western Ohio?

- Good troop leaders are key factor. All girls should enjoy the troop by becoming an important part of the troop. More girls would join if there were more troops or openings in current troops. There was mention of a leader forced to remove several disruptive girls from a troop.
- We have work to do to change the impression of the what we do and what we provide for young girls.
- Need to let parents know we do something besides sell cookies and that their girls will benefit from our program because of what we do. Get them involved. (I guess we need to encourage the leaders to do this) Need to continue things that let the girls understand themselves. That let the girls grow, accept one another, and work together to the good of everyone. Need to break the stigma of being "not cool".
- Additional resources may need to go towards programs for older girls and to knock down the perception that GS is for little girls.
- Continue to recruit through the schools, churches, etc. – one of the parents commented that her daughter kept bringing home notices of the first meeting; the mom was the reluctant one but finally agreed to take her daughter due to her persistence
- The programs are set up to build confident girls with character and courage. The leaders may need help in delivering a more consistent program, and there may need to be different criteria set up to help choose the best leaders that can drive the GS program and experience for the girls. The people that we talked to questioned whether girls understand the global aspect of scouting and how they can impact and interact with a larger audience. Anything that the Council can do to help girls discover the larger world would be appreciated by the parents and leaders.
- Keep working to recruit leaders – 2 of the 4 parents had a daughter who was on a waiting list for a troop
- Opportunity for us to more clearly explain our ENDS and girl leadership model.
- Opportunity to further leverage the heritage of Girl Scouts – lots of passion among the adults, many of whom had been Girl Scouts as a child.
- Recognize that parents associate Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts – perhaps in verbal communication we need to be clear about the differences (i.e. as Board members discuss with parents, etc.)

How does this learning affect our ENDS?

- We have many competent and highly empowered workers that we need to give more support to through tools that will help them grow and be better able to reach and hang onto girls.
- This learning process will key in on issues affecting our customers and will help the Board define areas needing improvement as well as identifying which goals are accomplished. We need to be sure we are staying on task and doing the right job for all girls.
- The Ends are meaningful and relevant for girls. Our Council in concert with GSUSA needs to improve the marketing of GS to parents and to girls of all ages.
- The girls self confidence increased (mentioned by several parents) and they learned to work together. These both lead to girls becoming more confident and competent. Some activities were ones that girls might not have tried on their own – as a result, girls also demonstrated courage to try something new.

- The discussions showed me that the Ends are correct for the GS organization. They state where we want the organization to move to and that there is still work to do especially with respect to helping leaders deliver a consistent program and broaden each girls realization of the larger world outside their community. The parents asked for more Council lead activities that help the girls grow and allow/force girls to get to know others outside of their small community.
- The Ends are important, but not well understood or known.
- At 55% there is little affect with current troop members. However those who cannot get into troops or feel isolated in troops because they do not fit will become apparent as percentages rise.

If we were to develop a policy, what might it look like?

- To remove the “secretive” idea associated with Girl Scouts and to use history with a modern look as to our helping hand and growth skills that we give to young ladies. To be more vocal in our community as to what we are and what we become with the positive skills we provide to young girls.
- It would define the way GSWO would focus on leadership opportunities for girls of all ages.
- I don't know that a policy would be needed. I think that it is a matter of training volunteers and older girls and building older girl programs and opportunities that focus on getting the girls to achieve the Ends.