

## **An Open Letter to the Members of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio 2011 Year in Review**

Dear Members of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio:

As we reflect on our tenure as the Outgoing Board Chair and CEO of this wonderful council during its first four years, we want to acknowledge the dedication of our volunteers, board members, and staff members. This has been a journey that brought challenges at every juncture, yet also was extremely rewarding. When we think about the hundreds of girls who have earned their Girl Scout Gold Award in our new council, we are proud. As we review the changes our staff and volunteers made to ensure that girls receive a stronger Girl Scout experience, we are convinced that the realignment efforts were the right thing to do. And when we consider the countless partnerships we have strengthened in our many communities to reach out with Girl Scouting in new ways, we are grateful for all the support. We will never forget this experience and the growth opportunities that it afforded us along the way. Thank you for your patience and your ongoing support of Girl Scouting throughout the past four year.

The purpose of this communication is to present the 2011 Year in Review for you. We are in the midst of celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Girl Scouts—and looking forward to the next century. In preparing for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we looked back at the beginning of Girl Scouting in the United States and our founder, Juliette Gordon Low's vision for girls. She believed that girls should receive the same opportunities as boys to develop physically, mentally, and spiritually. As a nonformal educational organization, she ensured that girls were exposed to activities like basketball, camping, and community service, resulting in life skills of that time, and preparing girls to take their place in the world.

Today the activities that girls are involved in through Girl Scouting have changed. Our mission: to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place, is more important today than it ever has been. Girls have to navigate a more complex world than ever before- but the benefits remain the same. Juliette Low prepared girls for life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Girl Scouting now prepares girls for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, regardless of their life choices. Experts in education, government, and business agree that children and youth must learn to think critically and creatively, behave ethically, work as a team and build a network of strong relationships, and communicate with others clearly and with sensitivity. Competency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills will increase the likelihood that children will be prepared in adulthood to address their personal and work life challenges successfully. In addition, the research shows that these skills are mastered through experiential learning activities involving supportive peers and adults. Our outcomes data demonstrates that our girl members have gained important foundational knowledge and leadership skills that are preparing them for the future.

This Year in Review will report on specific areas of work that you have told us matter to you – outcomes progress, volunteer engagement, membership outreach, and financial well-being.

**Outcomes Progress:** Each year we survey troop leaders and the girls themselves to determine program effectiveness– to make sure we are building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. We are pleased to report that Girl Scouts of Western Ohio had positive results in 2011. Below are some of the highlights.

Girls and leaders report with certainty that girls develop a strong sense of self and positive gender identity.

- Ninety-three percent of Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors told us that “when others want me to do something wrong, I don’t do it.”
- Overwhelmingly Girl Scouts say, “I like who I am even when other people make fun of me or tease me” and most girls say, “I use the Promise and Law to make decisions.”

Both girls and leaders report positively that girls gain practical life skills, seek challenges in the world and develop critical thinking.

- A majority of Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors say, “I learn how to earn money.”
- A majority of girls and leaders say that girls “try to do new things, even if they are hard to do.”
- Most girls and leaders report that girls “ask questions before I make important decisions.”

Girls are developing healthy relationships, but they have trouble talking about their feelings, especially at younger age levels. Older girls are stronger than Brownies when it comes to promoting cooperation and team-building, as well as positive conflict resolution. In addition, girls feel connected to their communities.

- Ninety-five percent of Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors say “if my friends have problems with each other, I help them fix it” and ninety-two percent of Girl Scout Brownies say “If I hurt someone’s feelings, I say I’m sorry”.
- Troop leaders and Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors say that girls try to figure out how to help their team.
- More than ninety percent of troop leaders observe and Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors tell us that “learning about people of different cultures is important.”

In acting to make their world a better place, overall girls can identify community needs, with age-level progression shown in aspects of time management. Girls are resourceful problem-solvers and advocate for themselves and others, as well as inspire others to act.

- Eighty percent of Brownie Girl Scouts say that “I think of things my community needs to be a better place and eight-two percent of Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors say, “I am good at getting others to work with me on projects to help my community.”
- A majority of Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors report that “If I see a problem, I tell people what I think needs to be done.”
- Eighty-eight percent of Girl Scout Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors report that girls, “look for ways to share my opinion on things I care about in my community.”

**Volunteer Support:** The strength of our Movement rests in our 15,000+ volunteers – troop leaders, service unit managers, recruiters, registrars, and all the other volunteers who give tirelessly of their time to support girls’ development. Based upon feedback from volunteers, we have strengthened a number of our processes and supports in 2011:

- We are testing ways to improve our processes for volunteer recruitment, application, background checks, and placement.
- We have completely redesigned our website to be robust, user-friendly, and able to support our needs in the coming years.
- We have continued to revise and implement trainings to communicate the Girl Scout Leadership Experience – and we are offering these trainings through classrooms, online, and home-based to meet the needs of today’s volunteers.
- We have provided a system of regular volunteer communication through service unit meetings, our website, and email materials.

**Membership:** Since 1912, Girl Scouting has been at the forefront of providing girls with leadership opportunities. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio is the fifth largest council in the United States, providing the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to 50,000 girls in western Ohio and southeastern Indiana, with over 15,000 adult volunteers. We serve one out of every seven girls in our 32 county jurisdiction, which is well above the national average of one out of every eleven girls.

**Finances:** The board and staff are committed to maintaining a balanced budget – one that balances our expenses against our revenues. We are committed to that principle for the long-term health of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio.

- The largest percentage of our revenue comes from our product sales, with the remainder coming from United Ways, annual contributions from donors, foundation grants, program fees, and retail sales.
- 90% of income was spent to provide direct services and support to girls, volunteers who work with girls, and volunteers who support troop leaders.
- Management and general expenses, such as business services, insurance coverage, legal and financial audit services, personnel and risk management, accounting and financial resources, as well as fund raising costs were funded by ten cents of every dollar of income.
- Standards of accounting indicate that well managed nonprofit organizations keep fundraising and management and general expenses under 30% and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio easily meets that standard.
- A conservative estimate of the dollars held in troop accounts is \$4.3 million.
- Like many Girl Scout councils across the country, we have a significant portion of our resources invested in program properties. The cost of providing and maintaining our council properties is over \$1.5 million, but we use less than 25% of camp capacity, based on expected camper day usage.
- The council owns a total of 10 camp properties. Our top four camps represent 86% of camp use. The least used six camps serve only 14% of campers, while the cost to maintain these six camps is 30% of the property budget. A 2011 volunteer property task group recommended that the council sell Camp Ladigrau and investigate other options for ownership, management, or use of our least used camps. The board will continue to monitor property usage.
- United Ways have continued to struggle to meet campaign goals, causing some allocations to come in below previous years. Since 2008, our United Way funding has decreased 23%, from \$1,368,000 to \$1,054,000.
- Our investment portfolio has rebounded since the economic downturn and is being closely monitored by the investment task group.

Your board and staff continue to focus on careful stewardship of our fiscal resources, and we will do our best to ensure sound management of the council in the coming year. The board is committed to increasing communication with our membership and we will be looking for ways to strengthen our ability to gather and share information with you.

Throughout our 100-year history, the most vital elements of our Movement have remained unchanged. The Girl Scout Promise and Law, and our mission will continue to guide our work and our organizational goals will focus on developing girls of courage, confidence, and character. We ask that you continue to support Girl Scouting and give us input as we move into our second century. Thank you for your dedication to Girl Scouting.

Sincerely,

*Nancy C. Dawes*

Nancy C. Dawes  
Chair

*Barbara J. Bonifas*

Barbara J. Bonifas  
CEO



4930 Cornell Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45242  
513-489-1025  
800-537-6241  
[www.girlscoutsofwesternohio.org](http://www.girlscoutsofwesternohio.org)

450 Shoup Mill Road  
Dayton, OH 45415  
937-275-7601  
800-233-4845

1870 W. Robb Ave.  
Lima, OH 45805  
419-225-4085  
800-962-7753

2244 Collingwood Blvd.  
Toledo, OH 43620  
419-243-8216  
800-860-4516

