

An Open Letter to the Members of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio 2013 Year in Review

Dear Members of Girl Scouts of Western Ohio:

The purpose of this communication is to present the 2013 Year in Review for you. Since our inception more than a century ago, we have celebrated 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 Scouts 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 20th century. Girl Scouting now prepares girls for life in the 21st century, regardless of their life choices. We know that Girl Scouts makes a positive impact in the lives of girls. In 2013, Girl Scouts of the USA published a report called, *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business*. This report summarizes key issues and major trends affecting girls' leadership and healthy development in the U.S. today. As the voice for and of girls, Girl Scouts believes it is critical for those who support girls to have up-to-date, accurate information about the status of girls' physical, social, and psychological well-being.

The State of Girls report finds that while there is promising news for girls in areas such as their educational attainment, many girls are being left behind, and not all girls are faring the same. However, we know that "data is not destiny" and Girl Scouting is committed to ensuring that all girls have the opportunity to reach their full potential. If you would like to read the full report, you will find it on our website.

This 2013 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: Nationally, nearly eight in ten teachers believe a larger focus on Social Emotional Learning will have a major benefit on students' ability to stay on track to graduate (80%), prepare for college (78%), and become good citizens as adults (87%).¹

Locally, Girl Scouting makes a difference. When local Girl Scout Juniors (n=350) say, "**I do my best in school,**" they also tend to report small-group, girl-led and hands-on Girl Scout experiences that align with five social-emotional competency areas described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL) as follow:

1. Responsible decisions: "I use the Girl Scout promise and Law to help me make decisions."
2. Relationship Skills: "If I get into an argument with friends, I am able to think of more than one way to make things better."
3. Social Awareness: "Girl Scouts has helped me to get to know new people."
4. Self-Management: "I set goals for myself to achieve."
5. Self-Awareness: "In Girl Scouts, I learn by working with other girls."

¹ *The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey* (a report for CASEL), 2013.

The girl/adult partnership in Girl Scouting uniquely prepares girls for leadership. When Girl Scouts of Western Ohio leaders say, “Girls plan and carry out projects in partnership with adults”, they also tend to say the following:

- “Girls get to take the lead on activities.”
- “Girls set goals for themselves to achieve.”
- “Everyone gets a chance to experience different roles on a team.”
- “Girls explain their ideas to other girls so they can learn from each other.”
- “Girls know people they can talk to about what their community needs.”

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 2013. Below are some of the highlights.

- 96% of Junior Girl Scouts achieved the *develop a strong sense of self* outcome.
- 87% of Girl Scout Juniors and Cadettes achieved the *positive values* outcome.
- 75% of Girl Scout Brownies and 67% of Cadettes achieved the *seek challenges* outcome.
- 67% (or more) Girl Scout Brownies, Juniors and Cadettes achieved *advance diversity*.
- 64% (or more) Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors achieved the *resourceful problem-solvers* outcome.
- 62% (or more) of Girl Scout Brownies and Juniors achieved the *educate and inspire others* outcome.

Volunteer Support: The strength of our Movement rests in over 12,000 volunteers – troop leaders, service unit managers, recruiters, data coordinators, 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 2013:

- We continue to test ways to improve our processes for volunteer recruitment, application, background checks, and placement and you will continue to see improvements in the coming year as we automate and streamline this work.
- We continue to revamp our website to be robust, user-friendly, and able to support volunteer needs in the coming years.
- We have redesigned and restructured the staff and volunteer support that is provided to Girl Scout leaders. This past year saw a new structure chart for paid staff and volunteers, as well as new ways of work for service teams.
- We have provided a system of regular volunteer communication through service unit meetings, our website, and online materials.

Membership: Since 1912, Girl Scouting has been at the forefront of providing girls with leadership opportunities. Girl Scouts of Western Ohio, one of the largest councils in the United States, provides the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to approximately 44,000 girls in western Ohio and southeastern Indiana, with the support of about 12,000 adult volunteers. We serve one out of every seven girls in 32 counties, well above the national average of one out of eleven girls. Reaching out to girls in a variety of ways that meet their needs is a challenge in today’s fast-paced society. Pathways to support flexible delivery of our program are being implemented in new and exciting ways. We recognize that today’s girls are looking for a different ways to stay active in Girl Scouts and we are working to meet that need.

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.
- 85% 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 fifteen 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 \$2.5 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 \$1.6 million, but we use less than 25% of camp capacity, based on expected camper day usage.
- The council owns a total of 8 camp properties. A 2011 volunteer property task group recommended that the council investigate options for ownership, management, or use of our least used camps and that work is ongoing. Camp Ladigrau was sold in 2013 and work was completed in the past year to prepare to permanently conserve Camp Myeerah as a City of Bellefontaine park. Some of the proceeds from Camp Myeerah are going into a renovation of Camp Woodhaven and we will celebrate these exciting improvements in 2014.
- 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 25%, from \$1,368,000 to \$1,036,568.
- Our investments have rebounded since 2008 and are being closely monitored by the investment task group.

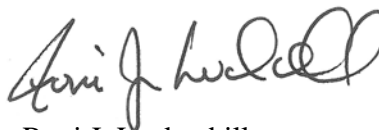
Your board and staff continue to focus on careful stewardship of our fiscal resources, and we will do our best to ensure sound management of the council in the coming year. The board is committed to increasing communication with our membership and we will be looking for ways to strengthen our ability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

Throughout our 101-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,



Jody Wainscott
Board Chair



Roni J. Luckenbill
CEO