

2010 Regional Forum Highlights

October 20, 2010 Program Center – Sacramento

Attendance:

Representatives and National Council Delegates: 58

Board and Committee Members: 6

Staff: 5

The Modesto Regional Forum event scheduled for October 21, 2010 was canceled due to low registration. Some service units provided their written comments to the topic areas which have been included in the highlights below.

Purpose and Format of Meeting

- These Regional Forums are part of the two-way communication system of our governance structure.
- Forums are used to discuss topics of interest to the representative assembly, board of directors, and GSHCC.
- Topics for these forums were established by the survey conducted at the Representative Assembly Member trainings in May and through an online survey conducted in June.
- Results from the topic discussions will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate body for consideration and/or action. For example, if a subject deals with governance, it will be forwarded to the Board Chair for consideration. Any subject that deals with operations will be forwarded to the CEO for consideration.

Annual Meeting

- Annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 12, 2011 at the CSU Alumni Association Center
- Representatives will receive information via email and some information will be posted on the website
 - Representatives need to present the information at service unit meetings and get feedback from the members.
 - Representatives need to be prepared to share the feedback at the annual meeting
- After the annual meeting, representatives should share with their service units what took place at the meeting.

National Council Delegates

- The next National Council Session is November 10-13, 2011 in Houston, Texas.
- GSHCC will be sending about 10 National Council Delegates to the session. Of those 10, only 3-4 will be volunteers. The other delegates will be board members and staff.
- GSHCC has completed the process of accepting and screening applications. Interviews will be conducted in November for those whose applications have been accepted. The Board Development Committee will submit a final list of candidates at the Annual Meeting in February for consideration by the Representative Assembly Members.

Small Group Discussions

Below are the highlights of the small group discussions held at the regional forum. As we process this list, we will let you know what action has been taken.

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1. *Some Girl Scout Councils are shifting from a pre-order Cookie Sale to a direct sale. What are your thoughts on this concept?*

- Preorder better for younger girls
- Direct sales better for older girls who don't have a lot of time to go take orders and then return numerous times to attempt to deliver cookies and collect money
- Older girls don't have enthusiasm for presales
- Might lose sales – leaders won't order as many if not presold; concerned then about not ordering enough because direct sales number is unknown
- Concern about giving cookies to parents without preorders – will they really sell them all? If not, are the parents financially responsible or will they be able to return them to the troop?
- Safety concerns about going door to door and then having cash on hand
- It's not clear what direct sales are
- Nightmare for cookie cupboards
- Can't carry your entire inventory with you when selling door to door
- Is it possible to do both? Some troops already do something like a combination. They order a lump sum and then while waiting for the cookies to come, they take orders from friends and family.
- When new cookies are introduced it could be difficult to predict sales because there is no history
- Will troops be responsible financially for unsold cookies ordered through direct sales? Or will they be able to return them? This will be one of the guidelines yet to be established. Also, the regional site sale sign-ups would help troops get rid of extra cookies.
- Direct sales might be good for parents who sell at work – immediate gratification.
- Could impact budgeting for troops because of the unknown income from the cookie sales
- New leaders don't have experience; could be a problem for them; they will need good training
- A lot of leaders expressed that they like the preorder process – they know exactly how much to buy and what the income will be
- Less paperwork; won't need to match preorders with what's picked up by the troop members
- Direct sales provides immediate gratification; don't have to wait two months for the cookies
- Some leaders said it would create a problem at work. It's generally okay to distribute an order form, but not to set up a "store" selling the actual product
- Would the sale time be shorter? This is yet to be determined. Other councils do 2 weeks direct and 3 weeks site sales. Can cut into other times for other money-earning activities
- Will probably do better at site sales without preorders; no more "already ordered" comments
- Preorder sales give more incentives

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- Would like more money back on each box of cookies
- Storage could be a problem; someone in the troop will need to act as a mini-cookie cupboard
- Good be a problem keeping track of who's got what
- Better for older girls when selling at school; immediate gratification; kids more apt to buy when cookies are immediately available
- Benefit of direct sales is not having to go to people several times (i.e., taking original order, returning several times to deliver product & collect money)
- Presale goals – 2 separate experiences; helps build confidence in girls, build up energy with preorders, and excited about delivering the product
- Could be a disadvantage for smaller groups
- Can council provide information on how it has worked in other councils? For example, what is troop profit/loss from non-paying parents, how has this affected site sales, has it made a difference increase/decrease in overall sales.
- Can the council provide statistics on direct selling?

2. *What can be done at the service unit/council level to retain and recognize adult volunteers?*

Service Unit Level Retention

- Mentors for new and bridging leaders
- Mentors that are experienced in each grade level
- Ensure new leaders get connected after orientation
- Do exit interviews to find out why leaving
- Provide supplies for new troops
- Get older girl troops more involved in the service unit/ and ensure that they are recognized for contributions
- Increase visibility of older girls to younger girls and parents

Council Level Retention

- Have consistency in the program so volunteers are not having to relearn everything—when change is required EXPLAIN the reason behind it
- More training available online
- Increase ease of getting the training
- Journey trainings
- Remember that not everyone has a computer
- Provide online courses that can be accessed by ALL types of computers
- Reduce the paperwork
- Provide more online resources (such as list of other helpful Websites, best practices)
- Online forums for discussions
- Provide some sort of incentive program for volunteers
- Provide “leaders lounges”—informal time to get together to network

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Service Unit Level Recognitions

- Have girls write endorsement letters for outstanding leader
- Mail Outstanding Leader info/flyer to girls/families
- Educate parents about SU level recognitions
- Provide “fun” awards at leaders’ meetings—possibly ones that volunteers can nominate each other for
- Allow new and different people to volunteer for team positions (ensure there is a turnover)
- SU leader/daughter event is form of recognition to both , (Quote “recognize my daughter and you have me for life”)
- SU end of year recognition event – invite troop parents that are involved, make it fun, thank everyone
- After annual meeting, recognize recipients at the unit level, troop level
- Contact to thank them when leaving at end of year

Council Level Recognitions

- More education & communication regarding board approved recognitions (done early enough)
- Award to daughters of volunteers besides Family Factor Patch Program
- Recognize board approved recipients in media
- Provide “points” for years of service that transfers into something such as discounts at the shop
- Provide a SU recognitions manager roundtable to share ideas
- Provide an official recognition such as a certificate for volunteer efforts/hours that can be used professionally

3. *What are your best practices for “girl-led” experiences?*

- Less Parents
- Asking for the girls options
- Probing questions
- Let the girls do agendas and minuets and other jobs for the troop and rotate the jobs
- Let the girls decide what they want to do for the year and do the research to do the activities and check Safety Activity Checkpoints for requirements.
- Leader act as a mentor to the girls and the girls do the work
- Give them choices on what they want to do
- Beginning of the year planning meeting and end of the year do a survey to see what worked and what did not
- Older girls lead Service unit events
- Girls vote on the badges that they want to earn
- Leaders guide girls and keep them on track
- Guide not lecture
- Need leadership course for older girls?

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- Let them plan
- Kick parents out of room and limit leaders input
- Encourage girls brainstorming and vote
- Training for leader on how to let the girls lead
- Redirect
- Draw name to form patrols
- Let girls do most things
- Let girls give options without judgment
- Older girls sharing with younger girls
- The girls give assignments to the leaders and parents
- Girls hold flag as leader; think of ways girls can be leaders
- Accept their ideas, no matter what, as valid. Help them solidify their ideas into doable activities

4. *Ways to attract and retain young women 18-25 as volunteers.*

- Offer a scholarship to girls who make a promise to become a leader or a co-leader. They could perform this service during college or upon graduating.
- Keep in close contact with Gold and Silver Award winners and encourage them to apply for a scholarship and stay involved.
- Offer units or internships to students at colleges for involvement with Girl Scouts. Liberal Arts colleges often require volunteer time from students. Connect with women's colleges.
- Start talking leadership before girls leave their troops.
- Make use of social networking sites. List events that are going on where older girls are needed. These could be one day activities to coordinate with busy college schedules.
- Great idea to offer reduced Lifetime Membership Rates to girls who are Senior Scouts. Perhaps their former troops could pay the cost of Lifetime Membership for graduating girls.
- Form a Girl's Society or Girl Scout Graduate Group that would help graduating girls identify with their Girl Scout history. This could be similar to a sorority and give girls a voice in the Girl Scout movement.
- Connect with groups such as Women Engineers at the university level who could help prepare scouts for the job market.
- Utilize Sacramento State University as a target group.
- Some Liberal Arts Colleges have theme housing. Could one of the housing units have a Girl Scout theme?
- Form troops for college age girls that would meet every two weeks. The groups could have patches to earn, guest speakers, interesting activities, etc.
- Have girls who graduate as seniors take on the role of Ambassadors. Give them the resources to connect with the council in their college towns.
- Leadership should be a core idea we instill in girls. We expect them to become future troop leaders and volunteer.

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- Do something nationally.
- Make bridge to adult a bigger deal.
- Offer a personal invitation to get involved from either the home town council or through sororities, churches, 20/30 clubs.
- College age students could serve as High Adventure helpers.
- Have a link on the Girl Scout web site that allows girls to enter their college and contact information. The new council would be notified when the Girl Scout arrives on the college campus.
- Have the marketing committee market pertinent information directly to girls from this age group (18-25).
- Attract certain college students such as teachers, social workers, early childhood educators, high adventure majors who need to have hours working with children for graduation requirements and have them volunteer with the Girl Scouts.
- Ask local businesses to offer incentives for younger employees who volunteer to work with Girl Scouts.
- Market information so people know that Girl Scouting is not just for younger girls.
- Have event trainings for younger girls on college campuses. This helps younger girls think about college and college students get acquainted with Girl Scouts. Utilize college clubs to provide in-service training to girls.
- Have college students who are taking financial classes volunteer to be cookie manager or fall product manager.
- Send a survey to girls (18-25) and find out what would be of interest to them.
- Bring this age group back to talk to former troops.
- Get the message out—Adults don't have to be a former Girl Scout to be a leader.
- Stay connected with clubs and sororities at colleges. The participants will change but the groups remain.
- Have reunions for this age group at annual meetings.

5. *What ways have you successfully incorporated Journeys into troop program?*

- Leaders confused
- Too much like homework; don't want to continue
- Customize Your Journey – worthless
- Lower reading level in girl books – too high right now
- Leader in Action link – awesome/fantastic
- No Journey training for leaders
- No time for other activities/badges in addition to Journeys
- No badges on vest
- Leader book confusing
- Sleepover for activities good for younger girls
- Restrictive for older girls
- Narrow field of interest
- Split between old and new
- No leader training

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- Devalues Gold and Silver Awards
- Too structured
- Not enough choices
- Too long for younger girls
- Being forced to do Journeys for awards
- Correlation between Journeys and other badges
- Were able to incorporate Try-Its in Journey
- New leaders adopting it; existing leaders resistant to change
- Daisy Story not appropriate for that age level
- Need more hands-on stuff (games) for older girl books
- Need council events to complete Journeys
- Plan overnight weekend events to have more time to work on Journeys
- When incorporating other badges girls have fun
- Not widely used; difficulty using; leader guide not same text
- Concerned about longevity
- Disconnect between leaders guide and girls book
- Some have reached out on the Internet for hints from other leaders
- Need a little more structure
- Younger girls lost interest
- Hard for leader to figure out when earned
- Too much reading
- Girls who want their awards (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Rose) are motivated to do Journeys. Get the word out that it's something fun to do.

6. *How do you feel about the governance structure?*

- Trainings have provided more information and had a positive benefit.
- Older girls being a part of the structure are a very positive aspect.
- Girls in leadership roles learning how Girl Scouts work is very rewarding.
- Website is awesome.
 - Keeps us updated and current and quick informational services. Appreciate immediate replies to questions.
 - General website needs a site map; too difficult to navigate and return to places and forms.
 - Some didn't know about web site at service unit level.
- Alternates not getting information so when they do fill in at the last minute like at the forum they are not aware of the questions and what is expected. Some alternates and representatives are not on the lists.
- Request to archive emails sent to Representatives so that they can refer back to them or get the information again.
- Service Unit Managers need to share dates and communications more effectively. (Alternates again)
- Emails are very well appreciated like the online material. One member said that hers is getting kicked back.

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- Annual Meeting:
 - Well structured, inspiring. Really like having the business and awards broken up. Do need a break or stretch at the halfway point?
 - Seats too close together
 - Very impressed by Girl Presentations.
 - Can we encourage people not to leave immediately after receiving their awards? Creates a distraction.
 - Can we have the people receiving awards ready or up front to speed things along?
 - Requests for slideshow or power point of girl presentations and the PSA to take back to service units and show to troops to encourage and inspire younger girls to work towards their own awards and to help with retention.
- Quicker posting of survey results and forum materials.
- Questions about length of time allowed to be a Representative. We discussed that this is up to each Service unit and they need to discuss it at that level.
- Very happy with seeing new faces at the governance level and appreciative of the simplification for girls to participate.
- Suggestions that forums and trainings be held in April/October so as not to interfere with start-up dates, program and cookie sales, etc.
- Try an electronic forum
- **OUR COUNCIL ROCKS!**