

2011 Regional Forum Highlights
October 29, 2011 Modesto, CA
November 3, 2011 Sacramento, CA

Attendance:

The meetings were attended by service unit representatives, national council delegates, board members, committee members and staff.

Sacramento – 50

Modesto - 18

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.
- The topics discussed at these meetings were the three National Council Proposals and two topics selected by the Board Representative Committee.
- The National Council Delegates listened to the comments on the three proposals and took that information with them to the 52nd Annual Convention in Houston. They attended the convention “informed but not instructed” which allowed them to consider other points of view presented at the convention. The delegates were free to vote as they saw fit after considering all the information.
- Results from the other two topic discussions will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate department within GSHCC for consideration and/or action.

Annual Meeting

- Annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 11, 2012 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.

Small Group Discussions

Below are the five topics we discussed at the Sacramento and Modesto regional forums in 2011. Immediately following each topic is a summary of the comments provided at each forum. Noted in **red** is the status of the National Council proposals. Noted in **blue** are answers to some of the questions or comments. As we process the comments on this list, we will let you know what action has been taken.

1. **National Council Proposal 1 – Authorization for Annual General Program Fees for Girl Scout Members. *Proposal passed as amended.***

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At the National Convention, this proposal was amended to change the words “general program fee” to “council service fee” and the proposal passed as amended.

[Implications for Girl Scouts Heart of Central California \(GSHCC\)](#)

We heard from many Representative Assembly members during the regional forums that you were not in favor of any sort of fee. Now that the proposal has passed, the GSHCC Board of Directors will need to make a decision on whether to implement a council service fee in addition to the GSUSA membership fee. This will undoubtedly be a topic for future input from representatives.

As a reminder, here are the comments that were gathered from the forums:

- It would turn girls away because it would not be affordable for a lot of families, especially if they had multiple girls in Scouting. Wanted to know if there would be a family discount for more than one registered girl per family if passed? [There would not be an option for a council to use a sliding scale. The fee would be the same for everyone regardless of how many girls from one family were registering. There would be the option of financial assistance, which would increase the burden to the council.](#)
- Parents may not register as an adult Girl Scout anymore if they need to pay an extra fee for their daughter.
- It might open the door for Service Units to charge an annual fee next.
- Recruiting new girls would be more of a challenge.
- Councils would need to increase financial aid so that more girls could afford to participate and then it would offset the extra-income collected.
- It would most likely decrease Family Partnership donations.
- Individual Troops or Service Units may not directly see the benefit of the added fee if they are not involved in programs in Sacramento, especially Service Units farther away. Felt girls closer to Sacramento would benefit the most.
- Didn't like that the fees could vary between councils and result in bordering councils competing with each other for registering girls near borders because one council is cheaper than another.
- Concerned that a girl may have to pay more than one fee in a year if the girl transfers to another council. [GSUSA has indicated that the girl would pay the fee only once even if she transfers to another council.](#)
- Didn't feel that councils in “black” have to impose this fee because of the councils in the “red”.
- Most were concerned that the extra fee collected would be undesignated income that council could use in anyway. Wanted to know if representatives would be able to have input on how the money is spent by council. [GSHCC will seek input from the Representative Assembly members when they begin to consider a council service fee. Members may be asked about how to](#)

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spend the money; however, the final decision rests with the GSHCC Board of Directors.

- Wanted to know how annual fee would be imposed if girl registered as a Lifetime member instead of annually. [Does not affect lifetime membership as that is considered an “adult” registration fee.](#)
- Money stays within the council and councils have a CHOICE to collect fee or not.
- Councils may have to run on less staff than they have now and would hate to see a council fold because of lack of funds.
- Most Service Units would like to see GSUSA slightly increase dues and then “kick back” a portion of the dues to the councils so that Girl Scout fees are equal across the country.
- Okay if additional funds used for program and not salaries.
- Don’t see the benefit at the grassroots level (i.e., troops)

2. National Council Proposal 2 – Timing for the Election of Delegates.
Proposal failed.

- Girls could be very young when they start.
- Adults may be able to commit, but for girls it could be difficult because they may have moved or not in Girl Scouts anymore.
- Delegates could be productive.
- Changing the timing won’t change anything.
- Need better training.
- If materials are provided earlier, it could provide a better understanding; more educated.
- Not clear what everyone would do if elected earlier unless materials are provided earlier.
- If elected too far in advance, they would lose interest.
- Maybe bring in the adults earlier and the girls later.
- Girls and adults may be unable to commit that far in advance.
- If appointed two years in advance, it may not represent the girl population at the time of the national council meeting.
- All delegates must be highly qualified, Girl Scout strong.

3. National Council Proposal 3 – Annual Membership. *Referred to task group.*

The annual membership issue is actually a “policy” in the Blue Book of Basic Documents; therefore, consideration by the full council session was not necessary. A motion was passed to refer this topic to a task group that GSUSA is creating. [The proposal will be considered by the task group and the National Board will have the final decision.](#)

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GSUSA will appoint a task group by January 2012 to study the current national dues structure and annual membership registration practice. The purpose of the study is to make sure that the membership processes meet the needs of current and future members and align with national program offerings and pathways.

As a reminder, here are the comments that were gathered from the forums:

- This would be a recording nightmare.
- Good for those who register later in a year.
- Would prefer a prorated fee to the end of the year or by quarter.
- Maybe a sliding scale based on when they join.
- What about emergency health forms that need to be updated once a year? Afraid something might be missed.
- Constant work, no anticipated time frame of completion of the job. Always having to track who needs to register, who hasn't, etc.
- How would Super Star Service Unit awards work with such a schedule?

4. *Representative Assembly Membership.*

- *How do you interact with your service unit manager?*
 - Yahoo Group, Email, Leader meeting
 - Good communication with Service Unit Manager and Team.
 - Put topics on the agenda
 - Need to be persistent
 - Invite to annual meeting
 - Survey on Yahoo Group
 - Only on the agenda when there is something to talk about; sometimes fall into another category on the agenda.
 - Some representatives didn't share the proposals with the Service Unit.
- *What are the best ways to promote and fill these positions?*
 - Outgoing representative should speak at a leader meeting.
 - Some didn't know the position existed until she was asked to fill it. More visibility of the person filling the position.
 - Girls should be encouraged to fill the positions. Older girls need information.
 - Didn't know the positions existed – need more training and more information about the position.
 - Seeing the process in action.
 - Current representatives promoting the position.
 - Video tape of annual meeting (snippets) that could be shown at Leader Meetings.
 - Email blast to attend annual meeting; personal invitation.
 - Friendlier language for proposals, etc.
 - Get rid of the fear of the position.
 - Needs to be someone with experience.

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- How can we better prepare girls for these positions?
 - Age level training; separate training for girls; friendly language – glossary of terms.
 - Mentoring by an adult.
 - General education about governance.
 - Include in older girl training.
 - Promote the position on the girl website, not just the Governance website.
 - Use Facebook, smart phone applications, etc.
 - Use the newly established Girl Advisory Board.
 - Ensure girls will be heard and their input considered.
 - Girls not aware that they can serve because Service Units are not aware and are not promoting it.
 - Target Senior/Ambassador Troop Leaders and provide them information about the opportunities.
 - Use the girls news leader to promote.
- Governance web page – questions about it, suggestions for improvement, etc.
 - More information on the Governance website (however, no suggestions were provided).
 - Information on training, forums, annual meeting hard to find.
 - Links for feedback for topics for representatives to present to leaders and refer them to the website.
- What do you need from the council to help you do your job as a representative?
 - Email reminders
 - Membership Director talk it up
 - Stress importance of the position
 - Hierarchy chart – flow chart
 - Orientation specialist should have information for training.
 - Governance should be on Facebook.
 - Put more information on the webstie so they can refer the SU membership to review; less work for the representative to create something (i.e., proposal discussions).
 - Get too many emails – need an attention getting subject line.
 - Generic email to all leaders with the topics to be discussed.
 - Find a way to share contact information of representatives to help with talking things out, carpooling, etc.

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5. Volunteer Services

- What services provided by council staff do you want to ensure do not go away?
 - Current Recruitment assistance of Leaders/Retention of Girls/leaders
 - Keep Membership Directors - they help a lot.
 - Community Relations representatives; meetings/sharing ideas, information.
 - Thank You's/Recognitions
 - Journey Events
 - Summer Camp
 - Gold/Silver Award - help with and recognition of.
 - The Store in the south area of the council.
 - Meeting space for events (schools and churches no longer an option for troops).
 - For those in between the North and South, more options for training, events, etc. – the more the better.
 - Local training, local programming
 - South part of the council feels they don't get offered the same opportunities as Sacramento.
- What areas could your service unit use additional assistance in (is there an area of need within your service unit)?
 - South office staff who answer the phone don't have general knowledge; referred to MD who is unavailable.
 - Better sharing between service units – use of webinars, need to step up to new technology.
 - **Community Service**
 - Not out in the community that much.
 - Need more Community Relations and Council support to direct coordinated service efforts; cohesive themes.
 - Boy Scouts are so unified around service – GS is not; more around cookies than anything – this is a weakness of GS.
 - Girl Scouts don't look like Girl Scouts (i.e., no uniforms) – Boy Scouts are much more recognizable. Girl Scouts not being marketed – need feet on the street.
 - Need a Community Service Liaison to find things to do and coordinate.
 - **Recruitment/Retention:**
 - More assistance with recruiting at low income schools.
 - Confirmation that schools are getting the flyers to the girls.
 - Regional Recruitment nights, more variety of nights including weekends.
 - Shared Planning, Earlier Planning in June/July since many schools start in early August or sooner.
 - Campus Girl Scout Coordinator for colleges
 - Help getting Leaders to leader meetings

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- Idea “Girl Scout” coffee cups at Kindergarten Registration
- Retention of older girls – council should do more around amazing older girl events.
 - ❖ Girls don’t feel connected to girls in the Council but do across the nation because of a national community service project.
- **Membership Directors:**
 - Improve Membership Director Rotation/Consistency(retention)
 - Don’t spread too thin (Own membership director?); some felt if had to choose found them of greatest assistance when attended Service Team meeting vs. Leader meeting.
- **Parents:**
 - More Communication/Training of Parents on Involvement (E-Communications)
 - Training designed for Parents (Parent Orientation/Girl Scouts 101 for Parents)
 - Recruiting of Parents whose daughters have been in for years
- **Training:**
 - Orientation Training help if Service Unit can’t do it
 - Conflict Management Training classes (leaders/girls/Parents)
 - Some don’t want online training
 - More localized trainings both Girl and Adult (including Camping certification)
 - Key Trainings both girl/ adult offered more frequently: Archery, Camping Cert., Program aide, Gold/Silver award, etc.
 - Older Girl Award Training Silver/Gold longer and more guidelines
 - Networking at Age Level Training **Grade (age) level trainings are no longer offered.**
 - Show Troops how to adapt program to better fit troop dynamics(i.e. Journeys)
 - More training around new resources and how to work with girls
- What would you like to do or share with neighboring service units (positions, activities, etc.)?
 - Girl Recruit Lists
 - Cookie Rallies
 - Large Events
 - Networking at Age level Trainings **Grade (age) level classes are no longer offered.**
 - Juliette Coordinators
 - Older Girl Retention Ideas/programs
 - Older Girl Activities
 - Recognition of Awards at Community Level (newspapers, etc.)
 - Organizers, Delegates, Program Aide Coordinators, Community Relations

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- Other:
 - MarCom Girl Internships -Expand/Advertise more/Rotate more? , offer other internship opportunities
 - Older girls underutilized as Mentors, leaders need to be better informed how to use them
 - Council Contacts/Phone list other than Membership Director
 - More Consistency of Program
 - Email Overload, look at clustering more
 - Marketing Girl Scouts to Community
 - Meetings of other Positions like is being done for Community Relations Reps.
 - Not so many activities related to Journeys.
 - Annual meeting – provide day care by older girl troops and rotate to the southern part of the council