

The Chair's Report

As we head into fall with the ringing of school bells across the country and the change of foliage, it is time to turn our attention to the start of the new program year. We must renew our efforts to promote the religious recognition programs within our different regions and provide a way for our programs to be used with as many young people as possible. It is vital that every young person has the opportunity to benefit from our programs.

Let us not forget that we recognize the importance of faith as a foundation for all the youth we serve. We are charged as members of the larger community to promote the values and beliefs that are part of our lives as Catholic adults. We must ensure that all youth within our regions have the chance to develop an understanding that Girl Scouts and Camp Fire are not separate from their faith as Catholic youth but part of the overall Catholic faith experience.

My goal and vision for the coming year is that we work together to develop a tradition of Girl Scouts and Camp Fire within each parish community across our country. We who have given years of service to our different programs understand that we offer relevant programs and that our programs support values in common with our Catholic beliefs. Our programs offer young people the chance to try new things, to be active members of their communities, and to give service and share their gifts and talents within that community.

Take a few minutes to think about how we can effectively communicate who we are and what we do. There are a lot of wonderful programs across this country! To ensure that a tradition of Girl Scouts and Camp Fire is realized within our



community, we must share with each other the different resources we have.

If you have a project that is fun, empowers, and celebrates Catholic youth, please share it with the rest of us. Strategies and programs that increase awareness and the stature of the religious recognition programs will ultimately enable us to benefit more youth.

If you have ideas and programs to share, please e-mail them to me. We will share your ideas and program links in our next newsletter. Your program ideas may be e-mailed to me at kcottom@pacbell.net.

I want to thank all of you who are out there every day, year after year, sharing your gifts and talents with our Catholic youth. By your example, you manifest that we all are called to serve and do so with a humble heart.

Kathleen Cottom
Chair, NCCGSCF
Region 11 Representative

Regional Reports

Region 7

Chicago has a well-established Catholic Committee that meets monthly with Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, and the Junior Daughters of the Knights of St. Peter Claver. Our Awards Day is in March at Holy Name Cathedral where, on average, 100 young people receive their *Mary, the First Disciple* and *The Spirit Alive* medals from the bishop. Adults are presented with the *St. Anne* and *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton* medals. The Boy Scouts have a separate committee and Awards Day. All other awards are presented at the parish level. Our chairperson is an energetic young woman, Cheryl Antos, who keeps us on track and has added a retreat day at the Basilica to our annual events. The secretary, Pat van Melle, is a wonderful lady who also organizes the seating arrangement for our Awards Day. Publicity is done by Carol Natke, who also initiated Marian Day at the Art Institute of Chicago as an annual event. The liaison to the Chicago Archdiocese Catholic Women is Dorothy Mae Thomas, who keeps that group updated on all our events. Workshops (training for moderators of religious award programs) occur throughout the year led by the 18 committee members.

Millie O'Brien
Region 7 Representative

Region 10

Recognition Presentation

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza presented religious recognition medals to 140 Catholic Girl Scouts in all four program levels this year. Receiving *The Spirit Alive* were Nicole Crum, Mary Faler, Tracy Newman, and Michelle Williamson. In honor of having attained *The Gold Award*, Girl Scouting's highest award, in addition to *The Spirit Alive*, the archdiocese presents a special recognition, *The Bishop's Gold*. Receiving this honor this year were Nicole Crum, Mary Faler, Tracy Newman, and Alexandra Cruz (see photo, below). Alexandra completed *The*



Spirit Alive in the previous year and earned *The Gold Award* while in the first part of her freshman year in college as she had graduated from high school a year early. For her *The Spirit Alive* service project, Alexandra renovated a rundown and overgrown historical cemetery in Austin while attending the University of Texas. For her *Gold Award* project, she organized an after-school RCIA program at her high school to help those students who wanted to complete their classes but could not attend the weekend classes at their parish. In 2003, Nicole was a delegate to the Youth Congress at the NCYC in Houston, and as a follow-up to her experience, she wrote a paper on social justice which was published by her parish.

Virginia Reed
Region 10 Representative

Lifetime Achievement Award

In recognition of 43 years of service, the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to Virginia Reed.

Building on her one year as a 6th grade Girl Scout, Virginia began her adult service as leader of her daughter's troop. While continuing in this capacity for 8 years, Virginia moved into the areas of initiating and coordinating girl programs, administration, and special events. Her primary contribution centered on raising spiritual awareness especially concerning the religious recognition programs developed and implemented by the various religious faith communities. Virginia formed and chaired the Council's Religious Recognitions Committee and still serves as the religious relationships coordinator and on the Membership Department's Faith-Based Initiative team. The religious recognition programs are recognized by Girl Scouts, USA, which encourages each girl to become a stronger member of her own faith tradition.

Virginia has served the Catholic membership of Girl Scouts and Camp Fire since her appointment in 1976 as the Region 10 (Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) representative to the NCCGSCF/NCYOF (the NCYOF officially became the NFCYM in 1982).

Betsy Denson
Communications Director
Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council

NCCGSCF Chair Visits Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council

On a recent visit to Houston, Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council (GSSJC) hosted Kathleen Cottom, chair of the National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire (NCCGSCF) and a member of the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area Council. Mrs. Cottom's expertise is in the areas of religious relationships and council training. In discussion with Mary Vitek and Delphia Duckens, the importance of good, continued working relationships in all areas was emphasized. The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and GSSJC have enjoyed the benefits of a Plan of Cooperation since 1975 and have collaborated to assist in the spiritual development of its Catholic members through the Archdiocesan Committee on Girl Scouting (ACGS). GSSJC is and has been a leader in the promotion of the religious recognition programs for girls of all faith communities. These programs are written, owned, and implemented by the religious leaders themselves and serve as a means to help a Girl Scout keep that part of the Girl Scout Promise "to serve God" according to her own faith. Virginia Reed, chair of the ACGS, serves as the religious relationships coordinator for GSSJC.

*Betsy Denson
Communications Director
Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council*

Region 14

Juliette Senior Girl Scout Heather Lowe from Chesapeake, Virginia, was selected to be on the Senior Board for the Girl Scout Council of Colonial Coast, Chesapeake, Virginia. Heather is a trained religious recognition moderator for youth for the Diocese of Richmond, as well. Heather will be attending the National Girl Scout Congress in Atlanta in October. At the end of the school year, Heather was nominated and selected by one of her teachers to attend a National Leadership Forum on Medicine at the University of California in Los Angeles. With other youth from across the country, medical



Left Picture: (pictured from left) Virginia Reed and Cora Ann Blytas. Right Picture: (pictured from left) Mary Vitek, Kathleen Cottom, Virginia Reed, and Delphia Duckens.

personnel provided workshops and hands-on activities at hospitals for the youth. Heather had the opportunity to personally experience cutting into a cadaver. Fun stuff!

Meredith Shelton, a third-year Cadette from Troop 480, Richmond, Virginia, was re-elected to the Senior Youth Council at the Church of the Redeemer. Meredith served three years on the Junior Youth Council. Nicole Shelton, a new Cadette from Troop 480, was elected to the Junior Youth Council as the co-chair. Cheryl Brown received the Diocese of Richmond Outstanding Youth Award for Region 4. She is a Senior Girl Scout and a Juliette with Service Unit 615, Hampton, Virginia. Cheryl has been a Girl Scout since the first grade.

Krista Patrick is a Senior Girl Scout in Troop 168. She has been a Girl Scout for 12 years since Daisies. Krista received the 2005 Girl Scout of the Year from the Virginia State Knights of Columbus. She has served as an ambassador for Girl Scouts in the community by appearing in various advertisements promoting the annual Helping Hands Food Drive that brought in more than 173,000 pounds of food, the largest single day in Hampton Roads. Krista has participated in several opening ceremonies, representing Girl Scouts, by singing the National Anthem at various community functions such as Harbor Park. She has earned the Silver Award, the second highest award in Girl Scouting. She is currently working on the highest award, The Gold Award. Krista will be entering her senior year at Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach as an international baccalaureate student. She is a member of the National Spanish and Latin Societies. She is the 2nd vice president of her class, a Chorus Madrigal, and on the Student Council Association Executive Board. Krista is active in her parish, St. Matthew, and sings in the choir.

*Dorothy A. Cogswell
Region 14 Representative*



Right Picture: (pictured from left) Mary Vitek, Kathleen Cottom, Virginia Reed, and Delphia Duckens.

From the Camp Fire Corner

Camp Fire USA's *Little Stars* program contains projects that serve as an introduction to Camp Fire USA. The projects are designed to excite and educate children before entering kindergarten (generally ages three to five) on a wide range of topics. Suggested programs where *Little Stars* can be used include: family day care programs, day care centers, pre-school play groups, faith-based children's centers, or as a program part of Camp Fire USA small group programs. In some councils, Teens in Action may volunteer to assist with this program.



Project List

Trail to Knowing Me

- My Family and Me
- Health
- Safety

Trail to Family and Community

- Our Group
- I'm Learning to Be Polite

Trail to Creativity

- Create and Pretend
- Arts and Crafts
- Fun with Food
- Trail to the Environment
- Ecology
- Exploring My World
- My Animal Friends

Trail to the Future

- Transportation
- Fitness

Project Format

Within each trail, projects are designed to stimulate motor skills, promote group-learning, and build confidence. There are 13 projects in the *Little Stars* curriculum. Each trail project follows the same basic format:

- *Level*: recommended grade level for children participating in the activities.
- *Trail*: name of the trail that the project falls under.
- *Project*: name of the project.
- *Purpose*: general description of what the children will learn while doing the project.
- *Meeting Plans*: how to do activities and supplies or materials needed to complete them.

- *Youth Outcomes*: list of ways children will benefit from participating in the project activities.
- *Requirements*: what the children need to accomplish to receive a recognition item.
- *Tips for Group Leaders*: advice for making each project a success.
- *Family Take-Home Page*: worksheet included at the end of the projects to be photocopied and sent home with the children. These take-home pages contain activities for the children to complete with their families.



Meeting Plans

Each activity option within a project is written as a meeting plan. *Little Stars* meeting plans are designed to last about 30 minutes.

Meeting plans are provided to help Camp Fire USA leaders create a fun, educational program. They are a guideline for leaders conducting a Camp Fire USA meeting. As each project follows the same format, so do the meeting plans. Each meeting plan contains the following information:

- *Trail*: name of the trail that the project is on.
- *Meeting Plan*: name of the meeting plan.
- *Project*: name of the project that the plan falls under.
- *Purpose*: general description of what the children will learn while participating in the activities listed in the meeting plan.
- *Opening*: activity to signal the beginning of the meeting. Meeting Openings and Closings ideas are listed in the book.
- *Materials*: list of materials needed to complete the meeting plan.
- *Preparation*: tasks that should be done before the meeting.



- *Activities*: explanation of the activities in the meeting plan.
- *Playback*: Points to Reinforce: list of questions to reinforce what the children have learned in the meeting.
- *Closing*: activity to signal the conclusion of the meeting. Meeting Openings and Closings ideas are listed in the book.

Progress and Recognition

Camp Fire USA believes in the value and importance of recognition for accomplishment. All curricula for older children build this into its structure. However, the needs of preschool children are different. Their short-term memory and limited understanding of concepts such as earning awards over a period of time change the need for recognition. Preschool children enjoy playing and doing activities for the joy of it. They do not carry over the concept of what they are working toward week to week. They live in the here and now. Receiving a sticker for the activity immediately after they complete it is recognition enough. As a result, when children complete a meeting plan, they will receive a sticker from the corresponding project to place on their *Little Stars* recognition chart. The *Little Stars* identification sticker is given to children when they join.

Requirements

In *Little Stars*, there are no requirements in how groups complete meeting plans or projects. Groups can do projects in any order. A group could complete all of the meeting plans from a project in consecutive order, or could work on several projects at once. For example, a meeting plan from Safety may be done one week, and a meeting plan from Fitness may be done the following week. The group can consider the seasons and its own interests in choosing which to do first.

Local Camp Fire Councils can assist you in implementing this program for children in your area, or contact Rosemary Pezzuto, National Camp Fire Representative at CampFirePatuxent@aol.com.

Rosemary Pezzuto
National Camp Fire Representative

From the Girl Scouts USA

Girl Scouts across the country are kicking into high gear in preparation for the 2005 Girl Scout National Council Session. The 50th Convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia from October 7-10, and it promises to be a wonderful experience for all involved!



The historic event will bring together 15,000 of our diverse membership, and will celebrate 93 years of Girl Scouting. This National Session will not be business as usual, but it will point the way to a brighter future with a new vision for success, sustained growth, and expansion. For more information on convention speakers, events, and schedule, please visit our website at www.girlscouts.org/convention.

As summer draws to a close, I am looking forward the start of a wonderful year and the continuation of a successful partnership!

Hillary Hazan
Program and Membership Consultant
Girl Scouts of the USA

Question and Answer Corner



Q. Can I **only** purchase the patch and not the medal for my program participants?

A. No. The patches for the religious recognition programs (*Family of God, I Live My Faith, Mary, the First Disciple and The Spirit Alive*) are not purchased in place of the medals. They are purchased **in addition** to the medals.

If you have any questions you would like answered, or information you would like to share, please email: hmobrien@sbcglobal.net.

Historically Speaking

In our last issue, we spoke of the approval of the Girl Scout movement by the United States (US) church in general and in particular, in the New York city schools. At the same time, the movement was flourishing in Detroit and other cities. By 1919, Girl Scouting was strong in 509 cities and towns in the US, and as our country entered World War I, the khaki clad girls were familiar figures in every community demonstration. They had become a vigorous and significant expression of a national patriotic spirit, the direct result of activity through the Girl Scout program to develop good citizenship among these young women. Detroit alone had 16 troops dedicated to worthwhile work through application of and concentration on the laws and regulations of the movement.

"Was it not worthwhile that the Girl Scouts knit 2550 pounds of wool into helmets and sweaters for the Red Cross? Was it not worthwhile to have Girl Scouts of this country during the war sell millions of dollars worth of Liberty Bonds; during the First and Second Loans, no suggestions were made in National Headquarters with regard to the part that the Girl Scouts had taken and no records were kept of their work at that time. In the Third Loan, however, they sold 12,742 Bonds amounting to \$3,151,100, while in the Fourth Loan they sold 39,987 Bonds amounting to \$6,023,550. In Detroit alone, the subscriptions obtained by the Girl Scouts amounted to over \$18,000" (from a typed speech by Beatrice Prior—later Turner—on behalf of the Girl Scout Campaign [Detroit MI, 1919, p. 2]).

"By 1922, the League of Catholic Women (in Detroit) had taken an avid

interest in Girl Scouting. There was one Catholic woman, who through her connection with the philanthropic work of the League, was cognizant of the ills that arise from unwholesome entertainment and felt that this need could be fully corrected through the Girl Scout organization. With this in mind, Mrs. E. A. Skae presented the matter to the League and they devised a plan for organizing Girl Scout troops in the various parishes. A volunteer worker assumed this responsibility which grew to such proportions that, at a later time, a paid worker was hired to become the "parochial head," first at the League office and later, at the Girl Scout headquarters. Many young women offered their services as leaders and were instructed in the art of scouting" (Beatrice Turner in *The Catholic Woman* [Detroit MI, November 1926, p. 2]).

Records show that this parochial leader must have been Mrs. Laura Steele who resigned her position four years later, averring that home duties were sufficient to keep her busy. Beatrice Prior Turner, originally from Colorado Springs, became the new leader. Mrs. Turner was very much an outdoors person and an excellent fund raiser. It is from her writings that we have the details of the war bond efforts and the following narrative which sounds familiar. "A stimulating enthusiasm has arisen among the parochial troops by the announcement that the League of Catholic Women will give a prize of fifteen dollars to the troop that succeeds in obtaining the most subscriptions to *The Catholic Woman* over one hundred" (Beatrice Turner in *The Catholic Woman* [Detroit MI, December 1926, p. 2]). Suggestions were made as to the disposition of this prize money;

i.e., donating to the new camp site, purchase of flags, drums, bugles, etc. Mrs. Turner was a frequent writer for *The Catholic Woman*, which carried reports of the Girl Scout troops and announcements of activities for adults.

Mrs. Turner was also an avid recruiter of leaders and did not hesitate to play the trump card by reminding possible leaders that "His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, has bestowed his blessing and approval on those who give themselves to the task of aiding the Girl Scout movement" (Beatrice Turner in *The Catholic Woman* [Detroit MI, November 1926, p. 1]). She deplored the fact that at the time, there were 101 parishes in Detroit but only 16 had troops. Through her idea to invite one female representative from Catholic groups (church organizations, colleges and schools) to a meeting at the chancery on January 25, 1943, the Archdiocesan Committee on Girl Scouting was formed. Through the C.Y.O. representative, Mr. Crowe, the director of the Catholic Youth Organization recognized these efforts and offered their sponsorship. Thus began a long and fruitful relationship with the archdiocesan youth office. Monthly Communion Sundays were held in each District and then city-wide Holy Hours each year. A Committee Chaplain was appointed to assist with and conduct the spiritual activities, and after considerable growth, the CYO hired a secretary to care for the Girl Scout program. Mr. Crowe's enthusiasm provided great support to the International Camp held near Pontiac at which he

assisted with the Opening Round Up and provided priests for the Masses. The Archdiocese's responsibility to Round Up was to supply all the prayer material which was funded by Mrs. Cousins. Alice Conway, head of Catholic Scouting from National, had previously attended a dinner meeting at the home of Mrs. Cousins Slattery who served on the Committee representing the Girl Scout Metropolitan Council, as did Fr. John J. Wittstock, Chaplain, and Bea Turner. At this dinner, arrangements were made to serve the needs of Catholic girls at this International Camp—the first Round Up. In attendance at this event as an Assistant Leader was Mrs. Sue Wyels, who was later appointed to represent Region 6 (Michigan and Ohio) on the Catholic Girl Scout/Camp Fire Subcommittee of the Youth Advisory Committee, NCYOF. Finally, there was movement toward a formal alliance with the national Catholic youth movement.

Note: There were many other dioceses at this time which were actively pursuing the formation of local committees and designing programs. We welcome you to submit any information you can gather so that, in future columns, we can record the enthusiasm and fervor with which the heroines and heroes of our movement were inspired.

Virginia Reed
Historian, NCCGSCF
Region 10 Representative

Partners in Faith

Immaculate Conception Academy

Immaculate Conception Academy of San Francisco (ICA) has partnered with Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area to provide Girl Scout services to students. In the first year of partnership, every freshman at ICA was registered as a Girl Scout giving them access to valuable learning and growth opportunities. During the school year, students enjoyed team-building activities, ecology programs, and even self-defense lessons.

In addition to these regular troop activities, the Girl Scouts also provide support to ICA for its grade-level retreats. Girl Scouts host the retreats at their camp properties, and they provide staff to help with program activities during the retreats. Typically, there are two 2-hour programs and an evening program.

Whether at school or in a retreat setting, the ICA incorporates the Girl Scout model of planning. Using a "for girls, by girls" approach, the students are invited to give input in the program activities that will be offered. Girls have selected program topics that encompass academic, religious, and social themes—all of which enrich the academy and retreat experience.

The partnership between Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area and the Immaculate Conception Academy continues to thrive. This year, each freshman, sophomore, and junior is a registered participant of the Girl Scout program.

Nikki Van Ausdell

San Francisco's Catholic Girl Scouts Save the Bay

Imagine 58 fourteen-year-old girls trapped in a cabin, enacting violations of environmental justice. These savvy high school freshmen from San Francisco's Immaculate Conception Academy were experiencing their Freshmen Retreat—Girl Scout style.

This Council-school partnership kicked off last fall with a Sophomore Retreat, which focused on self esteem. By the time winter came around for the Freshmen Retreat, Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area were beginning to introduce environmental themes to prepare new Girl Scouts for the launch of the Bold, Audacious Project for Fall 2006—Girl Scouts Save the Bay.

At their retreat, ICA freshmen participated in animated discussions about habitats and conservation, culminating in group skits and songs. Every group summarized human behaviors that negatively impact the environment, and alternatives they could present to others to help protect our world. A friendship circle with gaping holes representing contaminated water, injured animals, and poisoned plants concluded the learning activity, driving home the importance of rallying around environmental justice.

ICA girls continued their environmental education through a partnership with the Crissy Field Center, the National Park Service, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. Girls explored urban versus natural environments on ranger-led tours of San Francisco's newly renovated coast and completed a coastal restoration project to earn a patch.

While ICA girls also participated in other Girl Scout recreational events throughout the calendar year, it goes without saying that ICA helped pave the way for Girl Scouts Save the Bay.

Stacy Shwartz
Community Development Director
Girl Scouts of San Francisco Bay Area

Searching for Historical Information

The NCCGSCF is seeking information regarding events or activities which took place on behalf of Catholic girls in Girl Scouts and Camp Fire during earlier times. We hear about various efforts to organize diocesan committees and programs which were developed locally, especially for girls ages 12 and older.

Programs honoring Mary, our Blessed Mother, were developed locally, and we especially would like to hear about them. Perhaps pictures of medals or patches are available. What we need is information of any such efforts so we can insert them into the mosaic of Girl Scouting and Camp Fire in the Catholic Church. Talking to some older people could possibly produce information and yield some interesting stories; possibly girls who are visiting nursing homes could talk to older ladies who were Girl Scouts or Camp Fire girls.

Please make some inquiries in your diocese so we can recognize the efforts of those who went before us to enable the Catholic youth to keep that first part of the Girl Scout Promise and Camp Fire Oath, "to serve God" in a truly Catholic way.

Please send your information and pictures to the NCCGSCF historian, Virginia Reed, vbreed@sbcglobal.net, any of the regional representatives (listed on back page), or the NFCYM national office, rubym@nfcym.org.

Virginia Reed
NCCGSCF Historian
Region 10 Representative



Camp Fire USA Councils or Leaders—Catholic Religious Recognition Information

Camp Fire USA councils or leaders who are looking for better ways of working with Catholic youth in Camp Fire USA programs are encouraged to contact Rosemary Pezzutto, Camp Fire USA national representative to NFCYM at CampFirePatuxent@aol.com. Rosemary is available to assist Camp Fire USA staff and volunteers in finding ways to increase the use of Camp Fire USA programs in Catholic faith-based activities.

Rosemary Pezzutto
National Camp Fire Representative

Position Statement and Background National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA)

Preface

In any significant collaborative relationship, organizations should periodically review the purpose and processes of that relationship. Several issues at the GSUSA Council and parish youth ministry levels have led to dialogue between the leadership of the NFCYM and GSUSA. This position paper will identify the main issues and official NFCYM and GSUSA responses based on NFCYM and GSUSA communications, knowing that not all issues affect every diocese or council. Direct quotations from official inter-organizational communication are referenced.

Position Statement

The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry appreciates the long association with Girl Scouts USA and is proud of its collaboration in the education and formation of Catholic young women. We affirm the work of the Girl Scouts in preparing young women to be mature and responsible citizens in the world.

Concerns have been raised about materials utilized in some Girl Scout programs which address health and sexuality issues. As part of its mission to serve Catholic youth, the NFCYM is committed to present to all youth, men and women, the full breadth and beauty of Catholic moral teaching about the dignity of the human person. Human sexuality is a constitutive part of this human dignity gifted to each person by God. The human person must exercise this gift in the spirit of Christian chastity appropriate to one's state in life.

In the teaching and promotion of these values parents are the first and primary teachers of the faith. Youth ministers, Girl Scouts USA and all other collaborating partners are expected to respect the primary role and responsibility of parents. This requires that parents have prior knowledge and consent when matters of human sexuality are presented to their children.

NFCYM expects its collaborating members to support Catholic parents and youth ministers in the promotion of Catholic moral teaching among Catholic youth. We believe that this statement enables the Girl Scout program to fulfill their intent to fully respect and yet remain responsive to the varying beliefs of individual girls and their families.

History

The formal relationship between GSUSA and the Catholic Church dates from at least 1914 when Cardinal Gibbons endorsed the work of Girl Scouts and their relationship with the Catholic Church. In 1975 a formal plan of cooperation was signed between the Representative for Youth Activities in the Department of Education at the United States Catholic Conference and GSUSA.

This relationship was more fully formalized in 1988 by Archbishop John May, president of the United States Catholic Conference, assigning the Secretariat for Laity and Family Life to serve as liaison to GSUSA.

In 1982 the NFCYM was incorporated as a ministry organization which included the National Catholic Committee on Girl Scouts and Camp Fire (NCCGSCF) as a constitutive member and GSUSA as a collaborating member. The NFCYM assumed all responsibility for Catholic religious recognition programs serving Girl Scout and Camp Fire units.

Building on the relationship created through USCC, the NFCYM entered into a plan of cooperation with GSUSA in 1997, through our National Catholic Committee for Girls Scouts and Camp Fire. This plan highlights the role of GSUSA in providing information on religious recognition programs developed by NFCYM to all councils and troops and the need for continuing dialogue to assure respect for Roman Catholic religious practices and teachings and Girl Scouting's basic principles.

"The members of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire and Girl Scouts of the United States of America are united by a belief in God. We understand that the motivating force in Girl Scouting is spiritual and that through a relationship with Girl Scouting, each girl is encouraged to become a stronger member of her own religious community. The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry believes that the programs made available through the National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire encourage and enhance each girl's individual religious instruction in becoming a faith-filled Christian woman. The Roman Catholic Church and Girl Scouts of the United States of America recognize that religious instruction is the responsibility of parents and religious leaders."
(NFCYM and GSUSA Plan of Cooperation 1997)

There is a significant history to the relationship between the Catholic Church and her agents for youth ministry and Girl Scouts USA. This is a relationship that needs to be continually affirmed and strengthened.

GSUSA Structure

Issues have arisen at the local level and there is some confusion about the role and relationship between local Girl Scout councils and the national office for GSUSA.

"As for governance, 315 Girl Scout councils govern specific geographic areas and deliver program to girls. Just as each U.S. diocese is autonomous, so are the councils independent corporations and therefore, the governance

of each council is autonomous with the support of the national organization. (As previously stated) we believe the local councils are the best judges of the needs of the girls in their regions. Although this structure allows us to be responsive to girls and their families, it also requires a high level of local input. And, even as I imagine there might often be diversity among parishes within a diocese, I can assure you that many of our councils must serve and be responsive to a variety of communities and issues within individual regions. I also want to make you aware that each council is subject to a Council Performance Assessment to ensure they adhere to best policies, practices and procedures as established by the national organization.” Kathy Cloninger, Chief Executive Officer, (GSUSA May 2005)

Therefore, local councils have a fair degree of autonomy in determining to which issues affecting young people they respond and the resources and partnerships utilized.

Further, the local council also charters the troops. Therefore, the parish serves as a host and not a chartering agent for Girl Scout troops, unlike Boy Scouts.

Girl Scout Councils and Specific Issues

Concerns have been raised about materials utilized in some Girl Scout programs which address health and sexuality issues. GSUSA communication supports the primary role of parents in providing informed consent and approval on the dissemination of all materials.

“GSUSA policy is not to take a stand on or advocate for or against any issue regarding a girl’s health and sexuality, especially outside the confines of Girl Scout programs. We also believe that parents have the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of their girls within the context of Girl Scout programs. These policies enable the Girl Scout program to fully respect and yet remain responsive to the varying beliefs of individual girls and their families. Importantly, when a council or troop offers programs that address many of these issues, they are offered with the fully informed consent of the parents or guardians of the girls who choose to participate.” (GSUSA May 2005)

The role of parents in reviewing and assenting to materials and programs is reinforced.

“Since participation in any and all Girl Scout programs is determined by securing permission from a girl’s parent or legal guardian, all materials used in the program are disseminated to girls by the adult partners in our programs and are available for parental review.” (GSUSA May 2005)

Girl Scout Councils and Collaborative Partners

Local councils are expected to determine how to deliver the Girl Scout program in their area. Councils choose which collaborative partners will provide the best program and print resources for the needs of the young people in their councils.

A specific concern has been raised about Planned Parenthood and the public perception that GSUSA has a formal relationship with Planned Parenthood.

“To clarify a question that has been raised about such community relationships, monies from Girl Scouts at the council and/or national level are not now and will not be given to any outside organization that advocates on issues regarding private decisions to be made by a girl and her family. Specifically, no monies collected by Girl Scouts for any purpose, including our girls’ cookie sales, will be given to Planned Parenthood or any other organization that advocates on these issues.” (GSUSA May 2005)

Local Girl Scout Councils partner with many organizations, including Catholic dioceses, in order to respond to the specific needs of young people.

Girl Scout Governance

A specific concern has been raised about local council adherence to national policies and guidelines and the challenge created by a separately incorporated council structure. This might lead to quality control issues.

“... each council is subject to a Council Performance Assessment to ensure they adhere to best policies, practices and procedures as established by the national organization.” (GSUSA May 2005)

In any organization there are certain to be issues where local implementation is not fully in line with national policies. The Council Performance Assessment is GSUSA’s official process for monitoring local council implementation.

Grievance Process

Questions or concerns about local issues are ideally handled at the local level whenever possible.

“Girl Scout councils take immense pride in their record of responsive communication with the publics we serve. Should community members have an issue to discuss on any aspect of the Girl Scout program, they have only to call the local council to be informed of the process. We recommend the troop leader be contacted so the specifics of any issue can be discussed and then given time to assess the situation to determine if further information or recourse is desired. If so, an individual should contact the Executive Director (ED) or CEO of the council which oversees the troop in question. Generally, The ED or CEO will require 1-3 business weeks to review or assess the situation and provide feedback. Should further review or feedback be necessary, they can call the national office at 212-852-8000, and they will be directed to the Council Services Consultant who oversees the specific council. Inquiries can be expedited if the caller has all of the details of the issue at hand, including the troop number, the troop leader’s name, and a summary of communications to that point. Regardless of the time it takes—up to three business weeks to get a final result—all parties can rest assured they have had input into the process.” (GSUSA May 2005)

This value is reinforced in the NFCYM/GSUSA Plan of Cooperation.

“Areas of disagreement should be resolved at the local level whenever possible; however, if a substantial grievance cannot be resolved locally, the grievance should be channeled through the diocesan youth ministry leader and the local Girl Scout Council executive director to the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry/National Catholic Committee for Girl Scouts and Camp Fire and Girl Scouts of the United States of America.” (NFCYM and GSUSA Plan of Cooperation 1997)

There are several steps in the grievance process.

- Concerned parents and parish leaders meet with local troop leaders to address issues.
- If necessary, the next step is for parish leaders to meet with the local council officials. Ideally, the diocesan director for youth ministry, or designate, will be informed about any grievance situation, included in all communication, and present for discussions as appropriate or deemed necessary.
- The third step includes the diocesan director of youth ministry meeting with the local Girl Scout Council

executive. Diocesan directors of youth ministry will utilize their own Catholic Committees on Girl Scouting and Campfire, as appropriate.

- If issues are not able to be resolved at the local level, the NFCYM is contacted by the diocesan director of youth ministry and discussion is pursued with GSUSA.

Ways to Strengthen Communication

The NFCYM encourages diocesan directors of youth ministry to be proactive in contacting GSUSA Council leadership and in developing clear processes for communication.

Where appropriate and necessary, local dioceses and Girl Scout Councils should meet to develop a specific plan of cooperation, based on the national model. Such a plan might include the following:

- Diocesan directors of youth ministry should meet with their bishop to ascertain the bishop's hopes, concerns, and desired outcomes so that a relationship with Girl Scouts enhances the Church's ministry to young people.
- Dioceses should create Catholic Committees on Girl Scouts and Campfire (and Boy Scouts, as well), under the auspices of the diocesan director of youth ministry as the agent for the bishop, or a diocesan designate. Such committees could include a representative from

the local Girl Scout and Campfire Council. Annual joint meetings between diocesan Catholic committees and the local council leaders would improve communications.

- Local councils should invite the diocesan director of youth ministry and/or parish coordinators of youth ministry to serve as consultants to the council on appropriate committees, especially those considering new resources and programs.
- Parish coordinators of youth ministry should serve on troop committees, representing the pastor, where the parish serves as a troop sponsor.

Further, the NFCYM, through the National Catholic Committee on Girls Scouts and Campfire, will meet annually with the appropriate GSUSA representatives to ensure communication at the national level.

July 26, 2005

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