
Fall Town Hall Q & A Responses 2025

Monday, October 6, 2025 – Cranberry Township Q&A

Is every camp going to be the same? (Re: 2026 Simplified Camp Sessions)

Simplified sessions will still have individual themes for the weeks, but will focus on more outdoor programming and maintaining the same schedule throughout sessions to make it easier for the program team.

Is it possible to move Camp Redwing out of the flood zone?

We looked at relocating to the 55 acres out of the flood zone. Unfortunately, this would cost millions, and the council can't support this amount, especially since Camp Redwing is the least utilized camp at this point.

We were recently at Camp Skymeadow – Archery equipment was in much better condition than usual.... great job! Tent Units at Camp Skymeadow need some work – Alpine tent units have tents roped off and not available for use.

This was due to the storms this summer and trees coming down on the tent units. We have the lumber purchased, and work will begin soon on repairing them. Also, the board just approved to move forward with the multi-complex building at Camp Skymeadow, and this will be in the middle of the camp and will have sleeping and restroom facilities.

Will there be a price increase for cookies?

No, cookies will stay at \$6 a package, and the new cookie flavor, Exploremores, will be available like every other variety.

Our service unit was recently at Camp Skymeadow, and it was a mess. There was mold in the fridge, dirt everywhere, sinks were backed up, and the toilets needed to be snaked. Roto-Rooter had to be called in on Saturday morning. The main road up to Alpine was washed out, and people's cars were getting scraped on the bottom. We had one volunteer who hit a tree stump because you couldn't see it.

I am so sorry for this experience, and we will look into all of this.

We have a service unit camp at Camp Redwing. What are the other options for service units in the summer?

We're currently looking into what our different options are and what can house your numbers. Also looking to see what weeks we can keep open for service unit rentals at our other camps during the summer.

I have an Indie girl. What are you doing for them? Why don't we have a liaison in place? I don't feel like I am receiving proper communication or adequate help from the council. Is it possible for the MSAs to send a list of the Indie girls out to the service units? Also, share with the service unit managers so they know of Indie girls in their area. Basically, how can we better connect Indie with their appropriate service units?

We do have a committee on how to better help the Indie girls, but need to develop this better.

What, as a council, are you doing to replace the programming loss at Camp Redwing? The other camps are too far to drive for just an afternoon of programming.

We have done a small restructure for the outdoor team; they used to be just camp directors. They are now camp directors/outdoor program specialists. They will work at camp during the summer, but during the rest of the year, they will focus on programming around the entire council. Our programming needs to be expanded to all 27 counties.

What is the timeline for service units to know if camps will be available for them to rent for day camps? Trying to plan for 2026.

Jessica is working on this and will be reaching out to all service units that hold day camps at our camp locations.

Why can't we just fix the water lines? And wait to fix the pool next summer?

Pat also previously stated in 2017, after closing 5 camps, that no more camps would be closed for a long time. How do you explain that?

In 2017, this was accurate. Since then, our membership has declined, as well as usage of the camps. We have fully analyzed and costed out the repairs, which include an entirely new water system and infrastructure costing around \$300,000; the pool would cost around \$800,000 (not including the bathhouse). Camp Conshatawba did receive a new pool; however, the numbers and usage were there to sustain this. Even if this all could be repaired, flooding still remains the problem.

It is extremely sad to hear about Camp Redwing, but after the flooding tragedy in Texas, it makes sense to be vigilant and close the camp due to the consistent flooding problems.

Parallel to the announcement that Camp Redwing is closing, we do not want to receive emails about Gifts & Goodies, or want to hear about girls going out and where supplies can be found to support programming needs.

Thank you for saying this about Camp Redwing. We will look into our communication and the timing of our emails.

Please put together resources for troops for outdoor programming, and what is available for younger troops who do not want tent camping. Also, what did the process look like to close Camp Redwing?

Camp Redwing has always had flooding issues. The summer camp moved away in 2017 due to failing infrastructure, but kept SU and troop camping. After the annual meeting this spring, we learned about the well issues. We spent the rest of the spring and summer collecting data and making decisions.

How is the council working to get more volunteers in? Both my wife and I are aging and worried about the future of our troops.

Unfortunately, this is not a problem specific to your area. We are having trouble recruiting volunteers over girls. We looked at other councils and what they do for adult outreach – looked at everything that might work. In November, we will be piloting a few recruitment programs and see how they will go. We would welcome any and all ideas on how to get more adults to become volunteers and troop leaders.

Have you considered working with the people who bought our camps to use for outdoor programming?

We went to former camps this summer, and they are not good for Girl Scout programming; we are pivoting to other partners like state parks.

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 – Edinboro Q&A

I have a concern at Camp Hawthorne Ridge where cars are driving right up to the tents. This is causing safety issues and leaving ruts near the tents. There used to be gates to block the cars; they are gone, and now people are taking advantage. We were there the other night, and people were using the cars late at night, and this is dangerous for the girls.

Thank you for letting us know, and we will be looking into this.

Was the budget passed before or after it was decided on Camp Redwing closing? And what are we doing to re-allocate the supplies and funds?

Budget and closure of Camp Redwing happened at the same time. Every time a camp is closed, we do a full inventory and move supplies to other camps as needed. Yurts will not be moved – this is cost-prohibitive.

Please look into reducing the cost of troop leaders to go to an event (I understand the price if meals are involved), but if it is just to go and be there as the troop leader, possibly reduce the cost.

Are we allowed to look at smaller companies in our areas and solicit funding? Is that allowed, separate from the council, to help our individual troops/service units? It would be smaller companies not on the council's radar, like mom-and-pop shops. What are the state laws? Are we allowed to do this?

We will talk to our Fund Development team.

I know it is early in the mission delivery realignment, but is recruitment going well with the new structure?

We did a reorganization that started in August. We still had training to get done, so we are a couple of weeks behind, but still trending better than national. We will be hitting recruitment hard through November, and then we will pick back up in March for Daisy launch. Recruitment kits can be sent to you – please call customer care to request one. Erie areas are a little behind the Pittsburgh area. In January, we start to prepare for March and then prepare in June for fall. We are very interested in volunteer feedback and comments regarding recruitment.

Realignment webinars have been great – thank you for doing them!

Closing camp is not an easy decision; however, seeing the numbers at the Annual Meeting shows us we need to take action, and no one wants what happened in Texas to happen here. It is expensive to run a camp, and I know this wasn't an easy decision.

Thank you for saying that. No, it was not and is never an easy decision. Flooding is a huge problem and concern, plus adding the need for a new water system and pool was the last straw.

I feel bad about girls that we lost during COVID. Is recruitment targeting certain areas or counties? Is it more generic?

We're always looking for ways to be more thoughtful and targeted in our recruitment events. Axe-throwing (PLASTIC!) kits are proving popular out in the wild. Recruiters are looking at areas where new girl numbers aren't where they should be. Allegheny County, South Butler, and Erie County are the only ones with active recruiters right now.

We had two girls who joined troops that were in homeschooling groups; they reached out to us. How can we reach out to them? Are there lists to share?

Yes, we have started to list homeschooling co-ops. We are also trying to break into the charter and cyber schools as well.

We have lots of schools in our area with girls that want to do Girl Scouts, but do not have the adult volunteers to support them. What can we do to get more volunteers to lead troops?

The question of adult recruitment is very much on our minds; happening in our council and across the nation is a lack of adult volunteers. We are looking at what other councils are doing to recruit adult volunteers. We will pilot some events in November.

General discussion regarding training:

Please look into reducing the costs for training. We want to provide our troops with the best experience, but it is hard to pay for all of the training.

Can you provide a list of the volunteers who are trained and willing to help?

Any talk about opening a dream lab?

No, it's too expensive. We have talked to other CEOs who had them put in and are not seeing the foot traffic needed to sustain it. A staff member visited one during a conference, and each room was sponsored by a different company. This seems to be the only way for councils to afford these buildings.

Monday, October 13, 2025 – Johnstown Q&A

This building was donated to the council – will that affect the sale?

No, it does not. But we will double-check the deed just to make sure.

Also, we ask to use this building and are willing to pay a small fee. I feel there are others like this, and that would fix the building from being unused. Is it possible to keep this building open and move the shop here from Greensburg? We highly utilize the Greensburg shop, and Wendy has always been fantastic to work with.

Unfortunately we do not have a way to close off the second floor in order for volunteers to use this space without staff having to be here. We looked into the cost for having the elevator locked and only allowing it to go to the 3rd floor after hours, and it costs too much. Even before going mobile during the pandemic, this building was not being highly used. Johnstown did have a shop, but it closed in 2017 due to low usage. This is when we opened the consignment shop option and pop-up shop locations. We are also looking into a mobile shop that will go anywhere requested in the council.

Since the Johnstown office is paid for, how does selling this location and leasing a space save you money? Where does the money go once sold?

It costs \$33,500 annually just to keep the building operating; this does not include ongoing maintenance issues. Leasing space will be cheaper, and we will not have the ongoing maintenance fees. Fees from selling the office sometimes go into operating, but most likely will be put into the operating reserves.

What are the membership numbers now compared to 2017?

In 2017, we had 18,000 girl members; now in 2025, we are at 14,000

In regard to your location, you are continuously growing here in the Westmont-Johnstown area compared to other areas in the council that are seeing slowdowns in their registration numbers. There is still a commitment to this area and the girls, and we will still be leasing a space and will keep in mind the room available for troop use.

Do you have any evidence showing that requests are dropping off asking to use this building? Would like more statistics to show that the Johnstown building is not being used. There also used to be PowerPoints reflecting the data – would like to see more transparency.

The problem is the size of the building and the staff it houses; we need to reduce maintenance costs going forward. This is an 11,000 square foot building with four employees.

Are we going to see a [membership] decline next year with the dues increase?

Yes, we expect to.

What will programming look like now that Michelle is gone? Also, specifically for the older girls?

We are actively interviewing for this position in the Johnstown area. We are also working on developing a plan for what the Girl Scouting year should look like and a timeline for each age group. Working to be more specific to age level and look at the 4 pillars to ensure everything is being hit for the Girl Scout experience.

Other councils have turned buildings into maker space – did you think about this for the Johnstown office?

We've been learning from other councils in Ohio and Texas who did this, and the programming numbers are not what they thought it would be and not sustaining itself. Please also remember our camp subsidy. We present this information annually at the annual meetings. It is currently over \$1 million and unsustainable for the council. We need to make sure we are not bringing in anything else that will also need subsidized by the council.

When updating the troop catalog, we must fill out the form entirely instead of just the updated information – anyway to change this?

Kate and Colleen will look into this.

Training for volunteers – we need more resources and more training available like canoe, small watercraft, etc. Is it possible to reduce the cost? Also to have more of a notice besides a month out?

We have heard this from the other Fall Town Halls and are looking into how we can re-vamp our training.

Are any cookies tree-nut safe? Is it possible to get a sugar-free and nut-free cookie?

No, all cookies are made in the same facility. GSUSA and LBB work exclusively on the flavors, councils can submit input but overall, we do not make those decisions.

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 – Virtual Q&A:

What is the date of the Camp Redwing closing ceremony and will there be registration?

The Camp Redwing Closing Ceremony will be on Sunday, November 2, 2025, from 2-4 p.m. Registration is required and available on gswpa.org.

What will be done from the proceeds of the sale of Redwing?

We are still in the initial stage of listing the camps for sale. Board has not discussed it as yet. Allocation will be shared. With previous sales, the money was set aside for improvements to remaining camps.

Any plans for increasing visibility by increasing visibility of GS via advertising and social media?

We promote through paid social media in all counties. This promotion can be very targeted. We also promote on streaming through a partnership with a local news channel. The marketing team is always keeping foot on the gas to promote all the wonderful things girls in our communities are doing. We are also tracking numbers in areas.

What options are being explored to offer camp like options to girls in the Pittsburgh area?

Girl program and outdoor program are working with partners across the region to provide services. We're also working on kits that troops will be able to borrow.

Can we provide digital health history and permission forms?

We will look into it

Any plans to minimize cost/overhead/staff rather than cut services available?

The council is well run, and we have rarely operated at a deficit. Despite camp subsidy, we aren't upside down. We are not upside down, but we are managing our business. In 2008 we had 135 full-time staff. We currently have 76. We have moved with the times and right sized our staff to meet our budget. We know camp closure is hard. Camp Redwing floods so much and causes so much damage to the property and structures. Someone from Cranberry went to bed when it was drizzling and woke up to water at the top step. That is very frightening. Puts us at risk of injury or worse.

Is there a plan for camp access for greater Pittsburgh? Driving two hours is not possible for some kids. Will Skymeadow be available to troop camps the way Redwing was?

It is still to be determined regarding Camp Skymeadow. We are hoping to open some weekends. We are also looking at options for service units with larger numbers of girls. The outdoor team is focused on creating more outdoor program options. The outdoor team has redesigned the roles of camp directors and program specialists.

What safety measures are put into camping at state parks? Availability to differently abled girls?

We are still in the early stages and exploring what this will look like. Safety and equal access are priorities. Our program staff just learned of the changes at the end of September.

Will there be access to Redwing prior to ceremony to retrieve items left behind?

You may contact customer care to make an appointment to pick up personal items.

Will we have to pay to rent supplies previously available at Redwing?

This is still in initial stages. We envision a progressive approach.

Are there opportunities for volunteers working with older girls and CSAs?

We will have an MSA reach out.

Is there a possibility of locating a new property that serves the area Redwing served? Would rather money go to GS than other organizations?

We are looking at partnerships rather than properties.

What are you doing to help increase girl registration this year?

Membership realignment. We have a focus on recruitment in a couple of areas across council. Other areas are offering assistance through membership success advisors. We are split into areas with new resources available to focus on organic growth. into areas.

I don't understand the strategy of selling property – will lead to membership decline and its already declining?

In 2025 we were just shy of 14,000 girls. Our new goal is based on the membership cost increase. The membership team has done a good job projecting that goal. Camp subsidy in 2017 was above 70%, and the goal was to get down to 50%. We always intended to subsidize camp. We got to 57% just before covid, then everything changed. Now we are back to 70%. We cannot maintain a 1.2-million-dollar loss. We asked the outdoor team to pivot to delivering programming across council.

After evaluation, it did not make financial sense to move forward with Camp Redwing repairs. It was not a decision we took lightly. No one wanted to make it. At end of the day, I would not have felt that I was fulfilling my duty to the council.

We also can't fix the flooding which has increased in frequency and volume over the years. It's not safe.

Consideration of amending the bylaws to require approval of membership to close council property?

I am not aware of any such proposal.

Any restrictions on donated properties? Talked with families that donated?

There have been restrictions in the past and we abide by them.

Why sell the Johnstown building? Can you bring back retail?

The office costs a lot to maintain. Looking into trucks for a travel shop can be in different areas on a schedule. Offices are very expensive. In Johnstown, there are so many properties for sale who have been sold to out-of-state purchasers, just turning over. Lease space in Johnstown is mostly unrented. Those who own have trouble getting space leased. We have met with business leaders in Johnstown. We looked into renting before the pandemic and we were unsuccessful.

Have we done a camp with the chance to do badge work in stations?

It's my first year managing camps and we're evaluating. We are planning changes to programming.

Will we be required to train volunteers for rock climbing and watercraft?

If you mean through council, we will continue to train for all activities.

Canoe training at Redwing – where will it be? Why do certifications expire so quickly?

We are looking into where those trainings will be located. Safety Activity Checkpoints is always good to check. We want people to be sufficiently trained in skills.

Are we looking at state park partnerships?

Yes.