



# Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania Town Hall Meeting Report—Fall 2023

## Board of Directors Recent Activity

### Board Meeting, September 2023

- The motion to accept the Bank Signature Resolution with the inclusion of Nicole King Yohe as a third signatory was passed.
- The motion to accept the 2023 United Way Annual Application was passed.
- The motion to accept the 2023/2024 United Way of Western Crawford County Community Investment Application was passed.
- The motion to appoint Lois Kuttesch to the Board Development Committee was passed.
- The motion to accept the 2023/2024 budget was passed.

### Board Meeting, June 2023

- The motion to accept the United Way of Lawrence County Application was passed.
- The motion to accept the United Way of Warren County Application was passed.
- The motion to accept the Clearfield Area United Way Application was passed.

### Annual Meeting, April 2023

- The motion to approve the Board Slate was passed.

### Referrals for Board and Girl Advisory Committee

We are open to referrals and applications for our Board of Directors, Board Development Committee, and Girl Advisory Committee positions. We will have one Girl Advisory Committee position open in April 2024. The Board Development Committee is now looking for nominations and applications, especially focusing on Region 1. Please encourage girls who you believe would be interested and benefit from this leadership experience focused on governance to apply. (*Regions: Northern-most counties for Region 1; southwestern counties for Region 2; and southeastern counties for Region 3*)

## National Council Session Updates

The National Council session was held in Orlando, Florida in July this year. There were over 9,000 attendees! Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania was represented by 10 national delegates. Our responsibility was to have dialogue and other forms of input from our council delegates to represent our council's perspective relative to each topic. A visual presentation will be provided during the meeting.

## Annual Meeting

Our 2024 Annual Meeting will be on April 27 (location to be determined). While we encourage in-person attendance, the option to attend virtually will be available for those who cannot attend in person.

## Property Updates

### Camp Skymeadow

- Improvements to the tent platforms began at Forest Tents, testing a new design including a small deck.
- The Ranger House received a new roof.

### Camp Conshatawba

- The replacement of the vehicle bridge near Memory Lodge was completed in April 2023.
- The new pool was constructed and opened in time for summer camp this year! The new pool is beautiful and complete with a slide, heater, and lighting for evening swimming.
- The pool shower house was completely renovated prior to the beginning of the camp season. Non-slip flooring, new lighting, improved accessibility, and open-rafter ceilings are key changes that were made.

### Camp Redwing

- The Dining Hall received a fresh coat of paint, creating a warmer and more inviting feel.
- Improvements to the septic system have been completed to aid in mitigating damage from future floods. Improvements include raising septic tank access points and moving the leach field above the 100-year flood level. The old sand mound was rejuvenated to become the new leach field.

### Camp Hawthorne Ridge

- Work on the new Howard Falls trail began and will open this fall. A hike on the new trail leads members along the edge of Falls Run Gorge to its start at Howard Falls. Establishing the trail was a joint venture with the Howard Family Trust and local conservation organizations to expand this unique conservation area.
- Improvements were made to Thompson Hall's kitchen, including a new kitchen floor and substructure.
- A new HVAC system that includes air conditioning and a heat pump for increased efficiency replaced the aging system in Thompson Hall.

### All Camps

- New climate-controlled AED boxes were installed and partnered with an emergency phone at key locations, increasing access to these life-saving devices and emergency services.

### Kittanning Office

- The Kittanning Office remains on the market for sale. Unfortunately, commercial real estate remains challenging at this time.

## Girl Membership 2022-2023 Numbers and 2023-2024 Goal

MY23 (as of 9/30/23)

Type	As of 9/30/23	As of 9/24/23	MY23 Overall Goals	Difference of MY23 Goals
New	4,231	4,221	4,800	-569
Renewed	10,257	10,257	13,650	-3,393
Outreach (new & renewed)	229 (133 renewed/ 96 new)	229 (133 renewed/ 96 new)	500	-271
Overall	14,717	14,707	18,950	-4,233

MY24 (as of 10/1/23)

Type	As of 10/1/23	As of 9/24/23	Goal for MY24	Difference of MY24 Goals
New	1,526	1,181	4,323	-2,797
Renewed	9,032	8,156	11,691	-2,659
Outreach (new & renewed)	64 (61 renewed/ 3 new)	74 (66 renewed/ 8 new)		
Overall	10,622	9,411	16,014	-5,392

## Volunteer Membership

Total Adult and Lifetime Membership as of 9/6/2023: 8,877

Total Adult and Lifetime Membership MY23 goal: 8,991

Total Volunteer Adult Membership as of 9/6/23: 5,286

## Volunteer Engagement

gsLearn continues to be a training resource for volunteers to provide both fully online and blended learning (online and hands-on) learning options. As of early September, there were over 3,800 active users in gsLearn, an increase of 1,000 users in the last year, including the onboarding of new leaders and continued learning for seasoned volunteers. The most completed courses continue to be ones that are in the *New Leader Learning Path* followed by courses in *Let's Go Camping 1*.

Other courses added this year to gsLearn include courses on becoming a program aide skills trainer, Girl Scout traditions and ceremonies, flag ceremonies, and an overview of the service unit MagNut manager role. Thanks to Denise Cerilli-Martz for her collaboration on developing the flag ceremonies training! A complete overhaul and redesign of the entire *New Leader Learning Path* was launched in mid-August, based on volunteer feedback, to reduce the amount of time to complete the online training courses and provide the information leaders are seeking as they start with their troops. Girl Scouts of the USA courses on World Thinking Day and the Mental Wellness Patch Program were also released.

Upcoming in the fall and early winter are courses on the Silver Award, a higher awards overview, and an update to the *Let's Go Camping 1* course.

### **The Troop Mentor Network:**

New for 2024: The Troop Mentor Network is a team of volunteers representing our entire region. They serve several functions:

- They meet monthly with the task of providing input on several council-wide topics.
- They provide critical feedback during the development of Girl Scout resources and training.
- They serve as peer support for volunteers who are interested in expanding their Girl Scout experiences and need a seasoned volunteer's perspective.
- They are currently developing training to support service unit troop coaches as they provide direct mentorship to the troops in their local areas.

We currently have a page on our website showcasing our Troop Mentor Network which provides a direct contact link to these wonderful troop mentors.

### **New Troop Leader Onboarding:**

In conjunction with the adult learning team, the volunteer support team has developed a New Leader Checklist that helps new volunteers confidently plan and complete their first year with ease. The creative space theme keeps the topics fun and engaging and ties it to the Daisy Launch program which happens every spring.

Additionally, we've put into action an incentive program to help new troops who are just getting started! When a new troop with two new troop leaders is officially formed and the new troop leaders have completed their New Leader Learning Path, they qualify to receive one of the following: a \$100 store credit, a Daisy badge kit, a Brownie badge kit, or (in limited supply) a Journey kit. We are looking forward to continuing this incentive in 2024.

### **Service Unit Resources:**

In 2023, we focused a lot on building new and improved policy/procedure documents which can be found on the forms and documents page of our website!

Coming in 2024: We will focus on building service unit resources, including a service unit manual for traditional service units, revised job descriptions, event training, and more! Last year's "Service Unit Planner" was updated for 2024 and may be used by service units throughout the year to set goals, stay on track, and assess their success at the end of the year. Strong service units are an essential part of a successful Girl Scout experience, and we are excited to see all the wonderful experiences that our girls will have thanks to the work of these teams throughout our council.

### **Delegate Season is Here!**

Every year, service units all over the council elect volunteers to represent their areas at our annual meeting held in April. Delegates are a critical part of our organization's democratic process. They represent their area in decision-making and in providing input into council policies that impact their experience and the Girl Scout movement.

If you're interested in serving as a delegate in 2024, here are the requirements:

- Potential delegates may be registered girls 14 or older or registered and approved volunteers.
- Delegates must be elected by the service unit and have their name submitted to staff by November 15. The delegate submission form can be found on the forms page of our website or may be requested from our customer care team or your membership engagement specialist.
- Delegates must plan to attend the annual meeting in 2024—this will be held on April 27.
- Elected delegates must complete the delegate training course provided in gsLearn 30 days prior to the annual meeting (this course does not need to be retaken if reelected).
- Each delegate must have a unique email and mobile device from which to send and receive information.

This year, we are asking that all names be submitted by November 15, 2023. Membership engagement specialists will let each service unit know how many delegates and alternates to elect based on the girl member population as of September 30, 2023.

## **Summer Camp**

The outdoor program team planned and ran eight weeks of summer camp. They worked diligently to run safe and fun events for the girls. The team was able to recruit staff both domestically and internationally.

- We ran 11 weekend/troop programs this summer.
- We ran eight weeks of resident camp at Camp Conshatawba, Camp Skymeadow, and Camp Hawthorne Ridge.
- We ran five weeks of day camp at Camp Redwing.
- We successfully ran 80 resident camp sessions serving approximately 1,400 girls and their families/caregivers.
- Program highlights included:
  - Multiple sessions of Pony Pals were offered and sold out.
  - Explore Western PA Waterways took a group of Seniors and Ambassadors to all four camps and experienced water activities at each location.
  - At Culinary Cadettes, girls learned various strategies and tips for cooking. They were given the task of creating and implementing a dessert from scratch as well as getting judged on their teamwork, taste, and final product by camp staff. Not only did they create amazing items to eat, but their enthusiasm, creativity, and teamwork were amazing to watch.
  - At Dynamic Drama, girls got to create and act in plays.
  - At Cavernous Adventures, many of the campers were away from home for the first time and traveled to Kentucky. Many of them overcame their fear of heights while ziplining and their fear of darkness. It was amazing to see their confidence after the trip.
  - We ran various horse programs where girls got to learn about horses while gaining skills in riding, grooming, and caring for the horses.
  - Travel programs included rock climbing at Ohiopyle and trips to Mammoth Caves National Park, Cedar Point, Six Flags in New York, and Niagara Falls.

## Girl Program

- We had an excellent year with higher awards as we celebrated 130 Silver Award Girl Scouts at the Carnegie Science Center in April and 55 Gold Award Girl Scouts at the Chadwick in May.
- Gold Award Girl Scout Jillian Fishell was awarded a \$10,000 Scholarship from Girl Scouts of the USA for her project, “My Turn to TRI,” centered around creating a training program for the athletes of her local YMCA’s annual special needs triathlon.
- Council travel programs offered progression from a one-day trip to an international, seven-day trip. We offered a variety of travel experiences from Hersheypark to Niagara Falls to Baltimore to London and Paris.
- 122 travelers participated in our council-wide travel programs. More travel programs will be offered in 2024 and 2025.
- Over 237 events were offered in 2023-2024, with over 3,500 girls in attendance.
- We approved 250 troop and service unit-planned trips and high-adventure activities.
- 15 volunteer-led day camps were approved across the council.

## Product Program

### Fall Product Program (MagNut)

The MagNut program, Girl Scout Western Pennsylvania’s fall product program, began Sunday, Oct. 1. Over the summer, Girl Scouts participated in an online contest to name the MagNut program mascot, an ocelot. After more than 500 entries and voting, the MagNut program mascot’s name is Dottie, also known as Dot the Ocelot! In addition to traditional order card sales, customers can purchase magazines and order nuts and candy through girls’ secure websites for shipping or girl delivery. Customers have two new products available for purchase through girls’ websites in 2023—Tervis Tumblers and a Bark Box.

### Girl Scout Cookie Program

The Girl Scout Cookie Program kicks off Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. As reported at the Annual Meeting and regional service unit meetings, our council’s contract with Little Brownie Bakers expired with the 2023 program. After much research and consideration, we signed a new three-year contract with Little Brownie Bakers in March. The new contract not only came with an increase in the cost of the cookies to council, but also included the possibility of a commodities price increase if the baker’s costs for ingredients goes up. Due to the rising expenses associated with cookies, a retail price adjustment is essential starting this year, with the price increasing from \$5 to \$6 per package.

This change benefits girls and volunteers by providing more proceeds to troops for activities and projects. The increased price also provides resources for council to accommodate more girls, improve and maintain our camps, offer affordable costs for council programs and activities, and give financial assistance to eligible families.

	2023	2024
Base Proceeds	\$0.80	<b>\$0.90</b>
Super Troop Tier 2 (195)	\$0.05	<b>\$0.10</b>
Super Troop Tier 3 (240)	\$0.05	\$0.05
MagNut Tier 1 (\$185/250)	\$0.02	\$0.02
MagNut Tier 2 (\$275/250)	\$0.05	\$0.10
Additional Proceeds	\$0.05	<b>\$0.10</b>
<i>Maximum earning</i>	\$0.98	\$1.18

← ● **10 cent base increase**  
keeps pace with retail  
increase to help give  
girls more resources

← ● **5 cent increase** at  
Super Troop tier 2

← ● **5 cent increase** to  
troops who opt out  
of rewards

Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania offered a new pilot program this year for Girl Scout Cookies! The Election Week Cookie Sale (EWCS) is a limited fall cookie sale that is part of our council's Girl Scout Cookie Program.

Through this optional pilot program, troops can hold booth sales the week of the general election. Polling locations would make a great booth spot; however, troops are welcome to set up booth sales at other locations throughout their communities during the week of Nov. 4-11, 2023. Information about this new program was shared in an email to troop leaders on Sept. 12 and during product program open office hours in September and October.