

## *Girl Scouting . . . Our Future's Looking Sweet!*

By Penny K. Cooper, President/CEO, Girl Scouts of South Carolina – Mountains to Midlands, Inc.

Since its founding 95 years ago, Girl Scouts has offered unique opportunities for girls to develop positive values and to contribute to society as leaders and responsible citizens. Today, Girl Scouts remains a premier voice for girls and a leading expert on their growth and development.

One of the reasons Girl Scouts is positioned to serve girls ages 5-17 in our new millennium is due to the foresight of our national organization, Girl Scouts of the USA. After years of research and consultation with top corporate organizational experts, a nationwide realignment of council jurisdictions began in 2006.

Girl Scouts of the Old 96 Council became one of the nation's first councils to plan and complete this process by joining with Girl Scouts of the Piedmont Area Council (Spartanburg) and the Girl Scout Council of the Congaree Area (Columbia). Girl Scouts of South Carolina – Mountains to Midlands, Inc., officially began on May 1, 2007 to serve over 187,000 potential girl members in 19 counties of central and western South Carolina.

How is this going to help girls? The goal of realigning councils is to strengthen our ability to deliver on our promise to girls. Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Through high-capacity councils, Girl Scouts will serve generations of girls to come. We will be empowered to deliver a consistent, outcomes-based, girl-centric program.

A high-capacity council has the ability to design and implement superior organizational functions that maximize services. *High-capacity* means *high-functioning*. Leadership of the council inspires, prioritizes, provides direction, and innovates to achieve the organization's aspirations. A high-capacity council is adaptive and flexible. It exhibits seamless integration among program services, back-office services and functional departments. A high-capacity council produces high impact on the membership and the communities it serves. We can sustain services while proactively improving and redirecting resources and services to girls and adults.

What are these services? Program options available to girls are increased in the realigned structure. Girls have greater opportunities to see themselves within a larger perspective by interacting with a larger network of girls. They have a multitude of activities to choose from at varying locations. Three camp programs instead of one were available to girls this summer.

Resources and opportunities are also enhanced for adults (which ultimately enables us to provide better program and serve even more girls). Volunteer training can be delivered online or via teleconferencing. Materials and data can be accessed online across all 19 counties. Troop programs are being developed to maximize the productivity of each volunteer hour. Administrative procedures can be completed from volunteers' homes. Realignment enhances our support structure for volunteers, ensuring that their Girl Scouting experience is also one of personal growth and development.

Is it all about finances? Realignment is not about cost savings. It is about deploying resources in a more strategic way to improve direct services to girls, adults and the communities that support them.

When we look at the cost per girl in different size councils, on average, the cost per girl in smaller councils is higher than the cost per girl in councils that serve larger numbers of girls. These larger councils – whether in compact urban areas or vast geographic areas – can spread administrative expenses further, ultimately making more resources available for girl program. Realignment allows us to focus on Girl Scouting’s core strength of leadership development while offering provable outcomes that benefit girls, families and communities.

Our new structure will make the most effective use of resources to deliver a superior Girl Scout leadership program to even more girls. Over the next several years, Girl Scouts is introducing a strengthened Leadership Development Program through which girls discover their personal best and prepare for a positive future, connect with others in an increasingly diverse world, and take action to solve problems and improve their communities. With our unique focus on girl decision-making and girl-directed cooperative and experiential learning, girls will continue to have fun, make new friends and pursue exciting adventures.

For 95 years, Girl Scouting has helped girls become leaders who have a lasting sense of responsibility and accountability to their communities. Girl Scouts is a community partner acting on our belief that service to others is a core human virtue. With renewed vigor and increased emphasis on citizenship, personal responsibility and community service, Girl Scouts of South Carolina – Mountains to Midlands is poised to build capable and caring girls who make the world a better place. Our future’s looking sweet!

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