Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan
Girl Scouts Michigan Shore to Shore
Girl Scouts of Northwestern Great Lakes
Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana / Michiana
Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

Questions and Answers Concerning Girl Scout Councils in the State of Michigan

Recently Girl Scouts has been attacked with a campaign of misinformation. This Q&A answers criticisms and claims that have come to GSUSA and Girl Scout councils in the State of Michigan from various sources.

What is the mission of Girl Scouts?
The mission of Girl Scouts is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Grounded in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, Girl Scouting is a non-formal, experiential, and cooperative education program that promotes girls' personal growth and leadership development.

-Girl Scouts of the USA Constitution, Article 111

Has Girl Scouts removed the word "God" from the Girl Scout Promise or placed an asterisk after the word "God"?
The Girl Scouts Promise contains the word "God." The word "God" has never been removed. The word God can be interpreted in a number of ways, and girls are allowed to substitute whatever word their spiritual beliefs dictate. Not all religions use the word God, and some religions have more than one god. According to the Girl Scout Constitution, "The motivating force in Girl Scouting is spiritual. The ways in which members identify and fulfill their spiritual beliefs are personal and private." Girl Scouts welcomes girls and adults of every race, ethnicity, level of ability and religion who accept the Girl Scout promise.

The Girl Scout Promise is as follows:

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

Is it true that Girl Scouts places minimal emphasis on the family?
No. Families have always been encouraged to be part of their daughter's experience in Girl Scouting. Girl Scouts encourages families to get involved with their daughter's troop. Parents also must sign the membership form and provide permission for all Girl Scout activities.

Is it true the Girl Scouts program materials fail to support core values?
No. As a leadership organization, we aim to inspire girls with examples of women who have a wide range of beliefs, but share a willingness to take a stand for their beliefs. We hope that every girl who is a member will find the courage, confidence and character to lead in accordance with her own beliefs, interests and the values of the Girl Scout Promise and Law. The essence of the current Girl Scout program materials follows the example of the first Girl Scout handbook. The program materials for girls at all age levels feature hands-on activities that

build leadership traits such as a strong sense of self, team building and problem solving skills. Girl Scout Leaders have the option to utilize the program materials that best serve the needs of their girls.

Is it true that Girl Scouts does not teach girls pride in their country?
No. The Girl Scout Promise states that girls will "serve God and my country." Girl Scouts participate in flag ceremonies, donate cookies to troops overseas, and wear the American flag on the sash as part of the official uniform. Patriotism, citizenship, and community service are basic tenets of the Girl Scout Program and are embedded in the Preamble to our Constitution.

What is Girl Scouts' relationship to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts?

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is comprised of 145 member organizations worldwide that promote mutual understanding and cross-cultural opportunities for girls around the world. Girl Scouts of the USA is one of the 145 Member Organizations.

Each Member Organization creates its own programs and pursues advocacy efforts based on the needs and issues affecting girls in their individual countries GSUSA does not always take the same position or endorse the same programs as WAGGGS. GSUSA's relationship to WAGGGS is akin to the US (and Vatican) relationship with the UN. The United States may not agree with every position the UN takes, but values having a seat at the table (as does the Vatican).

Does GSUSA have a financial relationship with WAGGGS?
Every Girl Scout and Girl Guide organization is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – and each Member Organization, including Girl Scouts of the USA, pays dues. WAGGGS operates in much the same way as the United Nations; each member organization pays dues based on the size of its membership and the per capita income of the country in which the organization resides.

Do the Girl Scout Councils of Michigan donate money to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts?
No. The Girl Scout Councils of Michigan donate NO money to WAGGGS. Individual Girl Scouts or Girl Scout troops may only donate to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund, a GSUSA fund that supports service projects, training and international exchange events, as well as exchange visiting programs. Each Girl Scout or Girl Scout troop is encouraged to make its own decision as to whether or not to donate.

Is any money from Girl Scout cookie activities used to pay the WAGGGS quota?
No, all of the money from Girl Scout cookie activities stays at councils. The national funds that GSUSA sends to WAGGGS come solely from investment income.

Do Individual Girl Scouts or Girl Scout troops belong to WAGGGS?
No. Individual girls or Girls Scout troops are not members of WAGGGS. Girls Scouts of the USA is a member organization of WAGGGS.

Can an Individual Girl Scout or Girl Scout troop opt out of paying dues to WAGGGS or WAGGGS Membership?
No. None of a Girl Scout's annual membership fee goes to WAGGGS.

Was Girl Scouts of the USA's participation in the recent 54th Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations intended to "promote a number of radical sexual rights, including abortion and other controversial sexual rights," as alleged by critics?
No. The girls from several countries who participated were there to promote action on global issues concerning women and girls worldwide. The statement prepared by the girls who participated does not reflect Girl Scouts of the USA's position, or influence any policy or action of the national organization or local councils.

What is WAGGGS position on Reproductive Issues?
WAGGGS has position statements on fighting HIV and AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, adolescent health, and talking about sex. ***WAGGGS specific positions are not GSUSA positions***, and WAGGGS recognizes that its member organizations adopt different approaches. A WAGGGS representative can respond to questions about their policies. The person to contact for more information is Rebecca Munro, Communications & Advocacy Director, at Rebecca@wagggsworld.com.

Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) reported that Girl Scouts allowed Planned Parenthood to distribute material to girls who participated in the UN meeting. Is this true?
No. This did not happen. GSUSA did not provide girls with any materials from a third party at the workshop conducted in March 2010 at the United Nations. Participation in that conference was the subject of numerous internet stories and blogs that were factually inaccurate and troubling. Girl Scouts had no knowledge of the brochure in question and played no role in distributing it.

Is there a mandate against praying or Christmas caroling at meetings?
No. Although Girl Scouts has policies supporting religious diversity, no policy by GSUSA prohibits or requires the saying or singing of a grace, blessing, or invocation before meals, or at a meeting, conference or other group gathering. The decision to say a grace, blessing, or have an invocation is made locally at the troop or group level and should be sensitive to the spiritual beliefs of the participants.

Does Girl Scouts of the USA support Planned Parenthood?
No. There is no relationship - past, present or planned - between Planned Parenthood and Girl Scouts of the USA, or Girl Scout Councils in the State of Michigan. The Girl Scout organization does not take a position on abortion or birth control. Our membership is a cross-section of America's diversity with regard to opinions on religious and social issues and practices. We believe these matters are best decided by girls and their families.

What is the Girl Scout position on abortion and birth control?
Girl Scouts does not take a position on abortion or birth control. At the same time, Girl Scouts respects the moral teachings and theology of all Faith Communities. The "GSUSA Blue Book of Basic Documents", states in the policy section on pg. 20 that *"Every Girl Scout group shall respect the varying religious opinions and practices of its membership in planning and conducting activities"*. For example, the Catholic Spiritual Scouting Program's follow the moral and theology teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Again, we believe these matters are best decided by girls and their families. All councils are directed to obtain written parental permission for any locally planned program that could be sensitive.

Does the Girl Scout program provide sex education to girls?
Neither Girl Scouts of the USA nor Girl Scouts councils in the State of Michigan advocate for or against any issue regarding a girl's sexuality. If program opportunities address these issues, girls who choose to participate must have the fully informed written consent of their parents or guardians. Again, we believe these matters are best decided by girls and their families.

Does Girl Scouting teach girls "to support a decision to pull a life support system from a dying relative" and "give information and justification for ending a pregnancy," as alleged by critics?
No. These statements are false. These issues are best discussed and decided within families.

Is there an article in a Girl Scout book entitled "All I really needed to know about being a lesbian I learned at Girl Scout Camp"?
No. There is no book published by Girl Scouts of the USA that contains an article with that title or subject matter.

Is Girl Scouting "anti-boy" in its curriculum?
No. The Girl Scout program does not portray boys negatively. Research shows that girls benefit from a program designed specifically for them and delivered in an all-girl setting. Boys have unique needs and interests as well, which are best addressed by an organization structured to meet their specific needs.

Are Girl Scouts able to earn Wiccan badges?
Girl Scouts has no relationship (and never has) with Wicca. Just because an outside organization states that their patches may be worn on a Girl Scout uniform does not mean that it is sanctioned or endorsed by Girl Scouts. Official GSUSA insignia (badges) representing sanctioned program and objectives is worn on the front of the uniform vest or sash. Official religious recognitions are worn on the front of the uniform vest or sash. Optional, interest-related activity patches are worn on the back. Girls attend or participate in all activities with the direct written permission of their parents or guardians.

Does Girl Scouts support Susan G. Komen for the Cure?
No. Girls or adults, in their capacity as Girl Scouts, may not raise or solicit money for any other organizations. Individuals or troops may choose to volunteer their support for such organizations in non-monetary ways.