

CEO Message
10/24/09

Good afternoon, Everyone, and thank you for taking the time to participate in this most important democratic process, electing our Board of Directors and Board Development Committee.

As we continue to move through this transformation of our Movement, each year is different from the year before...and that will hold true for the program year beginning now and taking us through 2010.

Two years ago we put our great Council together.

Last year we organized our operations to support the new program roll-out and have tweaked that again this year to support the Pathways and Journeys.

We have upgraded our technology to support communications needs that change and improve almost daily – e-newsletters, website design and content, facebook, twitter, blogging. And that's today! We will continue to adapt to, and adopt, all the next new communication vehicles as they become available. We are working with GSUSA on new internal communication tools – in the not-too-distant future you will be able to submit your membership registration online – not this year, but soon.

We are training our volunteers, creating program opportunities for our current Girl Scouts as we reach out to all girls across our Council.

We are working on several GSUSA programs as a state-wide effort – in coordination with our 3-sister Girl Scout Councils in NJ (recognize Helen Wronski – GS of Northern NJ, Sue McClure – GS of the Jersey Shore, and Susan Brooks – GS of the Heart of New Jersey). These initiatives include Hispanic Outreach, the Live Healthy/Lead Healthy Advocacy program and a Destinations program for 200 teen Girl Scouts in NJ next July addressing the concept of healthy media images.

As we are doing all of this, we have taken on two additional, but essential, initiatives that I would like to highlight.

There are certain things new regional Councils are required to do after realignment. One is to conduct a long range property study and the other is to conduct the strategic learning initiative. Over this past year we completed both, and I would like to report on each.

Eighteen months ago (in April 2008), we began the process of evaluating our properties (camps and service centers) as they relate to our overall sustainability – where we are now, where we need to be moving forward and determining how we get there. Said another way, where must assign our limited resources to support those few things that matter the most.

A Long Range Property Planning Committee was created and trained by GSUSA and began their research.

The study included reviewing the status of our properties for:

- Environmental, health and safety issues
- Usage history and patterns
- Maintenance costs
- Current and future projections for internal and external demographics

The research included:

- Examining the condition of the Council facilities and indentifying necessary modifications
- Conducting an assessment of costs to remedy deferred maintenance
- Identifying obsolete facilities and analyzing the effectiveness of those sites meeting programmatic goals.
- Examining program goals, curriculum, progression, equipment, and training requirements.
- Identifying the best mix of program offerings and delivery methods to serve the membership (current and projected) and suggesting a preliminary implementation plan.
- Reviewing attendance records, cost factors, and progress toward outcomes.

- Analyzing the characteristics of our current membership and identifying target membership markets
- Identifying girl, parent and troop leaders market issues, needs, interests and expectations. We did this through a professionally created survey – and we had over 2,000 respondents.
- For the new program, consider delivery methods, locations, costs, demand, past attendance, volunteer/staff supports, transportation, and other appropriate issues.

I would like to recognize those volunteers who put in hundreds of hours on this important work – Committee Chair, Janet Stevens; Ann Marie Horner, Carol Mullin Cathi Macheda, Rhonda Holland, Dr. Deborah Ihunnah, Kathie Wright, Linda Drumheller, Linda Thompson, Lita Abele, Margaret Smith, Vicky Beyerle – and staff members HL Ransom and Vicky Allen.

We completed a 16-month property study, as have most of the Councils across the country, and the Committee submitted their findings and recommendations to the Board last month. As a result of this, and combined with our strategic plan focus, we will begin planning for improvements at Oak Spring, the East Brunswick Service Center, Camp Inawendiwin and Camp Kettle Run. We will be looking to divest of Camp Sac North and Sheppards Mill, as well as the Newfield Service Center and make services more readily available to our southern counties with a new service center located farther south in a more accessible area.

This past year we also took on the challenge of strategic learning and we went through a 6-month process created by Columbia University School of Business in collaboration with GSUSA. From this initiative we have research that created our leadership message with our key priorities of program, volunteerism, funding and collaborations. These key priorities will focus our planning and evaluating moving forward. We have learned what is important in our Council and what we need to do to interest more girls to participate in our outstanding leadership program. Again, we are aligning our limited resources to support the few things that matter the most.

We have been recognized as a strong, well organized Council by GSUSA and as a result have been given the opportunity to participate in over 10 pilot programs and

initiatives. This has afforded us opportunities to develop new programs and secure funding as well.

As we look forward, we are beginning to lay the groundwork for raising \$1.5 million through a major gifts campaign by 2012 – the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouting - to support our programs, property improvements and ensure the future of our Council for the next 100 years. We will be doing this in conjunction with the Movement-wide GSUSA major gifts initiative.

Each year brings different challenges and successes. We are continually planning and evaluating to meet the needs of our 21st Century girls and support our leadership program. This means that we are constantly changing, tweaking and modifying what we do – adaptation is the name of game as we continue to “work at the speed of girls”.

Thank you for all you do for our Council and for our girls. You are the wheels that keep us moving in the right direction.