

Girl Scouts

Invest in Girls. Change the World.



Pamela I. Anderson, CEO



Sylvia Acevedo, Interim CEO



Lidia Soto-Harmon, CEO



Lynelle McKay, CEO



Marina Park, CEO



Tammy H. Wharton, CEO

Girl Scout Promise and Law

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.

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,

and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.



Sylvia Acevedo

Mission and Movement



An Interview with Sylvia Acevedo,
Interim Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of the USA

EDITORS' NOTE In June of 2016, Sylvia Acevedo was named to her current post. Formerly, Acevedo was secretary of the National Board and served on its executive committee. She is currently a White House commissioner on the Presidential Initiative for Hispanic Educational Excellence and a national advocate for STEM education. She is a strategic consultant to companies that wish to use technology to capitalize on demographic trends, and she previously served as President and CEO of Communicard LLC. Acevedo earned her Bachelor of Science degree in industrial engineering from New Mexico State University and a Master of Science in engineering from Stanford University.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Girl Scouts of the USA (girlscouts.org) is 2.7 million strong – 1.9 million girls and 800,000 adult volunteers in 92 countries through USA Girl Scouts Overseas, who believe girls can change the world. It began over 100 years ago with one woman, Girl Scouts' founder Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low, who believed in the power of every girl. She organized the first Girl Scout troop on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia, and every year since, the organization has made her vision a reality, helping girls discover their strengths, passions, and talents.

As you now lead Girl Scouts of the USA into the future, how important is it to sustain the organization's heritage while remaining relevant today?

For our 104-year-old organization, one of the key concepts of Girl Scouting is "bridging" – we bridge to the future from a really wonderful history of amazing experiences for girls and 59 million alumnae using the Girl Scout Promise and Law to guide us.

We think about how we can make Girl Scouting much more relevant to girls today, which is shown by our focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and our love of the outdoors and different life experiences. We're making sure the experiences are contemporary for our young women today.

Has the mission that was so clear in the beginning changed or evolved, or has it been consistent throughout the years?

It has been very consistent. We're all about courage, confidence, and character for girls. This is also what has guided my life.

I was fortunate to become a Girl Scout. My family lived in an impoverished part of a New Mexico town. When my younger sister became ill from a meningitis outbreak in that neighborhood, my mother moved us into a different area where the streets were at least paved. Because of that, I

had the opportunity to become a Girl Scout. I'm so grateful for that, because of Girl Scouting I then realized that life isn't just left to fate; one can actually prepare, organize, and put contingency plans in place to guide your life. I learned that our skill-building activities could be fun to do with friends, including amazing outdoor experiences.

Also, at a time when many girls like me didn't think about going to college to become engineers, my Girl Scout experience in cooking and then achieving my Science badge made me realize that if one puts ingredients together in the right order and adds heat, one can make anything. This gave me the "Ah-ha" moment that helped me understand that science was just like cooking.

As a fourth-grader, earning those badges gave me the courage and confidence to study science, and to really study math at a time when it wasn't popular for girls to do that.



When my college counselor told me that girls like me did not go to college, I responded that not only was I going to attend college, but I was also going to study engineering. When she replied that girls don't study engineering, I told her that if I could cook, I could be an engineer. That led to my becoming an engineer and rocket scientist, and changed my destiny.

I had the confidence because of those Girl Scout experiences. It is what our organization is all about – how we can continue to create those experiences for girls, and how we can get our entire movement working together to provide additional opportunities for reaching more girls.

Many think of Girl Scouts as only for young girls. How important is it to build and strengthen that alumnae network and that mentality of being a Girl Scout for life?

I am a lifelong Girl Scout who "bleeds green." People know how much I love Girl Scouts and what the Girl Scout movement has meant to me.

They start telling me their personal Girl Scout experiences and how much Girl Scouting has meant to them. This is one of our primary areas of focus: how we can create that Girl Scout network and connect alumnae to each other. We all benefited from Girl Scouting and the country benefited from Girl Scouts as well as what those Girl Scout alumnae have done with their lives.

If we look at the huge impact we've had in terms of helping to create women entrepreneurs and those who are in political office or in other fields, these women of achievement often say they got their start from the leadership and entrepreneurial experiences they had as Girl Scouts.

Working with alumnae is an important part of the movement. We have to tap into the wonderful experiences they had and recognize that the things they wanted to do when they were kids are the same things girls want today – they want to have fun experiences with their friends.

As you assume the role of Interim CEO, how important will it be to communicate your vision and engage your many councils and other partners and stakeholders when it comes to moving forward with that vision?

I worked as an executive before, both in nonprofits and corporations. The most important objective is to make sure that everybody clearly understands where we're going and what we're doing to get there as an organization.

For me, it's about the three Ms – it's Membership, which means it's all about the girls; it's Movement, which is all of us working together to enable more girls to have the wonderful experiences that Girl Scouting offers; and it's Money, which provides the lifeblood of financial oxygen to really power the Movement through funding and investing in our future leaders – girls.

Along with that, I want people to realize we're all brand ambassadors because we live our lives according to the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

The reason we've been recognized as a great brand in many studies and surveys isn't because our logo is everywhere – it's because of the way our Girl Scouts and alums live their lives. This is crucial for young girls today, the women they will become tomorrow, and the contributions they will make to our country in the future. ●



Pamela I. Anderson

Staying Relevant



An Interview with Pamela I. Anderson,
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson

EDITORS' NOTE *Previously, Pam Anderson served for four years as a board member of Girl Scouts of Westchester-Putnam, Inc. Prior to assuming her current Girl Scout role, she enjoyed a long, thriving career within the financial services industry. During her tenure with a previous employer, she was a founding member of the Women of Color Connections employee networking group, which garnered the company top recognition as a "Best Company to Work For – For Women of Color." In addition to her Girl Scout responsibilities, Anderson is an active member of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church where she served as a trustee.*

What excited you about the opportunity to lead Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson and how have you made the transition from the private sector?

I was a Girl Scout as a child and I grew up in Girl Scouting. I knew the power of leadership – it was where I first learned about community service. I was the mother of a Girl Scout and I served on a Girl Scout council board.

On the corporate side, while I was in financial services, that was my day job; as a senior woman of color in my firm, my "night job" was mentoring young women into senior roles. When I was growing up in my firm, there weren't many people who looked like me above me, so it was extremely important to me that I set out to be a role model for those who came behind me.

There came a time when the markets were in turmoil and I had an opportunity to transition. When I left the organization, I hadn't really thought about Girl Scouts *per se*, but I knew that the nonprofit industry was changing and that there must be a way for me to translate my business skills to the nonprofit industry. I wanted to take all of my energy and use it towards a mission with the same fervor that I used my energy in corporate America.

I knew that my skills were transferable but I didn't really know how to transfer them. This was almost eight years ago.

I spent the summer after I left my firm teaching myself how to work at a nonprofit. I used everything that I had utilized in my 20-plus years in corporate America in the first six months as the CEO of a Girl Scout council.

I had to deal with talent management and risk management, not to mention figuring out how to take on an organization that had gone through realignment which, from my perspective, was really a merger.

In Girl Scouting, this was a merger of culture. Coming into this organization that was still in the midst of realignment, I had to figure out how to get people to honor their legacy, but somehow come together so we could move forward.

In Girl Scouts, we are manufacturing leadership experiences, not widgets. That doesn't necessarily generate revenue, so we have to learn how to tell a compassionate story that people will understand and participate in.



Many skills were transferable but, in a nonprofit, I had to use them a bit differently. In corporate America, we have the ability to sit back and throw things up on a wall and move them around. In a nonprofit, we can get caught in a day-to-day mentality. We have to force that thinking so we can sit back and think strategically.

Ours is a small business where I'm responsible for 65 full-time employees, not to mention thousands of volunteers and girls.

It has been a challenge, but also a wonderful experience.

In the private sector, there is a focus on innovation. With Girl Scouts' 104-year-old history, how important was it to honor the past while making sure the programming is there to be relevant today?

I firmly believe that the founder of this organization was an amazing woman who was way ahead of her time. We have to reach girls where they are today, but the messages need to be relevant. However, they're not all that different.

Today, we talk about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and think it's a new concept. But they had STEM over 100 years ago – it just wasn't called STEM.

We talk about healthy living today, and being environmentally friendly. That is what they did 104 years ago, just differently.

Girls today want to have fun, as did girls all those years ago. It's extremely important today for our girls to have progressive adventures as they did in the past.

I try to tell not only my team members but our volunteers and parents that girls haven't changed; the way we reach girls has changed, as has the way they perceive things.

In leading the council, how critical is it to engage the entire family in these efforts?

It is extremely important to engage the family. The foundation of a Girl Scout experience is most definitely the troop leader and many troop leaders are parents.

For a long time, the Girl Scout movement didn't engage the parent, so parents didn't know about the leadership experience.

In our council, it's extremely important that the parents know what the experience is. We purposely created some programming where the parent is the person deciding what the experience will be and where the parent comes with the child.

We consider the relationship with the council and the parent to be extremely important, and it's all about communication. We consider the parent and family to be one of our key stakeholders. We send them information. We want them to know what Girl Scouting means and what they can expect this experience to deliver to their child, and we want the parent to be a partner with this organization. ●



Lidia Soto-Harmon

Heritage and History

An Interview with Lidia Soto-Harmon,
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts Nation's Capital

EDITORS' NOTE Based on her extensive business and philanthropic profile, on August 25, 2010, Lidia Soto-Harmon was appointed CEO of the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital, after serving six years as the organization's Chief Operating Officer.

Would you give an overview of Girl Scouts Nation's Capital and where you see growth within that region?

We are the largest Girl Scout council in the country, serving about 60,000 girls and with the adults, we're probably at 87,000 members.

We cover 25 counties in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, and in 2008 we merged with a council to our west.

We have been strong in this region since 1963 and that's why we have continued to find success.

How do you balance the history and heritage of Girl Scouts with remaining relevant today?

We're 104 years old and we're still here because the tenets behind what made Girl Scouting great 100 years ago is what makes it great today, which is the concept of providing a safe space for girls to explore, take risks, and serve their community. Community service is incredibly important for Girl Scouts. This is visible in our highest awards like the Gold Award, and this year we are celebrating 100 years of girls making their communities and our world a better place.

The fact that our council, as well as councils across the country, have amazing Girl Scout camps where girls can be stewards of nature is incredibly relevant and important.

Some of our programming has changed as times have changed, but the core of who we are – the sense of service to others, the sense of having courage and learning by doing and trying different things – has not changed.

In our council, we find that value-based education is still incredibly important for young people.

How do you define the Girl Scout experience from an age point of view?

I am humbled when I see my 70- and 80-year-old Girl Scout volunteers still finding ways to teach archery to younger generations, and still at camp teaching girls about plants and other elements of nature.

I see it in the mothers who were Girl Scouts growing up, paying it forward by giving their own children the gift of Girl Scouting, because they know we provide a nurturing environment, a safe space to make friends and allow girls to fail so they can continue to grow strong and confident.

In our council, we probably have one of the highest percentages within our organization of lifetime members both on staff and in the community. This is because of our sense of purpose, which doesn't end once a child goes off to college.

How important is the coordination among different markets?

There is strength in the way Girl Scouts is organized in that we're a federated system. It's incredibly important that there is a national organization that works on the national program portfolio, on protecting our brand, and on the things we all need to be doing in the same fashion so we act as one organization. There is also great strength and value in having councils be laboratories for different

How do you define your role in leading this council and what are your keys to success?

One of the reasons our council has been successful is there is a true commitment to a staff and volunteer partnership. When I think of the close to 5,000 troops we have in this council, there is no way that girls could have such a rich leadership experience if it wasn't for the volunteer troop leaders.

Anything we can do at a staff or a council level to support our administrative volunteers and our troop leaders is key. With about 60,000 girls and a staff of only about 118 people, there is just no way to serve our Girl Scouts if it wasn't for committed volunteers.

Investing in training, really listening to what their needs are, and making sure the experience is rewarding and fun are the keys to success for any council.

How do you define the power of Girl Scouts and the impact it has on these girls?

What I see with the young families that are involved is that it's probably the most comprehensive way to impact a girl's life – dads can be cookie managers or work on high adventure; moms can mentor and bring the community together to help support the troop. I also see siblings involved, brothers who are committed to helping their sisters grow and succeed.

Girl Scouting is comprehensive and everything is part of the menu, from outdoors activities to learning how to run a business.

With Girl Scouting, everybody can play a positive role in helping a girl develop, which is incredibly charming and wonderful.

How critical to the success of the council is it that the whole family is engaged?

Our primary customer is really the volunteers and parents, because they deliver our fine program to Girl Scouts. Parents are the ones making the decisions and are the ones who have to see the value of having their daughters participate. Some of the technology investments we have made recently as a movement are critical. Millennial parents are busy. Anything that can facilitate their opportunity to easily engage with Girl Scouting is critical to our success. ●



opportunities and to figure out how we can scale them up to the national level. We pioneered an initiative that we started 10 years ago in this council to reach out to young Latinas. Through our work, we have created a beautiful model that we can potentially replicate in other parts of the country.

There is great value in having local opportunities to try new things and to figure out how to scale them up. There is also great value in having a strong national organization that helps protect our brand and helps make sure the programming is the same across the country.



Lynelle McKay

Impact and Purpose



An Interview with Lynelle McKay,
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of Central Texas

EDITORS' NOTE Lynelle McKay harnessed her passion for female empowerment and service to the community as fuel for her work with Girl Scouts of Central Texas (GSCTX). Previously, she was an engineer with Freescale Semiconductor, retiring as Senior Vice President and General Manager of the company's \$1-billion Networking and Multimedia business. Before becoming the CEO of GSCTX, she served on its board, and she continues to serve on the board of the Ann Richards School Foundation.

How do you define what Girl Scouts means and the impact it can have?

It's a life-changing experience for a girl. The mission is as strong as ever – to build girls' courage, confidence, and character. I personally believe that it's the confidence that is often the missing link and is crucial for a girl growing up today.

If we can build up her courage and confidence, then as opportunities are presented to her, she is ready to go through that door and take advantage of all that is available to her.

A girl can be her authentic self and still take advantage of those leadership opportunities that all girls should have. We don't see enough of that in today's society, which is why we believe the Girl Scout leadership experience is so powerful.

Central Texas has been a fast-growing market for Girl Scouts. Would you touch on where the market is today and the growth you see in the area?

We're in the middle of Texas so we feel we're at the forefront of the changing demographics that we're seeing across the nation. For us, the biggest challenge is staying relevant for all girls everywhere. In Central Texas, this means making sure we're there for girls in rural and urban areas, the growing Latino population, families and that we remain relevant for all the kindergarten through 12th grade girls out there.

Are the needs different when it comes to that demographic and how important is it to customize the programs for the demographic?

It's very important. When we first started, we actually had a specific Latina initiative because we knew we needed to be able to scale programs and increase services to the Latina girls in our area. We began partnering with the Catholic Diocese, thinking this was the

best way to reach and engage this community. We had some starts and stops with our effort to grow our traditional Girl Scout troops and we quickly learned that we needed to address the whole family unit, not just the girls, in our recruitment and retention efforts.

We learned that we needed to present it to the girls and their families in a different way, because first-generation Latinas aren't growing up in a family that really understands the Girl Scout brand. When we engage with a Latina troop, we have to engage the whole family. This was a big learning point for us that clearly indicated that we had to do things differently. We had to make some changes in how we recruit girls as well as how we support their troop leaders so that they all have a quality Girl Scout leadership experience.

The network of the seven Texas councils and seven Texas CEOs is a very close-knit group. When I first came on board, they helped me get up to speed with all things Girl Scouts. They were there for anything I needed and shared best practices. We try to get together at least once a year to talk about what is working and what is not. Many good ideas have come from the Texas councils.

In addition, because the national culture we operate in has changed, there has been a resurgence of trying to bring all national CEOs together regularly to share best practices.

In coming from a tech company, were your business skills transferable?

The similarities of running a billion-dollar tech business and a Girl Scout council are great because, at day's end, it is a business. Today, my biggest goal is to empower girls. It's quite a complex business because there are so many different stakeholders – the parents, the volunteers, the donors, and the community at large. I've had to use every single tool in my tool box to be as successful here as I was in the tech world.

Were there certain things that surprised you when you assumed this role?

When I first took this job, I didn't realize how big a presence Girl Scouts has in the community. In the tech world, I was there to support my business, my employees, and customers. In Girl Scouts, the girls, the parents, and volunteers are my customers. But it was eye-opening to realize how big a role Girl Scouts plays in a local community. It isn't just about my customers anymore. We have the responsibility in every community we serve to stand up not just for Girl Scouts but for all girls.

It's even bigger than I imagined it to be, but that's the fun part.

How important is it to create relationships with the girls as they grow older?

These girls are growing up before our eyes. They have many needs, including relationships with adult mentors. We know that no matter how much they hear something from their parents, if they can hear it and see it modeled by other adult women, it opens their eyes to what they can become. Part of our challenge is not just how we're staying relevant for today's girls, but how we show them a road map to success. One way is to provide real-life role models so that they can see that if a woman they admire and have a relationship with has done this thing, then they can do it too. ●



How do you go about engaging the families and are you happy with how it has been received?

Generally, we allow tag-a-longs at Girl Scout events. Tag-a-longs are usually Girl Scouts' younger siblings, whether boys or girls. It was not necessarily our procedure to allow tag-a-longs to join in at events, so we modified those rules so they could participate in many of the activities. For example, we started inviting entire families to camp in order to expose them to the experience so they would feel comfortable letting their girl go to summer camp by herself or with a friend. These events enabled us to increase the confidence levels not just for the girls, but also for their parents.

Is there close coordination among Girl Scout councils?



Marina Park

Girls and Families



An Interview with Marina Park,
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of Northern California

EDITORS' NOTE Marina Park joined Girl Scouts of Northern California as CEO in November of 2007. After attending law school at the University of Michigan, Park launched her impressive career journey, spanning the spectrum from impassioned community organizer and VISTA volunteer (just before law school) to Managing Partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP—the nation's first major woman-led law firm as firm-wide Managing Partner. In recognition of her outstanding business acumen and innovative leadership, in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, the San Francisco Business Times honored Park with the Most Influential Women In Business Award, and in 2015 recognized her as a "Most Admired CEO."

Looking back to 2007 when you joined Girl Scouts of Northern California, what excited you about the opportunity and what makes it so special?

When I joined, I had been at my law firm for almost 25 years, and throughout that time, I had a commitment to working with all of our attorneys to help them develop in their careers, and I had a particular focus on women attorneys.

I saw many amazing young women who had done incredibly well in school but, within three or four years into their careers, I could see that their confidence was shaken. I knew that it had been more challenging for me to figure out how to lean in and get opportunities than it was for my male colleagues, and I wanted to understand the reasons for that.

I had been thinking about the need to help women develop courage and confidence and willingness to take risks at younger ages. I saw these attributes as essential ingredients for women leaders.

In 2007, as my Managing Partner term came to an end, I happened to be volunteering at Girl Scout Camp CEO, where women executives mentor high-school age girls from under-resourced schools.

At Camp CEO, I learned that five Northern California Girl Scout councils were merging and they needed a CEO who had experience in mergers, and who was passionate about the Girl Scout mission – to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world

a better place. I looked into what Girl Scouts was doing around leadership and realized they were building into their program exactly what I felt women needed. I noted that the Girl Scout leadership program had many parallels to the Leadership Project that McKinsey & Company published around the same time, highlighting actions that corporations should be taking to help women develop as leaders.

What really propelled me to join Girl Scouts as a CEO was the concept of starting in kindergarten to help build a pipeline of women who are equipped with the courage and confidence to become whatever they are destined to become. That is the passion that brought me to Girl Scouts.



How do you focus on maintaining the heritage of Girl Scouts while making sure the programming is relevant today?

One of the first things I started talking about when I came to Girl Scouts is that we draw strength from our past and give energy to our future.

The foundation we stand on in Girl Scouts is important. We have generations of Girl Scouts who are giving back and volunteering – it's an incredibly important part of who we are – but our energy needs to go into the future, and we need to always be looking ahead. What do girls need today to be ready for what is around the corner for them, and what skills do they need? How can we equip girls, and continually work with our many layers of historic knowledge and experience in Girl Scouts, to make sure we're also bringing forward our volunteers to be able to deliver that to girls?

We draw a lot of strength from our history and legacy, but our commitment is to our girls and looking forward to what they need.

Where do you see growth opportunities in Northern California for Girl Scouts and how important is it that it be diverse?

Right now the majority of girls in grades K-12 are diverse, so when we define who our future membership is, we have to make sure it looks like Northern California in all its diversity.

We also think it is important that we recognize that there are many common elements to what parents desire for their daughters. They want their daughters to learn new skills, become risk-takers and challenge-seekers, and they want opportunities to spend more time with their girls.

We think Girl Scouts can connect with what today's parents are looking for, and our focus is on making these things happen for girls and their families.

Girls across all classes and races have similar things they're looking for, too – they want fun, friendship, and adventure. Our challenge is to find the intersection between what girls want and what parents want, and deliver it in an affordable way.

Is it important to engage the parents as well and are you looking at working with the whole family?

It's important to engage the full family. We see family experiences as a shifting focus, certainly within Northern California. I am hearing it from many of my counterparts in other Girl Scout councils as well. Families are so busy, kids are pulled in so many directions, and even technology is a distraction. We're hearing that families are looking for a place where they're disconnected from technology and are doing things and learning together.

It's interesting to see that some of our most popular programs the past few years have been family camps and "side-by-side" learning opportunities – where parents, caregivers, and girls learn new skills together.

We love being able to create that experience for our Girl Scouts and their families. ●



Tammy H. Wharton

Building Leaders



An Interview with Tammy Wharton,
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland

EDITORS' NOTE Shortly after she was named CEO, Tammy Wharton faced the challenge of merging three Ohio councils into one – Heart of Ohio, centered in Zanesville, Heritage Trails, centered in Mansfield, and Seal of Ohio, with headquarters in Columbus, Ohio. Since the merger more than seven years ago, Wharton has worked tirelessly to create one voice of Girl Scouting in the 30 counties the council serves. Under her leadership, Girl Scout participation grew by more than 3,000 girl members at its height, a remarkable showing compared to other Girl Scout council mergers. In addition to her work at Girl Scouts, Wharton gives back to the community through volunteer activities including Franklin County Children Services, the United Way, the Human Services Chamber of Franklin County, The Ohio State University Non-Profit Advisory Board, and many other organizations.

What went into creating the Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland?

When I learned of the historic transformation Girl Scouts was undertaking, I knew I wanted to be a part of this monumental change. The goal was to form a new council with greater efficiencies, aligned processes, and updated programming. This would serve to make our organization and brand more relevant. We were able to take the best practices of three councils and merge them into one new, highly functioning organization.

We were making history. To ensure success, we involved staff, volunteers, community stakeholders, alumnae, and girls in the process. Committees spent countless hours reviewing best practices, writing procedures, and interviewing stakeholders to capture the incredible ideas from the many Girl Scout advocates. It became clear that the future of Girl Scouting in Ohio was tied to the success of this merger and we had to “get it right” – and I think we did.

What were the keys to effectively merging three Ohio councils into one?

VISION – A clear vision communicated and embraced throughout our organization was essential to success. We stayed committed to our purpose, establishing clear timelines and defined outcomes.

COMMUNICATION – Clear communication was essential. We accomplished this with two-way communications with all stakeholders, sharing our progress, goals, and successes, and incorporating their feedback into decisions.

INTEGRITY – We were honest, fair, candid, and transparent and all councils were equally important. Some call this living the Girl Scout Law, but I call it doing the right thing.

DECISIVE – Sound and sometimes difficult decisions were made. These were critical to reaching our goal, and we remained laser focused on what was best for our girls and the movement as a whole.



SUPPORT – There were many moving parts to create the organizational structure to support this massive undertaking. Committees had experts sharing their extensive knowledge and if we reached a roadblock, I was thankful to have Girl Scouts of the USA to help us get back on track.

How important was it for you to engage staff, volunteers, and the girls in this process?

Effective leaders recognize that engagement of all stakeholders is vital to success. Mergers are no different. While Girl Scouts offers incredible programs and services, it's the people who give so freely of their time,

talents, and treasures that make us successful. To garner support of the merger, special attention was given to engage our dedicated internal staff, our devoted volunteers, and our external constituents. By fully tapping all of our human resources and engaging them along the way, they were able to envision the newly merged council that would better serve their needs.

How did you go about creating one voice of Girl Scouting throughout your 30-county district?

Creating one voice and rally cry can be an organizational challenge. Fortunately, we are an organization with volunteers and staff who are deeply passionate and committed to Girl Scouts. We all rally around the fact that we build leaders and there's no question that our girls are the reason we do what we do.

What makes giving back to the community so important to you?

Our organization relies on volunteers to make our mission possible. Without them, we could not serve the girls in our 30 counties. While I have always had philanthropy and giving back in my blood, I am passionate about supporting the community that has been so good to me. Helping others as I have been helped throughout my career, drives me to give back to the community and use my time, talent, and treasures to make the world a better place.

What is involved in planning and hosting the next Girl Scout convention in Columbus?

Since the announcement in 2014 of Columbus as the host of the 2017 Girl Scout convention, we have been partnering with Girl Scouts of the USA as well as our community partners like Experience Columbus and our sister Ohio councils to pave the way for the largest girl event in the nation. We have been planning for the better part of a year and a half. From branding and logistics, to working through the incredible girl experience, we are poised to deliver an experience like no other girl-centric community event. If you're a girl, parent of a girl, or an organization that supports girls, this is the place you want to be. ●

A Brief History of the Girl Scout Movement

For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts of the USA has inspired generations of girls to lead with courage, confidence, and character. The Girl Scout Movement began on March 12, 1912, when Savannah, Georgia, native Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low gathered 18 girls together to provide them the opportunity to evolve physically, mentally, and spiritually. Her goal was to bring together girls of all backgrounds to develop self-reliance and resourcefulness, preparing them for future roles as professional women, as well as for active citizenship outside the home. Within just a few years, there were nearly 70,000 Girl Scouts nationwide, including the territory of Hawaii. An inclusive movement from its very foundation, the first African-American troops were established in 1917, and by 1920, troops for girls with disabilities were established as well.

Today, there are more than 59 million living Girl Scout alumnae. And 2.7 million girls and adult volunteers are active members in our 112 Girl Scout councils in every corner of the United States, Puerto Rico, and United States territories, and in more than 90 countries overseas. The Girl Scout Movement has grown into the largest girl-serving organization in the world, with a robust program that helps girls develop into confident leaders by learning new skills and measurable outcomes. The award-winning Girl Scout Leadership Program creates a safe environment for girls to discover themselves and their values, take healthy risks, connect with others, and take actions to make the world a better place. Additionally, this initiative stimulates the development of vital life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, cooperation and team building, conflict resolution, and advocacy, among others.

Core programs around outdoor education, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), environmental stewardship,

entrepreneurship, healthy living, financial literacy, and global citizenship have been bedrock pillars of the Girl Scout experience from the beginning of the Movement. STEM badges were first introduced in 1913 with the “electrician” and “flyer” badges, offering girls of every age activities relevant to everyday life. This legacy continues to this day, with modern-day Girl Scouts earning badges in digital arts, computing, code-writing, financial literacy, graphic design, and business. Camping, hiking, kayaking, and map-reading are also foundational elements of the Girl Scout Movement, which continue to be central, to this day.

Girl Scouts’ financial literacy programming – most notably, the iconic Girl Scout Cookie sale – helps girls set financial goals and gain the confidence they need to ultimately take control of their own financial future. And this entrepreneurial groundwork has now gone digital with the introduction of Digital Cookie in 2014, teaching vital new skills like online money management, electronic commerce, app usage, Internet safety and behavior (a theme repeated in programs focusing on anti-bullying, and healthy body images for girls).

Celebrating its centennial in 2016, Girl Scouts’ highest awards, now known as the Gold Award, is the highest honor a girl can earn. It requires girls to make a measurable and sustainable difference in their community: assess a need and design a solution; find the resources and the support to make it happen; complete the project; and also inspire others to sustain it. It has been known as the Curved Bar, Golden Eaglet, and First Class over the years. But whatever it’s called, every girl who has earned it is part of an elite group of selfless, civic-minded individuals who have taken action in their communities to tackle a local or global problem in a sustainable way – and that means they’ve made our world a better place.

Today, 52 percent of women in business are Girl Scout alumnae. Nearly every woman who has been in space wore the Girl Scout uniform, as did two-thirds of all female members of Congress, and Girl Scout alumnae in the world of public service include three former secretaries of State. And, the Girl Scout mission continues, seeking to help girls from all walks of life build the courage, confidence, and character they need to transform the world. Girl Scouts of the USA protects and propels girls, families, and society by updating programs, making it faster and easier for adults to volunteer, and working with an unwavering dedication to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape facing the modern girl. ●

Top 10 Accomplishments

1. Founder Juliette Gordon Low organized the first Girl Scout troop on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia.
2. In the early 1900s, Juliette Gordon Low introduced what is now known as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to Girl Scouts by offering welding, aviation, and circuitry badges.
3. In 1956, Martin Luther King Jr. described Girl Scouts as a “force for desegregation.”
4. Girl Scouts of the USA was ranked #7 in the 2016 Brand World Value Ranking.
5. More than 59 million American women alive today participated in Girl Scouts during childhood.
6. Fifteen of the 20 women (75 percent) in the U.S. Senate and more than half of the 88 women in the U.S. House of Representatives are Girl Scout alumnae. Additionally, all three female U.S. secretaries of state are Girl Scout alumnae. And there are currently six women serving as governors across the U.S. – and five are Girl Scouts alumnae.
7. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. Girl Scouts sell about 200 million boxes of cookies – nearly \$800 million worth – during each cookie season.
8. There’s more to Girl Scout Cookies than what’s in the box. When a Girl Scout sells you cookies, she’s building a lifetime of skills – goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics – essential to leadership, success, and life.
9. Girl Scouts launched its first-ever national digital platform – Digital Cookie 1.0 – in 2014 with two separate ways for girls to market their online cookie business by inviting customers to visit a personalized cookie website, or by taking in-person orders using a mobile app. In 2015, Girl Scouts of the USA built on the initial success of Digital Cookie 1.0 by launching Digital Cookie 2.0, with dynamic, engaging, and interactive new tools and fun new upgrades that make learning and selling cookies more exciting and educational for girls.
10. *Fast Company* ranked Girl Scouts among the “World’s Top 10 Most Innovative Companies of 2015 in Not-for-Profit,” touting Digital Cookie as “showing girls that technology is about more than texting.” ●

A word from Girl Scouts of the USA’s National Board President, Kathy Hopinkah Hannan

“Girl Scouts has an over 100-year-old legacy of providing girls with the guidance they need to become the best leaders they can be, and to be girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Over the course of our rich history we have had devoted leaders to continue the legacy of Juliette Gordon Low, a visionary pioneer. As a Movement, we welcome Sylvia Acevedo, a life-long Girl Scout who brings extensive experience as a talented leader, entrepreneur, and technology executive as well as a deep passion for and understanding of Girl Scouts, for her service as interim CEO as we continue our mission to serve girls and invest in our collective future.”

For more information on Girl Scouts of the USA

Join us in building the next generation of leaders.
To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or become a member, visit

www.girlscouts.org