

## THE BASICS

Our troop meets every Tuesday from 7 – 8:30pm at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School with no meeting on the last Tuesday of the month. Each meeting has a different purpose or they will be geared just for a specific age group, so you need to be aware if you need to be at each meeting. A newsletter is published almost every meeting, and should be read by both the girl and her parents. Newsletters and all other information are kept in a file box with each girl's name. The troop is also heavily email-dependent, and you need to check your email to be informed of any last minute changes or updates.

## ADMINISTRATION



**REGISTRATION COSTS:** Troop 5002 collects annual dues of \$30.00. This is due in September. The \$30.00 helps defray the costs of badges and patches (normally \$1 - \$4. or more per patch, badge or pin). In addition, there is a \$10.00 fee for annual national dues (normally payable in the spring when you “early bird” register). There is also often a small fee associated with specific camping trips or field trips. Girls who commit to a trip and back out at the last minute will normally be responsible for the cost of the trip, especially those expenses that were pre-paid (like food or tickets).

**FUND RAISING:** There are several formal fund raising programs during the year:

Cookie Sales      Calendar Sales      QSP      SHARE

Teens still sell cookies. We take orders in January, make deliveries in February, and do booth sales in March of each year. This is our major fund-raising source. Girls often earn as much as \$100 for their “Scout accounts” (see below) during this fund raiser.

The Troop also sells Girl Scout calendars in the fall (\$1.50 profit per calendar). This is a low-pressure campaign, but the calendars make excellent gifts!

The QSP program comes in late Spring. QSP is a magazine ordering program, and is NOT a door-to-door fund raiser. QSP is intended for girls and their families to order or renew magazines they would normally get. Ordering through QSP (as opposed to Publishers Clearing House, etc.) allows approximately 40% of the magazine costs to go directly to support the five Girl Scout campgrounds in the Washington, D.C. area.

Finally, the Council runs a “**SHARE**” program in the fall. **SHARE** is “**Share Her Annual Real Expenses**”. Families are asked to contribute to the cost of training troop leaders, providing printed materials, and other administrative and program costs. Donations are entirely voluntary and private, done in sealed envelopes, but the council recommends a minimum contribution of \$25 per family, a real bargain when compared to ballet, soccer, gymnastics costs.

The troop also does money earning activities. Girls will have “Scout Accounts”, but this money is never the girl's personal money; it is the troop's. If she leaves the troop, the money stays in the troop general funds. Girls can use money in their Scout Account to apply towards any troop trips or troop expenses.

**FINANCIAL AID:** Of all organizations we know, Girl Scouting has perhaps the easiest-to-obtain financial aid program. If a parent ever feels the cost of scouting is becoming too

much on their budget, please let Gretchen or Barb know. With that, we can make a request to Council for funds to pay for that scout's activities – no documentation is required from the family.

*PERMISSION SLIPS:* Whenever we meet outside of the normal meeting location, a permission slip is required. Normally, these need to be signed and filled out prior to the activity (which also lets adults know how many girls will attend).

*HEALTH FORMS:* At the beginning of the year, you will be asked to fill out a Health History Form and Emergency Consent Form. We take these on every trip. Adults who travel with the troop will also need to fill out health forms.



*UNIFORMS:* Every girl in the troop is encouraged to have, but is not required to have, a Girl Scout sash or vest. A full uniform is not required, but we often have opportunities to do "Sudden Service". In the last few years, we've been on stage with President Bush, danced and greeted VIPs at a National 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala, and met with Cabinet-level officials. We never know when these opportunities will come up, but in almost all cases there is little lead time and only those with a full uniform may participate. We can often share skirts, blouses, etc., but can't promise to have your size or that the owner of the skirt won't need it herself! At

[http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gscnc/insignia/where\\_to\\_place/11\\_17/](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gscnc/insignia/where_to_place/11_17/) you can see graphics of the Vest (or sash) that shows where everything goes.

The following "doo-dads" need to be sewn on the vest: "GSUSA" Strip, "GSCNC" Strip, numbers "5002". Also nice, but not necessary: dark blue felt tab for Girl Scout and World pin. The troop provides the Troop Crest (Falling Stars) and Girl Scout and World Pins (if they don't already have them). You can purchase replacements from leaders or the council store for lost pins. We also have some "5002" and GSUSA/GSCNC strips you can purchase. If she was a Brownie, the "Fly Up" wings go on the front of the vest, as well as the Bridging Rainbow, (if she completed the bridging requirements.) Those should have been provided by her previous troop. They can be re-purchased, if they were lost or if you wish to keep them on your old vests. Girls who earned the Junior Leadership Pin and the Bronze Award can also wear that on the front of the vest. Check the link, above, for proper placement. She should also have a membership star for every year she has been in Girl Scouts. Lost stars can be purchased from the troop or the council store.

Uniforms can be purchased at the Council Shop, 4301 Connecticut Ave NW (Van Ness/UDC Metro stop on the Red Line). The shop also has a website at <http://www.gscnc.org/gscnc/shop.htm>, and you can phone or fax your orders to them. Total Crafts in Burke on Old Keene Mill Road sporadically has vests, sashes and handbooks in stock (don't count on them, though!). Several of us are willing to assist any "sewing challenged" families with proper placement of items on the vest or sash.

*BOOKS:* We strongly recommend that girls have their own copy of the Guide to Interest Project Patches (IPs). They should also consider buying the "Go For It" Silver (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>)

grade) or Gold (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) inserts . The IP book will most likely be updated within 2 years. Even though we don't use these books at every single meeting, girls need to keep them with them. Finally, please have it **WELL MARKED** with her name!

## IPS, CHARMS AND RECOGNITIONS



*IPs*: An Interest Project, or IP, is what girls earn. They are not always easy to earn. Some can take months...others can be primarily earned through school activities. Each IP requires skill builders, a technology requirement, a service project and a career exploration. IPs are required to earn the Silver Award; additional IPs are required to earn the Gold Award. We want to be very careful on earning IPs and not go overboard in the early years -- earning IPs when you're in High School to get your Gold Award could be a real challenge if all the "easy" ones were done in 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Focus Books are still fairly new and a couple of them are required for the Silver (Uniquely Me: The Real Deal and Looking In, Reaching Out). If girls miss a meeting where work is done, we will try to help them make it up later, but that can't always be done. In all IPs there are other requirements that can be done in place of the missed requirement. For focus books, girls set individual goals with troop advisors.

Girls will be asked to keep records of their own advancements. If they realize they have done things in school that count towards an IP, we WELCOME and ENCOURAGE them to note that and run it by one of the leaders for credit. They should regularly compare their personal records with the troop's "master" record, especially if they need to show accomplishment of a requirement. Mrs. E keeps full records, can provide individual girl records to any girl who asks for them, and **NORMALLY NEVER UPDATES A GIRL RECORD WITHOUT THE GIRL TELLING HER TO DO SO!** In other words, if a girl was at the meeting and had an opportunity to complete 2 IP requirements, she needs to tell Mrs. E which 2 she completed. This is important because at some meetings, girls would rather catch up with friends instead of complete the IP requirements -- that's ok, but that's also the reason we don't give blanket credit for doing the IP work just because you were at the meeting!

*PATCHES*: Patches commemorate an activity we did, and normally signify participation in the event. This can be participation in cookie or calendar sales, Thinking Day, special events, or camping. Patches always go on the back of the vest/sash.

*SILVER AWARD*: This is the highest recognition a younger teen can earn, and if she wants to earn it, she must complete the requirements before the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. You do NOT have to earn it, but in general terms, it is a great goal to earn the Silver. We're in a transition period right now. Girls can use current requirements or the new "Go For It" requirements – or mix and match both. It is REALLY important that they individually chart their own course for this. Each girl's path will be different. If they haven't talked to Ms B or Mrs. T on their own, they're probably not on their way to Silver.

**GOLD AWARD:** This is the highest recognition a Girl Scout can earn. It makes a significant difference on college entrance applications and entitles the recipient to compete for scholarship opportunities. We've had troop alumni graduate with over \$10,000 in scholarships JUST through Girl Scouts and her Gold Award. Many compare this to the Eagle rank in Boy Scouts, and the leadership and service requirements are at a commensurate level. Requirements can be found in the Going for the Gold Handbook for current requirements and the "Go For It Gold Award" insert for revised requirements. Again, requirements currently can be mixed and matched.

**OTHER AWARDS and RECOGNITIONS:** There are numerous other recognitions that can be worn on a vest. They normally indicate a specific activity like Program Aide, Counselor-In-Training, Community Service Bars, etc. Information about these can be found in the Cadette and Senior handbooks. (The Troop has several copies of these).

**COURT OF AWARDS:** We try to hold 2-3 Courts of Award yearly. These are special times when our girls are recognized for their accomplishments and any other awards. These are family events and the chance for your daughter to shine. We normally have the girls plan these ceremonies themselves, which adds even more enjoyment to the evening.



## **PROGRAM**

**PROGRAM:** At this point, we have shifted planning and ideas from adults to girls. The adults are no longer called "troop leaders" but rather "advisors". The girls still require some adult input, but we do our best to let them plan and execute things they want to do.

**TRIPS:** We try to do some activities on weekends. There are normally 2-3 camping trips a year, and another 4-5 one-day trips per year. The girls want to take a big trip soon – but no decision yet. We always try to work in other smaller trips (skiing, etc.)

**TGIF:** Teen Girls In Focus is a group of Springfield-area teen Girl Scouts who meet solely for the purpose of planning major trips. In summer '03 they went to Hawaii. They have just begun planning their next trip, which will be to Italy. This is a Girl Scout-sponsored trip with plenty of money-earning opportunities. See Mrs. E for more details.

**Major Summer Opportunities:** "Destinations" are programs for teen girls and normally occur in the summer throughout the US and internationally. They range from Outward Bound-style trips to zoo internships. There are also international trips. Girls individually apply for the trips and are competitively selected. Funding is usually up to the girl, but often as much as 1/3 of the cost covered by our Council. Each year the offerings are different. Every girl should at least look at the offerings, which can be viewed at <http://www.studio2b.org/escape/destinations/>

**A note on participation:** There are no awards for "100% attendance" in this troop. Rather, we try to offer lots of different opportunities with the knowledge that busy schedules will always impact someone in the troop, and we can't always arrange the timing to meet

everyone's schedule -- in fact, with a troop this size, we really DON'T want everyone to show up all the time! ☺

## **PARENT SUPPORT**

We can't do it without the help of many. We already have many great volunteers, but ALWAYS appreciate more help. Here are the areas that require parent participation:

Fundraising (Calendars, Cookies, SHARE, or QSP – each needs someone to run it and/or help run it)

First Aiders                      Drivers

Parents (Mom or Dad) willing to camp overnight with us

Other: We always need experts or people who have neighbors in high places! Are you connected with federal programs, retail or education? Do you know any Staffers on Capital Hill? Are you a quilter, needlework expert, or painter? Do you have an interest or talent to introduce to the girls? It could be that 5, 15, or 50 of the girls have never been exposed to what you do and we want to give them all the options we can.

With a troop this size, it's often most productive to split them into smaller groups and rotate them through activities at a meeting. When we do this, we often need adults to work with each small group session. Please feel free to stay for meetings and let us know if you're ready to be put to work!

Let us know what talents you have that can make this a better troop!



## **OUTDOOR ACTIVITY**

Not every person is comfortable in the out-of-doors, but millions of girls who have passed through Girl Scouting say camping is what they remember the most. First, if your daughter absolutely does not like to go camping, that's ok. She can be an active member of our troop and elect to not go on our campouts. Our campouts will range from car camping to backpacking, and not every girl will want to backpack, which is again ok. Backpacking trips will normally be limited to smaller numbers of girls due to the types of sites we would be backpacking into.

**EQUIPMENT:** Your daughter will always need the following items when we go camping.

*Sleeping bag:* Should be rated to 40 degrees as an absolute minimum standard. (I personally would not put my daughter in a 40-degree bag, as I know she would be cold.) For guaranteed comfort in all cases, we recommend a "20 degree" bag. The degree ratings are averages, and some people sleep colder or warmer than others.

*Sleeping pad:* Can be purchased at any Target, Walmart, Kmart, or outdoor supply store, normally for less than \$15. Pads are much more for insulation from the ground than for comfort when you are young.

*Mess Kit:* A cheap picnic plate will work for a dish. A Cool-Whip container will work great for a bowl. Girls need a mug (for hot cocoa, which we almost always have) and a drip bag along with their mess kit. The best mugs are the insulated travel mugs with lids (available everywhere). A drip bag should be a hoisery bag, available in the laundry section of any grocery store or Target/Walmart, etc. The bag should have a string (old shoelace works) so we can hang it up (with wet dishes inside) to drip dry.

*Water bottle:* Can be a one-half liter bottle of water from the grocery store, or a sports water bottle. Best if there's a way to carry it hands-free.

*Backpack:* Not required, but if your daughter enjoys this, talk to us about appropriate backpacks for youth. Today's youth backpacks are designed to be expandable (e.g., they grow lengthwise). A Kelty youth backpack designed for growing teens normally retails for about \$70. We can also rent them for \$2. from the Council's equipment center in Merrifield. We appreciate adult volunteers who can pick them up or return them.

In addition, a packing list will be provided for each trip.

A final note: Our personal pet peeve is to hear a scout say "My mom forgot to pack that". Our favorite answer is: "Is this your mom's trip or yours? How come YOU didn't pack it?" It's ok -- and preferable -- to have mom or dad check them when they think they have everything on their list, but at this point in their life, THEY should do the packing.

## GIRL SCOUT ORGANIZATION



*NATIONAL:* Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) is in New York.

*COUNCIL:* The Girl Scout program for the D.C., No. Virginia and Metro Maryland area is administered by the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capitol (GSCNC)

*ASSOCIATION:* GSCNC is divided into about 30 geographic associations. Our association is "Association 52", and there are 5 Service Units within our Association, in the Burke / Springfield / Fairfax Station area.

*SERVICE UNIT:* This is the unit we most often interact with. Our Service Unit (SU) is the Silverbrook and Halley Elementary School boundaries, and there are currently over 30 Daisy, Brownie, Junior, and Teen Girl Scout troops in our SU. We are known as "Service Unit 52-8". The SU sponsors activities, such as the Spring Encampment, service projects, Thinking Day, Bridging, dances, and badge workshops. The SU boundaries also define where we are allowed to sell Girl Scout cookies.

*TROOP:* That's us. We are "Troop 5002", and have girls from at least 7 schools (Hayfield Senior, Hayfield Middle, Lake Braddock, Edison, Thomas Jefferson, Woodson, and several other smaller schools).

## FINAL NOTE:

Yes, this is a big troop, but we like the variety and flexibility it offers. Most of these girls have known each other for years. We get economy of scale with a large group, and when we plan events, if only 12 can go, it's still going to be a great trip. We want to have something for everyone in this troop, and we will NOT let your daughter get lost in the sea of other girls. At the same time, there will be an expectation that she watch out for what she needs to get done without constant reminders from the adult advisors. This doesn't mean, though, that Mom and Dad can't check up on a regular basis to see what she may need to get something finished. Just as you have to prod with homework now and then, we need parents to stand behind and give gentle pushes with the Girl Scout program as well. Thanks for your support!

