



Girl Scouts Nation's Capital
56th Annual Meeting – April 21, 2018
Lidia Soto-Harmon Remarks
Chief Executive Officer

Thank you, girls.



It's been a sobering, yet exciting year for women and girls.

Time Magazine's persons of the year, were the **Silence Breakers**, representing all the women and **girls** who stood up for their rights, and raised their voices against sexual harassment.



We saw "Me Too" evolve into "Times Up." And voices of young students were heard on our National Mall as part of the *March for Your Life*.

There is **urgency** in our work to support girls, to help them gain courage, confidence and character, to truly make our world a better place. Girl Scout's mission is as important today as it was **106 years ago**. We remain the **best** leadership organization dedicated for girls, by girls.



Girl Scouts are embracing their inner Go –getter, Innovator, Risk-Taker... because all those qualities together make them leaders!

Research is clear – it starts with girls as young as **six**, when they start to believe they are less capable than boys.

In Girl Scouting, we can inoculate girls against the constant drum of media that tells them they must be perfect. Together, we can strengthen our girls to stand up to peer pressure and bullying that girls experience.

We can help build strong confident girls, and you heard from our girls here today, Girl Scouts is the place where they unleash their power.

Boy Scouts announced, after 108 years of delivering a program for boys, that it would start recruiting girls— quite frankly I was concerned. When Boy Scouts started in 1910, they had one problem, **girls**! Girls were trying to join, showing up at rallies signing in with just their initials. But once discovered, girls were **kicked out**.



Enter **Juliette Gordon Low**. She had something "*for the girls of Savannah, all of America, and all the world,*" and in 1912 she started Girl Scouts-- **for girls, by girls**.

I've always felt that Boy Scouts was the place for boys—and Girl Scouts the place for girls. **I still believe that!**

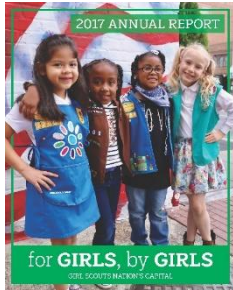
But, I am not naïve.

Boy Scouts has a history of focusing on the needs of **boys**. No matter how Boy Scouts may try to structure their programming to include girls, the fact is: you cannot just put another label on one program model and now say it is for girls!



After today's meeting you will receive an evaluation, with an opportunity to let us know how we can continue to be the **premier** choice for scouting for girls.

Girl Scouts doesn't just include girls, it was developed specifically **for girls, by girls**.



We factor in a girl-led component into everything she does. We don't just teach the skills, we teach girls how to *apply* them for real world success. The fact is that Girl Scouts is hands down **THE BEST** leadership program in the world for girls, and we have over a century of proof to back it up.

We connect girls with powerful women, role models and mentors.



We know that girls thrive in Girl Scouts. That's why we're all here, to help **girls** explore their passions, dream big and become leaders. This is what happens when girls are in a girls-only, safe-space, and have the opportunity to try new things, and take-risks without fear of failure.



I am proud of Girl Scouts' history and our legacy of women leaders (including 75% of today's women senators and 100% of women Secretaries of States, and almost every female astronaut who has flown in outer space).

I also am proud of our strong commitment to inclusion and to reaching girls in under-resourced communities. We need to stay strong for all girls.



Like ten year old Girl Scout Alice who shared with me her concern for what she saw as girls shying away from fully participating in school and class activities. When asked at a science fair—who wants to hold the lizard all the boys raised their hand, and they got the opportunity, not the girls. She said it happens in class too.

What Alice witnessed is systemic throughout society. According to research, girls as young as **six** can start to experience a confidence gap!

The New York Times



Because **Alice** is a Girl Scout— she took action and has mobilized girls around the world to be brave and bold, and to raise their hand. With support from her troop and Girl Scouts Nation's Capital, Alice created the **Raise Your Hand** movement. We received a lot of publicity, including an op-ed written by Alice and featured in the *New York Times*.



Today, nearly 7,000 girls, women and yes, men too, have taken the pledge to be brave, bold and **Raise your Hand**.

It is harder, when you don't know the answer, or you're not sure, or when you have a question, or when your teacher is looking for volunteers, but girls-- **Let's Raise Your Hand!**

You see, that's what it means when we say Girl Scouts provides a safe space where **every girl**, can claim **every role**, as an opportunity for **girls** to lead.



That includes the outdoors. Take **Barb Frazee**—a lifetime Girl Scout and avid adventurer. She shares her passion for the outdoors through **POGO** (Prince William Older Girls Organization). Leaders like **Judy Bauer** and **Jen Hachin**, have bonded



together to provide teen Girl Scouts with amazing outdoor adventures.

They are not alone. Where is **Brian Kerarny**? He is *Man Enough to be Girl Scouts* too. Brian helps girls navigate, 30-feet above ground, at our challenge course at Camp White Rock. And it doesn't stop there. How many of you have taken a troop camping, taught girls how to build a fire, or pitch a tent? [Stand up].





Because of you, last year, over **48,000** Girl Scouts and their families explored the outdoors at our **eight** amazing camps. They became skillfull at archery, kayaking, rock climbing, zip-lining, and in the process, our girls gained the **confidence** to take on any **challenge**.



This summer we anticipate that over **10,000** girls will explore the outdoors at our sleep-away, fee-funded day and evening and community-based camps.

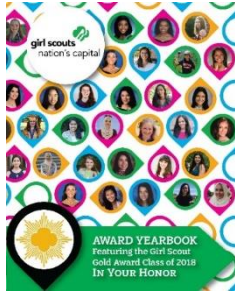


Helping girls discover their inner strength, that's what Girl Scout leaders do! Leaders like **Jennifer Manguera**. Her Girl Scouts have vests loaded with badges, patches and



pins. One of her troop members, **Maya** traveled on a Girl Scout destination to Iceland. Jen motivates her girls to go for our highest acheivement, the **Gold Award**. This year, three girls in her troop are going for the gold. You heard from **Mary**, who is working to prevent sexual harassment at school; **Maya** is setting up a library and play area for kids in Northeast DC, and **Lily**, who is eliminating the use of plastic straws in her school.

Jen is not alone. Like you, she delivers an amazing Girl Scout experience to girls. You help girls fill their vests with awards, achievements and memories that will last a lifetime.



Because of you, this year we've had the largest Gold Award class in our recent history, with **188** Gold Award Girl Scouts.



We continue to capture girls' natural curiosity in science, engineering, technology and math. In the first year of our new **STEM badges and journeys**, girls earned **4,200** badges and awards.



We are also introducing girls to women scientists, coders, astronauts, and cybersecurity experts.

Because girls can't be, what they cannot see!

To expand our STEM portfolio, we have formed a STEM Advisory Group to bring experts to the table and build partnerships. These STEM leaders recognize that Girl Scouts is the pipeline their industries need to fill the STEM gender gap, since only 25 percent of STEM jobs are held by women.

From filling the void in STEM to our strong presence in the business community, the Girl Scout Cookie program continues to be the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. Who here has turned their garage into a cookie cupboard-- in the middle of a freezing cold winter?



Where is **Rebecca Holley**? For six years, she has served as cupboard manager in Bowie, MD, distributing **40,000 boxes** of cookies to troops. And, **Linda Kelly**, a Service Booth coordinator in Alexandria—secured **285 booth locations**—providing **139 troops** with places to sell Girl Scout Cookies. It doesn't go unnoticed that product sales is **volunteer led!**



Thank you for supporting our girl entrepreneurs, helping with logistics, assisting your troop bring out their booth, and of course, purchasing Girl Scout Cookies.

This year, we added a new skill to the cookie program, **e-Commerce**, which gave the Cookie sale a real boost. Nearly **39,000** girls participated in the sale, and shattered our goal, selling more than **4.6 million** boxes of Girl Scout cookies. Over **3.5 million** dollars was earned by troops to fund girls' ambitions to travel, camp, and help their community.



Girl Scouts happens because of you.

Our **volunteers** are our most **valuable** players. The best way to deliver an exceptional program to girls is by building a strong volunteer structure and providing you with the tools you need. Girl Scouts Nation's Capital is great because we have great volunteers—over **27,000** strong.



To support our volunteers, there are new resources in the Volunteer Toolkit, including monthly webinars. We have also updated the Basic Leadership course, including distributing our **New Leader Passport**.

Last year, **5,298** Girl Scout troops were active in our council. With over **87,000 members**, Girl Scouts Nation's Capital continues to be the **largest** council in the nation.

Today, we start **early bird**. This year we asked girls to design our early bird patch. We received thousands of wonderfully, creative entries, and I am excited to unveil the winning patch design.



Congratulations to Girl Scout Cadette **Lily** from Troop 3966 in Alexandria, VA, for the winning entry!



Last year, we retained 70 percent of our members, and in light of new marketplace competition—I encourage you to raise that bar this year. Let's show the world that Girl Scout is the **preferred** leadership organization for **girls** in the Greater Washington Region. Promise me that you will ask every eligible girl and volunteer in your area to continue their Girl Scout journey and renew their membership?

And on that note, can I hear our membership bells?

At our August Kickoff, we awarded three coveted membership bells. We recognized **Association 34, Montgomery Crescent**, for having the largest increase in girls registered, with **190** new Girl Scouts. And, we awarded NOT ONE but **two** bells – Association **53, Mount Vernon** and Association **40, DC East**, for increasing girls registered by **eight** percent.

CONGRATULATIONS!

But hold on tight—or should I say **organize** more troops because I hear Associations **51, 60, 56, 40, 21, 15** are all vying for the bell! Troop organizers, make some noise!

We owe our success to all of you, our dedicated volunteers and members. We, together can support girls like no other organization. Everything we do is designed with and for girls, helping them develop the independence, critical-thinking skills, and judgement that lead to strong character.

I want everyone to stand up. Look around the room at the great opportunity that we have, and I want you to think not about what stands in front of you but who stands right next to you.



We are a family, bound by a legacy we share, and a sisterhood we can count on. Today we are giving each of you a "*Proud Girl Scout Family*" window cling. Please display it proudly.

We know the powerful impact we have on girls. At this critical junction in our movement, I ask you to stand for Girl Scouts, the organization that is FOR GIRLS, BY GIRLS!

Thank you.