

**Questions and Answers**  
*Possible Merger with Shawnee Girl Scout Council*  
As of 2/10/09

**About Council Mergers**

**Q. What is realignment?**

A. Three years ago, Girl Scouts of the USA launched a national strategy to **realign the boundaries** of Girl Scout Councils. The goal was to create a nation of 109 “high capacity councils” with volunteers, staff, and financial resources to provide quality programs, support membership expansion and enhance community visibility. In 2006, when this project started, there were 313 Girl Scout Councils, today there are 133 councils. It is anticipated that all work of realignment will be completed by October 2009.

**Q. Who drew the new boundary lines?**

A. Girl Scouts of the USA hired a team of demographers to draw a new map of council jurisdictions based on a consistent set of demographic principles. The original map has been modified in some regions to reflect more recent changes in population or, in some cases, information provided by local councils.

**Q. I thought we were going to “get” 3 Virginia counties from Shawnee? How did we become a “merger partner”?**

A. Shawnee Girl Scout Council was not comfortable with the map that was originally developed by GSUSA’s demographers. After many requests, the demographers revisited the map of our region and realized that the majority of Shawnee’s jurisdiction did “demographically” relate best to Nation’s Capital.

**Q. When did we learn that the map had changed?**

A. We first learned about the new configuration last fall. GSCNC’s Board held preliminary discussions at meetings in October and December. In early January 2009 we started to discuss this possibility with other key volunteers.

**Q. Aren’t we already a “high capacity” council? If yes, why are we merging?**

A. Yes, we are a high capacity council but Shawnee is not large enough to reach the threshold of “high capacity”, hence this realignment.

**Q. Who makes the decision about the merger?**

A. Merger decisions are shared between councils and GSUSA. Girl Scouts of the USA has the authority to determine jurisdictional boundaries. Girl Scout Councils are individually incorporated and subsequently must vote to “merge” whenever the majority of a council’s jurisdiction and assets are transferred from one council to another. Two sets of votes are required by each council. Votes are first taken at the Board level; action is then taken by “voting members” at each council’s Annual Meeting.

**Q. I don't remember voting when we merged with Frederick, Maryland. Why are we voting now?**

A. Frederick, Maryland was not a council – it was one county of a larger council. Agreement was needed at the Board level only.

**Q. If this merger takes place; will we have the largest geography of any council in the country? Will we have the largest membership?**

A. No to both questions. The nationwide move to realign councils has created jurisdictions much larger than ours would be if this merger takes place. Girl Scouts of Northern California now covers from San Jose to the Oregon border. Girl Scouts of Connecticut and Girl Scouts of Colorado cover their entire state. North and South Dakota have formed one council. And the Chicago area council covers territory from the Wisconsin border to Gary, Indiana.

**Q. Will we become so large that ultimately, GSUSA will divide our council?**

A. No, that will not happen. GSUSA believes that larger, more robust councils are the way to ensure growth and strength for the future.

### **About Shawnee Girl Scout Council**

**Q. How big is Shawnee Girl Scout Council?**

A. Geographically, Shawnee Girl Scout Council serves 14 counties in the Eastern Panhandle region of West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia. The largest cities are Hagerstown, Martinsburg, Winchester, and Cumberland.

The counties are Frederick, Warren, and Clark, Shenandoah, and Page in Virginia; Allegany and Washington in Maryland; Jefferson, Berkeley, Morgan, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Grant in West Virginia.

**Q. I am not familiar with the area covered by Shawnee Council, how do they “connect” to us?**

A. Many individuals live in Shawnee's jurisdiction and work in our jurisdiction. Commuter rail lines and major highways tie us together. Washington area businesses and government offices are moving to the Martinsburg/Winchester area. While there is a local NBC affiliate in the region, the primary source of TV news originates in Washington, DC and, as a result, school delay/closings information for all 14 counties is carried on local DC networks.

**Q. I understand the possibility of a merger with Winchester, Hagerstown, and the Eastern Panhandle but have also heard we might merge with the whole council. Can you tell me why?**

A. People who live in the 6 outlying counties, where the total girl membership is just over 1,300, do all their shopping – seek medical services – and play competitive sports in counties located to the “east.” They do not look to areas covered by

neighboring councils for those services. Councils that border the “outer counties” in Shawnee’s jurisdiction are located in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania – Charleston, West Virginia – and Roanoke, Virginia.

**Q. How strong is their membership?**

A. At the end of the most recent Girl Scout year, Shawnee was serving 5,052 girls in 491 troops with 1,617 adult volunteers. They have a strong focus on membership, posting a more than 6% increase in the last Girl Scout year.

**Q. Does the council own any property?**

A. Shawnee owns an office in Martinsburg and a camp, Camp White Rock (140 acres), located in Hampshire County, West Virginia. Many troops from Nation’s Capital have camped at White Rock when space was not available at our camps. Additionally, Shawnee has recently accepted the donation of 500 acres of land located in Frederick County, Virginia for development as an environmental learning center.

**Q. Would the Martinsburg Office remain open and continue to serve volunteers?**

A. Absolutely.

**Q. Is the council financially strong?**

A. Yes. Shawnee generates an annual operating surplus and has funds designated for providing service to girls in their council.

**Q. What does Shawnee care most about?**

A. We look forward to finding this out! We do know that the council values volunteers, focuses on customer service, loves outdoor and environmental programming, and cares about providing strong Girl Scout experiences to all girls.

**Q. Why does Shawnee want to become part of GSCNC?**

A. Shawnee realizes that they must “merge” with one of the councils that border their jurisdiction. Demographics make it clear that a merger to the “east” toward Washington, DC is the best “fit” for them. It will be easiest and most logical for their members.

**About Nation’s Capital**

**Q. Will merging with Shawnee change our local Girl Scout experience?**

A. We would hope that the only change you will experience will be improvement. Program offerings will expand as programs developed by Shawnee are available for Nation’s Capital girls. New camping opportunities will be available. We know that we will learn from and be inspired by Shawnee’s successes...just as we learned and benefited from Frederick County, Maryland, when they joined Nation’s Capital.

**Q. Won't the increased membership make it harder to get into our programs?**

A. Shawnee is a growing council but its membership is not large enough to result in a drastic change in program availability for our girls. Over time, we anticipate program availability will increase for all members as new programs are added.

**Q. Would a merger with Shawnee negatively affect our finances?**

A. We anticipate that the only affect will be positive. Shawnee is smaller than Nation's Capital – but their balance sheet is strong and their income annually exceeds expenses.

**Q. Will we expect our staff to cover this entire new territory?**

A. Absolutely not! As we have said before, Shawnee is a strong Girl Scout Council. They currently have 15 to 20 staff working to provide services throughout their jurisdiction. We anticipate that many of the staff will stay on, continuing to serve the area.

**Q. I am worried that Shawnee does things differently than we do. Will this be a problem?**

A. All councils do things differently. We expect that the first 12-18 months will be a time of transition as we learn from each other and make changes that will provide the best programs and services to all.

**Q. Did we learn anything from our “jurisdiction change” with Frederick that will help us with this transition?**

A. Yes. The “jurisdictional change” with Frederick went very well on both sides. We are stronger because Frederick is part of us – and Frederick is stronger, too. Frederick volunteers and staff have offered help with this next transition. They feel they are in a perfect position to help “new members of GSCNC” understand some of our ways of work.

**Q. Will the mobile van visit Shawnee? Will we get a second mobile van to serve our larger territory?**

A. We don't have answers to specific service delivery questions yet. Once merger votes are taken we will begin to work on specifics of service delivery. Shawnee is doing a great job now, we need to get to know them and learn what they feel are the most important ingredients to delivering good service.