



GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 11, 2009

TO: Council Delegates, Association Chairs and Assistant Chairs,
Service Unit Managers, Council Trainers, REACH Volunteers,
SHARE Task Force

FROM: Diane Tipton, President
Jan Verhage, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Major Change in Realignment Plans

Over the past few months, the Board has been grappling with a change in realignment plans for our GSCNC jurisdiction. After three years of anticipation regarding the transfer of 3 counties from Shawnee Girl Scout Council to GSCNC, the map was re-drawn by GSUSA making Nation's Capital the "unexpected merger partner" of Shawnee Girl Scout Council. This decision was made for "demographic" reasons which have been fully supported by GSCNC's Board.

Unlike jurisdictional transfers which only require Board action, mergers require the support of the Board of Directors and the Council Delegates. We facilitated the transfer of Frederick County, Maryland, with a vote at the Board level – a merger with Shawnee will require a vote at the Annual Meeting.

With a GSUSA timeline for completion of October 1, 2009, and our desire to avoid calling a special meeting of our council delegates, this action has been fast-tracked to facilitate a member vote at our already scheduled Annual Meeting in April.

In addition to background and history, this communication includes a fact sheet about Shawnee, a map, and a list of questions and answers we anticipate others might ask. This topic has been added to the agenda for Forums that are scheduled later this month and two additional meetings have been scheduled in March to answer any remaining questions. Information about all meetings will be posted on our website.

Thank you for your support.

Background: Three years ago, in an effort to build a nation of high capacity Girl Scout Councils (councils with the financial resources, volunteers and staff to provide quality programs, support membership expansion and enhance community visibility), GSUSA established a plan to redraw council boundaries, reducing the number of councils from 313 to 109. This plan, which is nearing the end of implementation, has resulted in mergers creating new Girl Scout councils – and jurisdictional transfers where boundaries were redrawn without forming a “new council.”

The “map” of new council boundaries was drawn by a team of demographers who considered factors like population, economics, travel patterns, and geographic barriers in developing their recommendation. With the exception of one council in Wisconsin, councils have moved forward with plan implementation. Some mergers and jurisdictional transfers have been highly successful and some are still dealing with merger-related challenges. Realignment is scheduled for completion this Girl Scout year with the final mergers and jurisdictional transfers taking place by September 30, 2009.

Realignment Plans for GSCNC: The original demographer’s plan called for the “jurisdictional transfer” of Frederick County, Maryland, from Penn Laurel Girl Scout Council to GSCNC. Additionally, the plan called for the transfer of Frederick, Warren, and Clarke Counties in Virginia from Shawnee Girl Scout Council to GSCNC. The Frederick, Maryland, transfer, which was extremely successful, took place two years ago. The jurisdictional transfer with Shawnee Council was scheduled to begin this fall for completion by September 30, 2009.

Realignment Plans for Shawnee Girl Scout Council: Shawnee, based in Martinsburg, West Virginia, did not agree with the Demographer’s Original Plan which called for the majority of its territory to be merged with Black Diamond Girl Scout Council based in Charleston, West Virginia. They felt that traffic and shopping patterns, commuter trains, and media connections all point toward a merger to the “east.” Not unlike Northern Virginia that focuses more toward Washington, DC, than toward Richmond – so, too, Shawnee felt strongly that their jurisdiction focuses more “east” toward Washington, DC, than “southwest” toward Charleston, West Virginia.

With the merger process scheduled to begin on October 1, 2008, Shawnee filed an “appeal” with GSUSA asking that the map be reviewed. To the surprise of all, when the demographer revisited the map, a new alignment was recommended that would transfer the majority of counties in Shawnee Council to Nation’s Capital.

<u>Demographer's Original Plan</u>	<u>Counties</u>	<u>Members</u>
Nation's Capital	3	1,401
Black Diamond	9	3,080
Virginia Skyline	2	571
<u>Demographer's Revised Plan</u>		
Nation's Capital	8	3,671
Black Diamond	4	810
Virginia Skyline	2	571

GSCNC's Response to the Revised Plan: We first learned about the new configuration in the fall. GSCNC's Board held preliminary discussions at meetings in October and December. Understanding that GSUSA has the full authority to establish council jurisdictions, GSCNC's Board took action to support the Demographer's Revised Plan.

With "change in realignment" on the horizon, a small group of GSCNC volunteers, including several members of the Board, met in early January to expand the conversation about changes in realignment. Though there was some understandable concern about "change," the conversation was positive. Several participants asked why we weren't merging with Shawnee's entire jurisdiction.

Shawnee's Response to the Revised Plan: While GSCNC worked to "get its arms around" this new possibility, Shawnee volunteers continued to express concern, feeling strongly that the revised plan was not correct and that their council should "merge" as one unit.

In an effort to give Shawnee a fair hearing, six GSCNC Board Members met with several Board Members from Shawnee in mid-January. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to Shawnee's concern about the map and hear their rationale for a 14-county merger with Nation's Capital. Shawnee presented strong demographic reasons for full merger with Nation's Capital and all Board Members in attendance agreed with the demographic rationale. The recommendation of the six GSCNC Board Members who participated in the meeting with Shawnee was forwarded to GSCNC's Board for consideration.

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GSCNC Board Action: On February 10, after hearing the report from members who met with Shawnee Girl Scout Council, GSCNC's Board voted unanimously to add "**full merger with all 14 counties in Shawnee's jurisdiction to the list of realignment**"

options we will support.” This action was taken in recognition of the demographic realities of Shawnee’s jurisdiction and with an understanding of the importance of “keeping a council together.” It was also taken with full understanding that the ultimate decision on jurisdictional alignment belongs to the National Board of GSUSA.

What’s Next: Whether GSUSA’s final decision is for a full 14-county transfer (which is what we expect) or the demographer’s 8-county revised plan, merger with Shawnee is “in the cards” for GSCNC. Discussion of realignment has been added to the agenda for February Forums. Additionally, two meetings have been scheduled in March to answer any remaining questions. Please check our website or call the Information Center for details.

What can you do to help? We know that many will have questions about how this will affect us. We want you to know that we anticipate only positive outcomes for girls in Shawnee and in Nation’s Capital. At GSCNC, our membership is growing, our volunteer base is strong and our innovative programs reach thousands of girls each year. Shawnee Council brings much strength to the table – a growing membership, a strong connection to the values of Girl Scouting, a positive balance sheet, a shared commitment to outdoor/environmental education. They have an office in Martinsburg – a great camp (Camp White Rock) that many of our troops have used through the years. And, most importantly, a merger with Nation’s Capital is what they have been seeking.

Please help spread the positive word and let us know if you have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed please email realignment@gscnc.org.