



Remarks from the Chief Executive Officer Lidia Soto-Harmon April 18, 2020

I am Lidia Soto-Harmon your CEO.

I know we are living in uncharted times, and I am reminded of a quote by **Louisa May Alcott**, the famous author of *Little Women*, who said, "*I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.*"

I am extremely proud of how resourceful our dedicated volunteers, Girl Scout families and staff, have been these past weeks. Together we have creatively found ways to inspire girls and to demonstrate the strength of the **Girl Scout movement**.

In times of crisis, Girl Scouts have always come together and done everything for the greater good. It's true today, as we face the COVID 19 pandemic, and it was true during the Spanish flu of 1918 when our District Girl Scouts set-up a "diet kitchen" and served soup to over 2,000 patients.

Even while we practice social distancing, our girls and volunteers remain very active Girl Scouts. Since mid-March our staff has delivered virtual troop meetings to 29,800 girls at every level of Girl Scouting, but staff run troops are just a small portion of what is going on. Since last week, over 1200 troops have activated free WEBEX accounts to serve their girls. Thank you, troop leaders for embracing this new way to hold regular, interactive troop meetings. Girls and parents are praising your efforts.

A new feature on our website is **Girl Scouts at Home**. It is allowing girls to go on our website and independently pursue badge and patch programs, find educational community resources, gain skills to navigate the outdoors and take on the **Virtual Challenge to earn the free patch:** *Girl Power Cannot be Quarantined*.

And we are engaging women leaders to inspire our teen Girl Scouts through our daily **Virtual Conversations with Girl Scout Mentors**. We have had an impressive group of women mentor our girls: from the US Ambassador to Micronesia (yes 15 hours ahead) to Business Leaders, Journalists, Judges and more! Our girls are sharing how they are coping, how they are doing their homework and wishing their proms and graduations were not cancelled.

I am grateful that we have had a **great** Girl Scout year, and more will come.

As Jeri shared, Girl Scouts in our region **sold 4.3 million boxes of Girl Scout Cookies**, and troop proceeds grew to a record \$4.3 million.

We have been overwhelmed with the many pictures from Girl Scouts showing appreciation for our healthcare workers. Here are two troops that delivered cookies to hospitals and let me tell you this is happening everywhere. Do you see their smiles behind the masks?

We are proud to be the largest Girl Scout council in the nation, with over 86,171 girl and adult members. Thanks to you, we have one of the strongest retention rates in the country and our adult volunteer recruitment was up by 1,000 new volunteers this past year. We did, however, see another year of decline in our new girl members. Together, I know we can inspire more new families to join.

This spring, we are asking every girl and adult to renew your membership for the coming year, so we are ready for an amazing new Girl Scout year in 2021!

With our Girl Scout families and staff at home, we are using this unique opportunity to increase our engagement of service unit volunteers. We are committed to your success because when our Service Units are strong, our Council is strong, and that is how we make the world a better place.

We know that amazing experiences are what keep girls engaged and coming back year after year. Last November, we held the largest Girl Scout EXPO ever, featuring all things Girl Scouts under one roof. And great news, we already have a date for our next Expo. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, October 9, 2021**.

This Council has made a commitment to deliver outdoor experiences, and to maintain our eight beautiful camps. This past year, we installed everything from new roofs and solar panels and we even replaced biffies at some of our camps.

We are concerned that we may not be able to hold our many summer programs this year. We are finalizing a plan for this summer and look forward to sharing more next week. But I want you to know that our camps will be ready for girls whenever we **are** able to gather once again.

Our Girl Scouts rocked-it this year.

- **917** Girls Scouts earned the Silver Awards
- **234** earned Silver Trefoil (100 hours of Community Service), and
- **203** girls earn the Gold Awards, our highest earned award and they each became ***Girls the World Needs!***

Congratulations to the girls, their parents and their leaders for all the support along the way.

It seems like yesterday, April 2014, when Faye Fields was elected as our Board President. Her leadership, these past six years, has been exceptional. Given our new format, we will await our Annual Meeting in 2021 to celebrate together the legacy Faye left on our council. I feel very fortunate to have had Faye as my partner and mentor and I know SHE knows that: ***Once a Girl Scout Always a Girl Scout.***

Faye, we put together a montage of photos from the past several years to say thank you for your amazing contributions.

Faye thank you for being a gift to our girls.

I am grateful for your perseverance, creativity and commitment to the greater good. We will get through this period together --- united in our mission to provide the best leadership program to girls.

We will all be stronger for having weathered this time as **Bold Leaders.**

Thank you