



Remarks from the Chief Executive Officer

Lidia Soto-Harmon

Girl Scouts Nation's Capital 59th Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 17, 2021

I am Lidia Soto-Harmon your CEO.

We have lived through a year that was truly like no other, and hopefully only once in our lifetime. I reflect on all the good works and goodwill our Girl Scouts have generated in our region and I am inspired and humbled.

I am proud that our volunteers and staff pivoted quickly to provide a place for girls to learn and grow, even if it meant digital platforms. And our girls were engaged. 35,000 girls attended virtual troop meetings. And almost 50,000 virtual program opportunities were provided, and this is just staff delivery. Imagine the numbers if we included all our troops, service units, and associations. Thank you all for modeling **resilience** and providing something that felt normal and consistent in a time of such uncertainty for our girls.

Our Gold Award Girl Scouts hosted Conversations of Consequence on issues such as racial justice, gender stereotyping, and mental health. For Thinking Day, 300 of our girls and I met virtually with over 30 Girl Scouts from Japan. You should have heard all the girls greeting each other with “kon’nichiwa”. It was our way to celebrate international friendship and the Cherry Blossom Festival. Virtual program opportunities truly do open the world for our girls.

Fortunately, our technology was up to the challenge. gsLearn has proven to be an invaluable tool providing more than 26,000 online learning opportunities that successfully instilled confidence in our Girl Scout leaders. And Rallyhood is where our Girl Scout community gathered -- virtually. And we are thrilled that we will

continue to offer Zoom accounts at the reduced rate of \$36 annually to support girl through 2023!

Our Girl Scouts have also found ways to serve the community and take-action in a pandemic. From sending Valentine's Day cards to front-line workers, to blankets for local hospice, to planting trees in memory of lives lost to COVID-19.

And despite our inability to gather, our girls remained committed to earning higher awards.

- **705** Girl Scout Cadettes earned the Silver Award
- **187** Girl Scouts earned the Silver Trefoil, and
- **201** girls earned the Gold Award, our highest earned award

Congratulations to the girls, their parents and network of volunteers for all the support along the way. These girls are indeed what the world needs!

As Maria shared during the Treasurer's report, our 2020 and 2021 cookie sales have been dramatically different but impressive in their own ways. Beyond the financial benefit to troops and the Council, Girl Scout Cookies have proven to be a true gift to our community. Girl Scout cookies brought smiles to the faces of to our community heroes -- teachers, health care workers, and first responders.

Our cookies also recognized the brave contributions of the Capitol Police and National Guard and facility personnel stationed at the US Capitol thanks to Booz Allen Hamilton. We were grateful when corporations and businesses purchased cookies from girls to say thank you to their employees through our Mint for Each Other Campaign. And we were so grateful and proud of the troops that used their cookie earnings to purchase much needed food for local food pantries. The Girl Scout entrepreneurship program truly provides benefit to our girls, families, our Council, and the community.

Our Council continues both our commitment to deliver outdoor experiences and to maintain our eight beautiful camps. This past year, we installed a new roof at Camp Aquasco's Aquascape Lodge and have updated the new Shawnee Lodge at Camp White Rock. Are you ready to take your girls camping – or should I say glamping? Also, we celebrated Camp May Flander's 90th Anniversary virtually in February as well as raised \$117,000 to make needed improvements.

As Barbara mentioned, we are committed to having programming at our camps this summer as well as supporting our volunteer-led day and evening camps. We are really excited to welcome back campers. It isn't summer without Girl Scout Camp, right?

We are proud to be the largest Girl Scout council in the nation, with over 78,683 girl and adult members. Thanks to you, we have one of the strongest retention rates in the country at 73%. We did, however, see another year of decline in our new girl members – virtual recruitment is a challenge. Last spring our members recognized the value of Girl Scouts and renewed their membership in record numbers. We understand, that for some of our members, a virtual Girl Scout experience is not ideal, but I promise you, Girl Scout **Adventures Await You in 2022** so renew your membership today.

And if there is a girl in your life, your street, your community, please use your power to have her join the greatest adventure in her life: Girl Scouts.

Last year when Faye Fields, our immediate past president of the Board, presided over our Annual Meeting virtually, we honored her leadership, her passion for girls, and her dedication to Girl Scouts with a promise to deliver a well-deserved, in-person celebration this spring. Sadly, we lost Faye to breast cancer last November. I have been heartbroken to not only lose an amazing leader, but a mentor and friend.

The Bobby Lerch Legacy of Leadership Award was created in honor of the Council's first president and to mark the pinnacle of leadership and service to our Council. In recognition of Faye Fields' inspiring leadership, we bestowed the Bobby Lerch Legacy of Leadership Award posthumously to Faye. Faye was an indispensable champion of Camp CEO, the Gold Award, the Major Gifts Society, and through her passion, helped bring the outdoors to thousands of girls across our Council. We are delighted that Ike Fields, her beloved husband, accepted this award on her behalf on March 29th.

We are all better for knowing Faye, her positive energy, her wisdom, and her grace. We miss her smile every day. Faye was truly a gift to our girls.

I am grateful to each of you for your perseverance, creativity, and commitment to making Girl Scout happen for our girls. We are all united in our mission to provide the best leadership program to girls.

I am looking forward to our next year. You have proven that we are **STRONGER TOGETHER**, and that the year ahead will be better than the year that has passed.

Thank you.