



## From the CEO's Desk

July 24, 2013

### Good News to Share

This week's CEO update shares my thoughts on recent news some of you may have seen about Girl Scouts of the USA. I want to share with you the good news happening in GSNYPENN, and address some issues you may have heard about!

First we're on track to reach our **membership** goal of 18,500 girls. And with your help we can reach this goal by September 31, 2013! To date we have 16,945 girl members, or 9% of the market share. And as we kick-off the new membership year in August, we're excited to provide service units with great new recruitment materials designed by GSUSA with the theme: "*I can't wait to....*" Be sure to check our website for details on the regional August meetings.

Our **camp** season is upon us, and if you've been reading our weekly e-news you probably noticed that the sessions have been filling and we've had to add sessions, and increase the capacity of several. I can't wait to visit the camps this summer and watch the girls as they share new experiences and friends. There are still a few openings if there's a girl in your life that is looking for a fun summer adventure! Visit our [summer fun web page!](#)

In May, we dedicated the renovated Health Lodge at Comstock Program Center. This renovation is just the beginning of investments that will be made in our properties as we continue to move through the **property** study recommendations. Soon, we'll be taking a more in-depth look at the retained properties and make plans for their improvements.

**The Girls!** Our Girl Scouts are truly amazing. We know of at least two high schools where the top two graduating scholars were Girl Scouts: Weedsport in Cayuga County and Marion in Wayne County. This year we celebrated 24 Girl Scouts who earned our highest award, the Girl Scout Gold Award. The Silver Award was earned by 158 Girl Scout Cadettes, and the Bronze Award was earned by girls in 61 troops. Add all those numbers and that is nearly 250 quality take action projects making life better for people in communities across the council. Of course that is above what troops and girls do every day in their own backyards.

Girl Scouts nationally has much to celebrate. **In short: Girl Scouting works.** In 2012, during our centennial year, the Girl Scout Research Institute released a national research report investigating the effects of Girl Scouting on Girl Scout alumnae. Women who were Girl Scouts as girls display positive life outcomes with regard to sense of self, community service, civic engagement, education, and income to a greater degree than do women who were not Girl Scouts. This is the case for all Girl Scout alumnae, across generations, social classes, and races, and regardless of their degree of engagement in other (non-Girl Scouting) extracurricular activities.

**I also want to give you an update on the Girl Scout Pension Plan.** Most Girl Scout councils, including Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, are part of the National Girl Scout Council Retirement Plan – a pension plan for council staff that our national organization (Girl Scouts of the USA) oversees. The pension plan was established in the 1970s and frozen as of July 31, 2010. It is a fairly modest pension plan, compared to many we are reading about in the news these days. For one thing, it is frozen. Staff

who retire with full benefits (in most cases after 30 years of service), are paid 50% of their average annual salary during the latter part of their employment. There are no medical benefits, and there is no cost of living increase. The pension plan was overfunded until 2009, when the recession (and resulting decline in investment values), coupled with some legislative changes in the way future liabilities are calculated, pushed it into an underfunded status. During 2007–2009, many councils merged as part of the national “realignment” that reduced the number of Girl Scout councils from over 300 to 112. As part of the mergers, eligible staff from merging councils were offered early retirement and the early retirement accelerated liability for their pension funding.

There are a number of factors contributing to the underfunding. One is the **low discount rate**. The current historic low discount rate is a very significant factor since it is a key driver of the calculations that pensions are required to use to calculate their funded status. The other is the **accelerated funding requirement** during the next three years (2014-2016) resulting from the fact that our pension plan is frozen. We need to bring our plan to funded status in 10 years – by 2023. Girl Scouts is **seeking legislative relief** that will help spread out our funding obligations over the next 10 years. If we are successful in obtaining that relief, assuming no dramatic changes in the discount rate or investment values during that time, then GSNYPENN’s pension obligations will hold about steady with what they have been during the current fiscal year. **We need your help!** Everyone can help Girl Scouts smooth out our pension payments by asking your members of the House of Representatives to support the legislations. Find a [sample letter](#) prepared by GSUSA that you can send to your representatives online.

Because we have such a proud history of providing girls with extraordinary and impactful experiences, we think every girl deserves the opportunity to be a Girl Scout if she desires. To do this, we need your help to find volunteers willing to mentor and guide girls through a journey to their full potential. Help connect us to women in your community who credit Girl Scouts with helping them realize their own capabilities and talents. Within a safety net of committed, resourced and trained adults, girls learn to take the lead and continue to learn every step of the way.

To keep Girl Scouts strong in the twenty-first century, we must evolve to address challenges and meet the needs and expectations of girls and adults. We recognize that change is never easy or fast, but we believe that our future is bright because our local leadership is committed to making the changes needed to meet girls where they are, and we have the passion of a movement behind us. Is the Girl Scout brand as strong and relevant as ever? Absolutely! Its strength is evidenced by the just-released 2013 Harris Poll EquiTrend Study that ranks Girl Scouts of the USA as the #1 brand in the Youth Nonprofit category for the second year in a row.

We are truly building the next generation of leaders at Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, and we have the resources to continue, with your help.

Yours in sisterhood,

*Pam*

Pam Hyland  
President/CEO