



New Leader Launch

January Questions

This month we did things a little differently. Instead of hosting the scheduled New Leader Launch, we redirected registrants to the cookie chat webinar hosted by the Product Program team on the same night. Below is the link to the recording of that and the information that we originally planned to share for the other two topics.

Topic 1 – Girl Scout Cookie Program Chat

If you missed the chat, use this link to reregister to watch the recording: Cookie Booth Scheduler, Pending Orders, Girl Transactions and Troop to Troop Transf. <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/448502239540163163>

Topic 2 – Girl Scout Traditions: World Thinking Day

1. What is World Thinking Day?

World Thinking Day is celebrated annually on February 22 by Girl Scouts and Girl Guides in over 150 countries. It is a day to reflect on our global sisterhood, learn about cultures around the world, and take action on issues that affect girls globally. You can learn more about the history of this day in gsLearn (World Thinking Day course) or the GSUSA activity guide.

Many troops celebrate by choosing a country and learning about its culture, language, traditions, food, music, and dances. Girls often create posters, displays, skits, or hands-on activities so others can experience what they've learned together. Some service units organize larger events where multiple troops each represent a different country and rotate through cultural stations.

2. How does Girl Scouts celebrate World Thinking Day?

Each year, WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) selects a theme that guides activities worldwide. Past themes have focused on global peace, storytelling, sustainability, and leadership.

In 2026, World Thinking Day celebrates 100 years. The centennial theme is Our Friendship, inviting girls to explore how friendships connect Girl Scouts and Girl Guides across cultures and borders.

Troops celebrate in many ways, including:

- Hands-on activities tied to the theme
- Cultural exploration through food, music, games, or traditions
- Service or advocacy projects
- Letter writing or exchanges with Girl Guides in other countries
- Participating in service unit or council-led events

Participation in World Thinking Day activities allows girls to earn the World Thinking Day patch, which changes yearly based on the theme and is available through the council retail shop.

3. How do troops normally celebrate this day?

There is no single “right” way to celebrate. Troops choose what works best for their girls, grade levels, and schedules.

Common approaches include:

- One dedicated meeting focused on World Thinking Day
- A cultural celebration night with food, games, or crafts
- A service project tied to the theme
- Participating in a service unit event
- For this year’s Our Friendship theme, ideas might include:
 - Creating friendship bracelets or swaps inspired by different countries
 - Writing letters or postcards to Girl Guides in another country (with parental permission)
 - Learning simple greetings in different languages
 - Discussing what friendship looks like across cultures

4. How long does World Thinking Day need to take?

World Thinking Day can be:

- One short activity (20–30 minutes)
- One full meeting
- A weekend or service unit event – reach out to your service unit team to see what they may have planned for troops!

Leaders should choose what fits their troop best.

5. I’ve heard that World Thinking Day is also a fundraiser for WAGGGS. Is this something I have to do?

No. Fundraising is optional. Troops may choose to:

- Donate spare change
- Learn about how funds support girls globally
- Focus only on education and awareness

All approaches are valid. Fundraising is not required to earn the World Thinking Day patch.

6. If a troop chooses to fundraise, where should the money be donated?

If a troop decides to raise funds in connection with World Thinking Day, all donations should go directly to the World Thinking Day Fund through WAGGGS.

The official place to donate is: donate.waggs.org

This ensures funds support global programs for girls, including leadership development, advocacy, education, and emergency response.

Key points for leaders to know:

- Troops should not send money to individual countries, councils, or organizations
- Donations should not be sent through the council unless specifically instructed
- Funds are typically submitted as one troop donation
- Fundraising is optional and not required for participation

Some troops choose to:

- Collect spare change during meetings
- Host a simple friendship fundraiser (with council approval)
- Donate a small amount as a troop decision after learning about WAGGGS

7. What should I keep in mind when planning World Thinking Day activities?

One of the goals of World Thinking Day is for Girl Scouts to connect with their worldwide community. To do this, leaders must ensure they are teaching about cultural diversity accurately and respectfully.

Some tips to help you connect with other cultures authentically:

- Learn before you share – use resources created by members of the community you are exploring. This will give you the background information you need before sharing it with Girl Scouts.
- Reach out to community partners - This can add or enhance Girl Scout understanding of the theme, or provide a deeper understanding to the larger world. Consider connecting with international volunteer organizations,

advocacy organizations, international student groups at universities or a united nations chapter.

- Prioritize authentic connections - This is the best way to learn about cultures because it helps Girl Scouts understand and respect people's unique experiences. Rather than looking up information on the internet, hear about individuals from other cultures directly. This can be from within your troop, troop families or community.

Encourage girls to ask:

- Who created this tradition?
- Why is it important?
- How can we share it respectfully?

8. How does World Thinking Day connect to the Girl Scout Leadership Experience?

World Thinking Day directly supports the Girl Scout Leadership Experience by helping girls:

- Discover: learn about themselves and the world
- Connect: build empathy and global friendships
- Take Action: understand global challenges and solutions

Together the girls are choosing the country or culture they wish to learn more of (girl led), researching and speaking to people from that country (cooperative learning), and demonstrating what they've learned to others via skits or presentations (learning by doing).

9. I am super overwhelmed and already planned my whole year. Is World Thinking Day required?

No. World Thinking Day is not required. It is completely optional and, most importantly, girl-led. Girls can decide whether or not they want to participate.

If your year already feels full:

- You can skip it and consider celebrating next year
- Check if your service unit is planning a World Thinking Day event
- You can keep it very simple with one short activity from the GSUSA activity guides

10. Where can troops learn more if they have questions?

Troops can learn more about the history of this day in gsLearn (World Thinking Day course) or the GSUSA activity guide. They learn the origins of world thinking day, how it has changed, goals for girls and themes. It also explains how to plan events through authentic connections and community participation, involving Girl Scouts.

Commented [NJ1]: I like this, but I feel like there is not enough time to truly dive deep and explore this topic. Included a different way to explain this in my email back to you

You can also visit girlscouts.org and search “World Thinking Day”

Topic 3 – Family Engagement

1. What is family engagement?

Family engagement is when family members are actively involved in their Girl Scout's experience. When families are engaged, they are more likely to support you in providing the best possible Girl Scout experience for your troop.

2. In what ways can family members help?

There are endless ways that family members can volunteer with a troop. It really comes down to what the leader needs the most help with, and what the family members are interested in doing. Maybe the leader wants help with their least favorite tasks, or something that always seems to get pushed to the back burner and never gets done, or maybe something that a family member is an expert in or enjoys doing.

3. That makes sense, do you have some specific examples of roles family members can take on?

Yes! A big one is asking a family member to take on the Troop Fall Product or Cookie Manager role. While many leaders do take on these roles themselves, it can be very helpful if someone else takes that responsibility off their plate. Some other examples include leading an activity at a troop meeting, organizing or chaperoning a field trip, serving as troop treasurer, end of the year party planner, or completing specialty training such as Basic Outdoor Leadership Training (BOLT), which is needed to take girls cabin camping.

4. What if a leader is more of a “it is easier if I do it myself” type of person?

We hear you! Sometimes delegating responsibilities to someone may feel like additional work, or it feels like you can stay in control of managing troop needs by doing it yourself. However, the more activities and interests your troop has, the more the responsibility of “wearing all the hats” begins to feel overwhelming.

One of the top pieces of advice from experienced leaders to new leaders is that you cannot – and should not – do it all alone.

Additionally, troop leaders are not the only ones who benefit from family engagement. Girls also benefit from having a diverse group of adults with different experiences, careers, perspectives, etc. as part of their learning journey. In addition, research has shown that having a network of supportive adults benefits youth's social and emotional development.

The family members also benefit by gaining a sense of purpose through volunteering, and spending quality time bonding with their Girl Scout.

Plus, troops with families who are engaged are more likely to stay together overtime!

5. How can a troop leader start to build their troop support network?

First, it's important to know that all adults who will be considered part of Girl Scout safety ratios must be a registered GSWCF member with an approved background check. Volunteers who are not in a Troop Leader or Product Program Manager role would need to be registered as a Troop Helper. By registering into the Troop Helper role, the adult will receive an email requesting them to complete the background check.

The troop leader should remind family members that background checks expire every 3 years and that memberships and volunteer roles must be renewed by the start of each membership year (October 1st) or sooner. When the background check is set to expire in three months, volunteers will receive an email requesting to submit their information to be rescreened.

6. Does that mean that family members need to be registered volunteers to be around the troop?

No, good question though! To clarify, this does not mean that all adults who are in the presence of girls must be registered and background checked, rather it is adults who will be considered responsible for the girls, or if they will be handling troop funds such as at a cookie booth. An adult leading a badge does not need to be a member and background checked if there are other background checked adults present to cover the safety ratios.

Just be sure that any adults who will be responsible for supervising girls completes the Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention training in gsLearn.

7. So, if a family member is going to help the troop and supervise girls, they need to be a registered member, have a valid background check, and take training in gsLearn?

Yes. This ensures we keep all girls safety as our top priority when they participate in Girl Scouts. Here is a checklist you can give to any family members interested in being in a role that would require them to supervise girls:

- Register as a member with GSWCF
- Register into the Troop Helper Role in their MyAccount
- Complete a criminal background check with GSWCF
- Complete the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training in gsLearn

8. How do I ask for help?

The number one reason given why someone didn't volunteer is because they weren't asked. When asking families to volunteer:

- Be Prepared – Know what tasks you need help, how many volunteers you need, and any important details you would need to share with them.
- Be Specific – Rather than a blanket statement such as "Can someone volunteer to help me with the troop?" Ask, "Can someone please lead the flower planting activity?"
- Be Transparent – Be clear about what the role will entail. If something you want help with is going to take a considerable amount of time, require training, or be a long term commitment, be upfront with that information from the start.
- Be Flexible – For example, let's say one of the parents is an experienced gardener and wants to lead the flower planting activity that you asked about, but isn't available on the date you planned. Consider swapping the meeting schedule around so that the girls can still get that experience.
- And get comfortable with delegating - If you think that a specific person would be helpful with a specific task, ask them directly if they would be willing to do it.

9. I love that last tip about asking directly, but how do I know what hobbies and skills other adults might be able to contribute?

We have a form on our website called [Ways Adults Can Help](#). 12 copies of this are also included in the New Troop Welcome box that one of the leaders should have received. I recommend asking each parent or caregiver to fill one out and return to the leader. They can select what types of task they are interested in helping with, and what skills or activities they can teach the girls.

10. Earlier you mentioned safety ratios. Where are those ratios listed?

The Girl Scout safety ratios can be found on page 21 of [Volunteer Essentials](#). This chart lists how many registered and background checked volunteers are required to be present for Girl Scout activities. The number of required volunteers changes depending on the type of activity, the number of girls, and the age of the girls. This is also covered in the Troop Safety course as part of your required New Leader Onboarding in gsLearn.

11. Where can troops learn more if they have questions?

I recommend the training in gsLearn called, [GSUSA Family Engagement – The Key to Success](#) – this is part of your required New Leader Onboarding in gsLearn and goes more in detail about what was covered this evening. It's about 30 minutes long. And of course leaders can also ask their Community Manager or service unit team volunteers for ideas, or send an email to info@gswcf.org.