New Leader Launch

October Questions

Guest 1 – Lisa Ranon, Volunteer Support Manager- Girl Scout Experience Box

1. **Is it easy to lead a Girl Scout troop?**
   Yes, new Daisy, Brownie, and Junior leaders can receive monthly Girl Scout Experience Boxes—delivered to your door! Each box includes simple scripts, easy instructions, and ready-to-use supplies for fun, stress-free troop meetings. Daisy boxes will focus on guiding Daisies through earning their petals, while Brownie and Junior boxes will allow girls to explore badges across our four program pillars – Entrepreneurship, Life Skills, Outdoors, and STEM.

2. **How many boxes do I receive during the year?**
   You will receive a total of **nine** boxes. One – the first is a Welcome to GSWCF Leader called a New Troop Start-up box. The New Troop Start-up has enough leader welcome gifts to share with two co-leaders and enough forms to support twelve girls.

   Some of the forms- used primarily at the first meeting with caregivers, include "Ways Adults Can Help" form used to help parents indicate how they can help, Girl Scout Health Form – used for each girl and co-leaders to complete and keep at all meetings, Girl Scout Permission Form, a form allowing parents to give permission for activities their girl can participate. There is even a GS Lingo document that lists terms that are GS specific and their meaning.

   GSWCF New Troop Start-up also comes with a copy of the New Troop Leader Start Up Guide and the most recent version of Volunteer Essentials. All forms can be located on the GSWCF website under forms and documents then Troop Leader Resources.

3. **What does each box include?**
   There is a total of 8 boxes that will be shipped to you or your co-leader throughout the year. Each box contains meeting instructions and supplies for two meetings. Ahead of each shipment, all leaders in the troop will receive an email letting you know it is on the way. The email will also include links to the digital files of the printed materials that are included in the box.

In addition, the leader receiving the box, will also receive an email with a tracking number. Pretty much everything you need to conduct at a minimum two meetings are provided inside each monthly box.

4. **How do I sign up for the boxes?**

   When you meet with your area community manager, map with community managers information in case you are unsure of your contact, will speak with you about the box and sign you up. *It is very important to speak with your co-leader if you have one at the time, to determine who will receive the box. The Daisy and Brownie boxes ship through Girl Scouts of the USA and the Junior box ships via GSWCF.

   To receive a box, your troop must have a minimum of four girls in either level and one adult leader registered.

5. **Can you receive a welcome box as a new leader for the year if you are a new leader for an established troop?**
   Yes, any level new leader whether taking over an existing troop or leading a brand-new troop, can receive the GSWCF Welcome – leader box.

6. **Are the boxes only for the troop's first year or is it also when you move up levels? If we have Daisies this year that bridge to brownies next year, do we get more boxes?**
   Yes, the term “new” is either completely new to Girl Scouts or an existing troop that is new to the Daisy, Brownie or Junior level. We do not have boxes for older girl program levels currently.

7. **Do we get multiple boxes for multilevel troops? We're supposed to be gaining 6 daisies with the 4 brownie Girl Scouts; can we get a box for each level?**
   Yes, if you meet the minimum for each level. In the example above, the troop qualifies for a Daisy and a Brownie box.

8. **I signed up for the GSUSA box and received them, but now I am missing a box?**
   If you are missing a box, please email info@gswcf.org. We will reach out to confirm which box and communicate with GSUSA to expedite a replacement.

Guest 2 – Cathy Glasgow, Community Manager (Hernando and Citrus County), Troop Finances and Bank Account

1. **What kind of costs should new leaders expect when running a Girl Scout troop?**
   Running a troop does come with some expenses, but they’re all tied to giving girls a great experience. Most troops budget for things like annual membership fees, program and activity costs, leader training, and supplies for meetings or service

projects. You might also have camping trips, badge workshops, or end-of-year celebrations to plan and facilitate.

2. **Is there anything that troop funds should not be used for?**

   Troop money shouldn't be used for personal expenses like trip expenses for adults who are not required to meet the girl-adult supervision ratio, annual passes to theme parks, or donations to individuals for personal use. Also, personal clothing items outside of Girl Scout uniforms or Girl Scout paraphernalia, gift cards, and dorm/college items or wardrobe are not allowed. Every dollar should support the troop's Girl Scout mission.

3. **How do troops pay their expenses? Do troop leaders pay out of pocket?**
   Not at all! Troops have three ways they can pay for expenses – Product Program proceeds, troop dues, or families agree to pay certain expenses. Troops use the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which occurs in the winter and spring, and the Sweets and Treats program, which occurs in the fall, as the main way to generate troop funds. Troop dues are a set amount of additional money families agree to pay the troop during the troop year. Families can also agree to pay for certain expenses like uniforms and membership fees. The goal of every troop should be to use troop funds after the first year to be self-sustaining and not have to have parents pay for basic items such as membership fees, uniforms, supplies or booklets.

4. **Can you give more details about troop dues? How much should troop leaders charge?**
   Many troops decide to collect troop dues to help supplement their cookies and sweets and treats proceeds. Dues average $1-5 per meeting to $20-$40 for the entire year paid all at one time. It's completely up to each troop to decide what works best for them. Hosting a parent/caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year is a good time to explain this to families and let them decide how they would like to contribute.

5. **Where should they keep troop funds?**
   Troop bank accounts are your place to deposit troop dues, Cookie Program/Fall Sweets and Treats proceeds, and other funds. Troop funds should never be held in a personal checking account.

6. **How will leaders open a bank account for their troop? Is there a certain bank they should use?**
   All troops must establish a bank account with two unrelated approved background checked adult signers from the troop + two signers from the service unit team. Contact your service unit accounting coordinator to set up a troop bank account. Each service unit determines which bank(s) they establish accounts. Your service unit accounting coordinator has a copy of the council-issued banking packet. They will work with you to confirm what personal identification is needed and assist you at the bank with opening the account.

7. **Once troop leaders have a troop bank account established, what should they do?**

You will need to ensure that the money is spent wisely as this is the girl's money. Remember troop money shouldn't be used for personal expenses or in ways that do not support the girl's Girl Scout experience.

Second you need to keep thorough records of all funds that are income and expenses. Keep a receipt every time the troop spends or receives money, or when money/product exchanges hands. Keep receipts for a minimum of two years in the event caregivers or your council make a financial inquiry.

Finally, leaders should coach girls on financial literacy so by the time they are older, they are ready to start managing the troop's finances under your supervision.

8. **How do troop leaders engage younger girls like Daisies and Brownies in managing troop finances?**
   Starting off, troop leaders will handle all budgeting for their Daisies. When selling cookies, adults will always handle money while girls sell the product. Daisies should practice identifying money and counting back change. When girls bridge to Brownies, leaders start talking about the cost of things with the girls and they can begin to decide how they want to spend their money. GSUSA has also created financial literacy badges that help guide your girls through money management skills in an appropriate age way.

9. **How do leaders keep accurate accounting records? Is there a special way they should keep these records?**
   Our council offers a finance report in two versions – one in PDF and the other in excel. This is how you will report to your service unit how troop funds are being earned and spent. Both Troop Finance Reports are available at www.gswcf.org on the forms & documents page, under the troop leader resources dropdown. Your troop finance report is due twice a year to your service unit accounting coordinator.

   If the finance report is not turned in by the deadline it could prevent the troop from participating in fall product sales in the next membership year and may lead to troop funds being transferred into the service unit account until the finance report is received.

10. **What if troops want to earn more money than they earn from the Cookie Program or Sweets and Treats program?**

    Girls have the option to participate in supplemental money earning activities, however there are specific guidelines and an approval process that troops must follow. Page 37 of Volunteer Essentials outlines these guidelines and the approval process.

    One of the key learning elements within the product program is to discuss with girls the goals they want to accomplish from participating. The expenses associated with the goal should be realistic and provide the appropriate amount. As the girls progress to the older program levels, trips and other experiences may require

additional funds, some time may be needed to obtain the amount requiring the troop to save over a couple of years.

11. **What if a girl moves away after the troop has participated in the product sale program, does she take part of the troop's funds with her, or does those funds stay to support the girls who continue in the troop?**

    Troop funds belong to the troop as a whole—not to any individual girl or family. The money your troop earns through product programs or fundraising is meant to support the entire group's Girl Scout experience. So even if a girl moves or leaves the troop, those funds stay in the troop account to benefit the remaining girls and future members.

12. **Since Girl Scouts is a non-profit organization, are troops tax exempt??**
    No. Although Girl Scouts of West Central Florida is a tax exempt 501(c) (3) corporation, Florida law prohibits Girl Scout troops from using the council's tax-exempt number to avoid paying sales tax.

13. **Where can troop leaders go for more details on troop finances?**
    Troop leaders can complete the course "Funding the Fun: Managing Girl Scout Troop Finances" in gsLearn. This is part of their new leader training and covers everything we talked about today. It also talks more about how to set troop dues, supplemental money earning, building a money management plan with your troop, and more about banking best practices.

Additional Questions from Our Volunteers

1. **If you continue your group over the summer, how would you document those expenses?** Once you turn in your end of the year finance report at the end of the school year, you would just start fresh with a new one and that would continue on until the mid-year report is due the following Girl Scout year.

1. **Does the bank run your credit for you to be a signer on the troop bank account?**
   No, this is not part of the process. You will use the council's EIN to set up the account.

2. **What is the most amount they can collect per meeting for dues?**
   There's no written rule. That might be a service unit rule. You might want to talk to your community manager and find out if that's just something that the service unit suggests. However, with Girl Scouts, we make suggestions. There's no hard rule saying you must collect a certain amount.

3. **How long does it typically take for the bank account to be set up and do both co-leaders have to meet at the same time with the service unit contact?** The service unit accounting coordinator, who is a volunteer, is the person that you will meet, and they will set up the bank account with you and your co-leader. We have a specific process on how to set up our bank accounts.

   Depending on schedules of everyone involved, it can usually be done in a couple of weeks. If only one co-leader wishes to be on the account, a parent troop helper who has an approved background screening with GSWCF, can share the managing of troop finances. However, everyone needs to be at the bank at the same time to open an account.

4. **What happens if a family says, I can't pay trip dues?**
   Nothing. You cannot penalize a girl because the caregiver can't afford dues. So if some parent pulls you aside and says, I'm really sorry, but right now I can't, accept the answer and continue to welcome the girl and her family.

5. **Will our service unit accounting contact proactively reach out to us to set up a bank account, or do we need to initiate the process?**
   The service unit manager, SUM, may make an introduction between you and the other team members. You may also meet the accounting coordinator at your local leader's meeting held each month. Remember the accounting coordinator is also a volunteer, so if you do not hear from, he/she and you are ready to set up the account, you can reach out to your SUM or directly with the AC if you have the contact information.

6. **Is there somewhere that offers free or low-cost printing for troops or can we use or nonprofit status for a discount?**
   Girl Scout troops are not tax exempt. Copies can be funded with troop money. We provide enough copies of the necessary forms in the GSWCF Welcome Leader box for a troop of 12. Your service unit may have local facilities they are aware that provide discounts on copies.

7. **I understand the prizes earned during product program participation are based on sales. What if there are families that don't participate in fall product or cookie sales?**
   Rewards are given to individual girls for reaching certain levels in sells during the product program. Rewards can be patches, plushies, hats, experiences, shirts, etc. Girls cannot earn individual funds. The troop earns funds (money for certain number of sales). Troop funds are to be used for all the girls.

   If a girl's family does not allow the girl to participate, she is not able to earn rewards. However, she can share troop funds. The girl can also support the booth sale activity by attending and helping in aspects of the program like giving change to customers of sharing "why" the troop is trying to earn funds.

8. **If someone wants to donate to our troop but ask for our service units tax ID to document the donation, is that something we can get from council?**

Troops and service units do not hold tax exemption, only our council. To receive the acknowledgement, the donor will mail the donation to Girl Scouts of West Central Florida and indicate that this is a donation for your specific troop number. The council will present the check to our bank and send a money deposit to the troop. The person making the donation will receive a letter identifying the donation as a tax deduction.

9. **Is there a way for them to do that on our website as well, rather than mailing in a check?**
   Yes, visit the GSWCF website and access the Support Us page; https://www.gswcf.org/en/support-us/ways-to-give.html. You can indicate the troop number in the special instructions note box.

10. **Are mobile payment apps such as Apply Pay and Venmo acceptable for dues or donations or should it be encouraged cash or checks so it's easily deposited?**
    "Cheddar Up" is provided by council as a method of collecting digital and/or online payments for troops. Cheddar Up is a leading group payments platform and allows troop or service units an easy tool to collect payments, forms, and information for troop and service unit expenses online, with no fee to the troop or service unit. If a troop disbands, the funds must be transferred to the troop account prior to closing the account. To set up a Cheddar Up account, please email **friendlysupport@cheddarup.com**. Let them know that you are with Girl Scouts of West Central Florida and your troop number so they can assist you.

    Troops are not permitted to use cash app type processors such as Venmo and Zelle. These platforms do not offer consumer protection as they are intended to be used for friends and family transactions. They also do not provide an adequate audit trail to protect the troop funds and pose a risk of co-mingling with personal funds. Volunteers should be aware that if they choose to use these platforms to collect funds and transfer to the troop account, in addition to being out of compliance on troop funds management, they may receive a 1099-K if payments received equals $600 or more in a year due to tax laws.

11. **What if a family or individual donates craft supplies and want tax information, is this possible.** A donation made directly to the troop is not tax deductible because the troop does not hold a tax exempt status.