

News from the Girl Scout Council of Vermont

What an amazing time to be a Girl Scout in Vermont! In 2009 we will merge with the Girl Scouts of Swift Water Council, creating a new, two-state, high-capacity council. "Make New Friends"...the words to the song that is so familiar to Girl Scouts young and old have never been more true, for in this merger year we will be able to make new friends right here in our own council in ways that will enrich us all. Girls and adult volunteers will have programs, courses and events across two states from which to choose.

Concurrently, GSUSA is creating a completely new and exciting approach to *what* girls do in Girl Scouting, *how* they do it, and how they'll *benefit*. The new Girl Scout Leadership Experience will engage girls in **discovering** themselves, **connecting** with others and **taking action** to make the world better. GSUSA is launching new Grade Levels, and troops will now include girls in at least two grades. This change is key to the success of the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience! At every grade level, girls will have an opportunity to be led by older girls and then experience leadership of younger girls.

Questions you may have about the Merger:

Why are we realigning?

Our national organization, Girl Scouts of the USA, has researched the work we do with input from girls, volunteers, council staff and the national community. They carefully considered all the results, and the research shows us we need to continue to be a contemporary, vibrant and girl-led organization. From all that research came pro-active recommendations of what would serve girls and volunteers best and be sustainable in the future. That exemplary work is leading to exciting and timely changes in Girl Scouting, including the realignment of Councils nationwide. With larger councils comes an economy of scale that will enable us to provide consistent Girl Scout experiences for girls, better support to volunteers, and more sustainable budgets.

What does the term Legacy Council mean? This is a term you will hear more and more as the merger process continues. We will not be joining the Swift Water Council and they will not be joining our council, but instead we will be working together to form a brand new council with new programs, culture, friendships and opportunities. *Legacy council* is the term used for the Girl Scout Council of Vermont and the Girl Scouts of Swift Water Council, and is a way to recognize that each council brings forward a rich legacy of people, programs and history to be cherished and to add value to the process.

Who is in charge of the Merger Process? We have formed a twelve person Council Realignment Committee (the CRC) made up of 6 members from each legacy council. Co-Chairs of the CRC are Vermont's Board Chair, Barbara Sirvis and Swift Water's Board Chair, Anne Edwards. Other members include the First Vice Presidents and CEOs from each council.

Four CRC Subcommittees will begin work initially, with others following as we progress.

Co-chairs from each legacy council will manage the work of the sub-committees over the next 10 months. **The Governance Subcommittee** will work on council structure, delegate systems, bylaws, policies and policy influencing systems and oversee the work of the Transition Nominating Committee. Vermont's Co-Chair for the Governance Subcommittee is our First VP Peg Daly from Bennington. **The Finance Subcommittee** will develop a new council budget, determine banking procedures, recommend finance policies and oversee merger expenditures. Vermont's Co-Chair for Finance is Barbara Martin from South Burlington. Barbara is a current board member and past council president, and is Dean of Administration for CCV. **The HR Subcommittee** will be determining an initial staff structure chart, developing job descriptions and salary schedules, and establishing the new council's personnel policies. The Co-Chair of the HR Sub-Committee is Bonnie Finnigan. Bonnie is our immediate past council president and Director of HR at the VNA. **The CEO Search Committee** will manage the search for a new council CEO. They will begin the process with a survey of Service Unit Managers, council trainers, delegates, other adult volunteers and staff and community members. They will work with GSUSA to run a national search, conduct interviews, and make a final recommendation to the CRC and new council board of directors. The Co-Chair of the CEO Search Committee is Jackie Low. Jackie is a current member of our board and retired bank manager.

The CRC will meet frequently over the next 10 months with a goal of completing their tasks in time for a merger date of January 1, 2009. If you have any input, comments or questions you would like to share with them, please contact Barbara Sirvis at bsirvis@girlscoutsvt.org or Sharon Baade at sbaade@girlscoutsvt.org.

What about our Council Staff? We anticipate that many familiar faces will remain. A new staff organizational structure will be developed by the CRC HR Sub-Committee to provide you with the best, most contemporary services possible. All staff in both councils will have an opportunity to apply for positions in the new council, and may, in fact, apply for more than one position, giving staff members an opportunity for advancement or a chance to put their expertise and energy to work in new areas. Other staff members are looking forward to taking early retirement. The new CEO will be hired part way through the merger process, giving her/him time to fill staff positions before Day 1 of the new council.

Will we still have our Membership Marketing Directors and our Service Units? One of the things we'll be looking at is the way we deliver services to local communities and community volunteers. You will have opportunities to provide your input so that we develop systems that serve contemporary girls and busy volunteers in the best way possible, meeting everyone's needs. Our MMDs are key to providing you with direct service. Their titles may change, but you will still have a staff member that's "yours", an expert on your region who understands your areas unique needs and works in partnership with you to meet those.

What about the Service Centers and Camps? In our history as the Vermont Council, we have had offices in Montpelier, St. Johnsbury, Morrisville, Manchester, Rutland, Burlington, Bennington and Springfield. Over time, those locations have changed with population shifts, volunteer needs and the cost of rent or purchase. We will continue to have regional offices to serve you, and for now those will remain in Rutland, Hardwick and Essex. Camp properties are "off the table" for now, until we have an opportunity to build this new council, get to know one another, and truly have an understanding of where girls are going and what their needs are. As long as our camps continue to be full, they are viable and sustainable. We are truly fortunate, because between us we have three resident camps that are loved and well used by girls, and they each have programs that are unique and make them special, rather than duplicating services. That's good news!

What about Cookies and QSP? We already have much in common in this area. We sell our cookies at the same time and for the same price. When the time comes for cookie contracts, the new board of directors will determine the baker, looking at who can best provide program and product that serves girls' and the council's needs. You can anticipate that our cookie credit system may change. Each council has different ways of recognizing the efforts of girls, and we're counting on you to support compromises that may occur in this area. Both councils offer the QSP Be A Reader / Nut programs in the fall. Last fall, we added nuts and candy to our sale so that we would be more in line with Swift Water's fall sale. We also made certain we were selling the same selection of products so that we eliminated any border issues.

What about the New Board and the Delegate Body? A new, transition Nominating Committee will soon be at work to begin looking for the best people possible across our two states to serve on the first board of our new council. That nominating committee is comprised of equal membership from each legacy council. The board will likely include a few familiar faces who you already know and some wonderful new additions who have new skills and needed expertise to bring to the board. The Governance Committee of the CRC will be working hard to determine the size of the board and a new delegate structure. Some merged councils have gone to a "Senate" system of equal representation, some to a "House" system of proportional representation, and others have gone to Town Meeting systems. In the days ahead, the Governance Committee will be asking for your input and developing a system of delegates that works for our new council, so your voice can be heard.

What can we do NOW to start celebrating? Your troop can participate in a new patch program! Learn about our neighboring sisters at the Girl Scout of Swift Water Council by completing the Sister-to-Sister Patch and connecting with a Pen Pal troop from Girl Scouts of Swift Water Council.

We have also just determined that we'd like to give adults and girls the opportunity to send us ideas for a new council name. There are some requirements, of course:

1. **The council name will start with the words *Girl Scouts*** to build a unified national identity for our organization.
2. **The council name should include a state and/or regional reference** to help the external market better understand the jurisdiction that we serve.
3. **The council name will be new** to build a shared future of new experiences for all.

Examples of Names: Girl Scouts of Nebraska, Girl Scouts of South Carolina, Coastal Area.

Girl Scouts of the USA has the responsibility to take action to approve the name. The Council Realignment Committee will forward at least two possible names to GSUSA and then the committee votes from among the names that are approved by GSUSA.

If you have a name or names you would like the CRC to consider, please e-mail Sharon Baade at sbaade@girlscoutsvt.org or send them to the Girl Scout Council of Vermont, 79 Allen Martin Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452.