



## **2020 Annual Meeting – State of the Council**

I know many of you have attended our annual meeting for years, and I appreciate your ongoing support and partnership. While this is not the annual meeting you or I were expecting, I'm grateful for the technology that allows us to connect.

We can meet like this thanks to the infrastructure investments we've made and the support of our staff, our board, and our members. So, thank you! And please know I feel your presence and appreciate your participation!

While we typically follow our annual meeting with a luncheon honoring our volunteers, this year, we are recognizing the hard work and dedication of our 23,000+ service unit volunteers, leaders, trainers, mentors, and parents throughout National Volunteer Month. Also, on May 30, we'll host our Virtual Volunteer Recognition event when we honor 280 amazing volunteers, the largest number in our history.

For today's meeting, we have many people with us for the first time, including record attendance of Girl Scouts between the ages of 14 and 18! So, if you're new, please know that we welcome you...and that this is my first annual meeting as well!

While I'm on the subject of being new, I want you to know, right off the bat, that it has been the honor of my life to lead this council since September. Thank you all for your warm welcome and the trust you've placed in me. And thank you to Lise Luttgens, who so successfully guided this organization as CEO for 11 years. I appreciate your support and the bridge of continuity you've provided.

Change, as we all know, is part of life. We expect change. We anticipate change. And we plan for change.

And yet, I don't believe any of us could have imagined the scope and scale of change we've seen over the past several months. We're all still adjusting to new ways of living and working and connecting with others.

Yet even with all the changes and disruptions, many important aspects of our lives have remained unchanged. The people we love, the relationships we value, the traditions we cherish...these have not changed. And we have not changed in the essence of who we are. Not at home. Not in our work. And not in what matters most to each of us. Some amount

of change is healthy and needed. In life...and in thriving organizations, including Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles.

Every day, we take stock in the world around us. We look at the many challenges facing girls. And together, we make the adjustments needed to help tomorrow's leaders overcome the hurdles and seize the opportunities to make the most of themselves, make the most of their futures and make our world a better place.

Having said that, I think we'd all agree that the changes of recent weeks have come in a great rush and at great cost. None of us would welcome change of this magnitude. Change that has uprooted lives and closed schools, businesses, houses of worship, and places where people gather for food and fun and fellowship. Some of our neighbors have faced grave hardship. Thousands have fallen ill. Hundreds have lost their lives. And we grieve with those who are hurting.

But, as Girl Scouts, we do not stop there. We get involved. And we make a difference. When Keck Medicine of USC needed facemasks, our robotics teams got to work, creating mask and shield components with 3D printers. Meanwhile, our girls have made and sent hundreds of comfort cards to senior citizens and hospitalized children.

And many troops have donated Girl Scout cookies to first responders and used cookie proceeds to buy dinner for hospital staff. In these ways and many more, our Girl Scouts are bringing light to the darkness, helping those in need, and offering hope for brighter days ahead.

With our girls and for our girls, we are also offering continuity and certainty and reassurance. The broad shutdown gripping our city, our nation and much of our world continues to be necessary to protect and preserve public health. But it has not and will not shut down Girl Scouts. On the contrary, we have leaned into this moment. We have been determined and creative and resourceful. We have innovated to stay connected and relevant. With new-found technology tools, our volunteers have not missed a beat in supporting leaders, connecting girls, exploring badges and taking action in the community

Together, we're meeting the needs of our girls with in-home opportunities, online programming, virtual meetings and lots and lots of fun. I'm proud of what we've done—and continue to do as an organization. And I want to thank all of you for being part of this journey. Together, we are making a meaningful difference for our girls and our future.

Yes, there are mountains to scale and glass ceilings to shatter. But we are making real and significant progress. With programs and initiatives that remain accessible through technology, it means our girls can continue to rely on Girl Scouts as an ongoing and enduring part of their lives.

As a national organization, we've launched Girl Scouts at Home, with resources for all ages and focused sections on STEAM, outdoors, life skills, and entrepreneurship. There are over

100,000 girls using Girl Scouts at Home. This council has also assembled a set of resources, including free virtual meeting tools. And we're sharing ideas from other councils across the country. To be sure, the continuity we offer is vitally important to our girls especially in these times of isolation.

And I speak not only from observation but from personal experience. Because I too relied on Girl Scouts during a critical time in my life. When I was a young girl, my family was disrupted by the pain and upheaval of divorce. When I was nine, my mom remarried, and our family moved to Santa Monica from San Diego.

As you can imagine, 9-year old me was excited and nervous for this fresh start as I entered the fourth grade at Roosevelt Elementary. But things didn't begin well. I was overweight, my body was changing, and I looked different from many of my peers. It was hard for me to fit in.

To make matters worse, I became the target of a bully who chased me home on his bike, hitting me and calling me ugly names. My mom was also going through a difficult time, but she knew I was struggling. And in one of those inspired moments of parenting she signed me up for the local Girl Scout troop.

She bought me the entire uniform—dress, sash, green knee-highs with gold tassels and a beret, along with a Girl Scout Guide and a canteen. And, if you're wondering, yes, I still have the uniform and sash! Very quickly, our Thursday troop meetings became the highlight of my week.

I wore my uniform with pride. When our troop recited the Girl Scout promise, I meant it with all my heart. It made me feel as if I could do anything. And whenever I earned a new badge, I pestered my mom to sew it on my sash right way. Each badge told the world something about me. Who I was, Who I wanted to become? And what I cared about.

Ultimately, I found purpose and inspiration and a sense of belonging. It was like having magical superpowers.

After a few years, we moved to an area with no Girl Scout troops. Suddenly, my Girl Scout days, as a girl, were over. And while this bright, shining season of life came and went, the lessons endured. Girl Scouts changed me.

In fact, my experiences in Girl Scouts have stayed with me to this day, informing and inspiring many choices in my life and career. Looking back this morning, I can say, without exaggeration, that the time I spent in Girl Scouts was the spark that lit the flame of discovering my own unique purpose in this world.

Girl Scouts helped make me who I am today. And I'm proud to say I'm a lifetime member of Girl Scouts. My story is special to me, but it is not unique. I know many of you have had similar experiences. And I know this council is continuing to make a profound difference in the lives of Girl Scouts, volunteers, and our communities

In fact, every time I meet a new Girl Scout, I wonder how her life will be improved by this movement, which we're all privileged to be part of. Pausing to think about the impact of our council and the stories of our girls, inspires me every day. And, today, I can report that our shared accomplishments continue to make GSGLA one of the most successful Girl Scout councils in the country.

We are in the last year of our three-year strategic plan and we have conducted an assessment of our accomplishments and opportunities for the future.

So, let's talk about our accomplishments in 2019:

- Our core values of diversity and inclusiveness have guided our mission to empower 46,821 girls last year, including more than 17,000 from underserved communities. This represents continued membership growth for the third year in a row and an all-time high for the council.
- We continued to expand our community-based partnerships with after-school programs to provide a quality Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Last year, we worked with 78 organizations across 368 sites to reach 8,589 girls—1,500 more than 2018.
- The council's success in keeping girls engaged in Girl Scouts plays a huge role in our membership growth. Our 72% retention rate is the fourth highest in the nation.
- All told, we provided over 177,970 points of service last year.
- Our girls earned more than 87,000 badges.
- Girl Scouts lead the change they want to see in the world. And our girls gave back generously to our neighborhoods last year, logging more than a half-million hours of community service.
- And more than 2,700 girls' high awards were earned by GSGLA Girl Scouts. With the largest Gold Award class in the country, 326 girls found sustainable solutions to large-scale problems and inspired us by their achievements along the way.
- In 2019, more than 28,000 local girls participated in the Girl Scout Cookie Program—the world's largest youth financial literacy program—learning important lessons in setting goals, making decisions, managing money and more. And our Cookiepreneurs sold 5.6 million packages, making this the most successful cookie program in the nation.

Today, I'm also thrilled to share with you that the biggest construction project in our council's history, Camp Lakota, will be finished early this summer with six villages, that include 24 A-frame cabins, six restroom/shower structures, and a magnificent new dining hall. And thanks to one of our most generous donors, we will also be adding an equestrian center this year. We are thrilled with the amazing outdoor experiences that we'll be providing to thousands of girls in the years ahead. And we look forward to a wonderful grand opening in the future.

Unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic has taken a toll on our dreams of camp experiences this summer. This week, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel our summer resident camps and day camps across our six council properties. This decision is based upon the guiding value of keeping our girls and camp staff safe.

Even so, our outdoors team is developing virtual experiences complete with a campfire and live sing-alongs each week.

In 2019, we touched the lives of nearly 47,000 Girl Scouts. We supported Girl Scouts who experienced camping for the first time, joined robotics teams, embraced new passions, found untapped strengths, learned to lead and helped others along the way.

We reached out to involve and inspire more than 17,000 girls in underserved communities, helping them gain newfound confidence, courage and self-sufficiency.

We nurtured girls' interests and accomplishments in STEAM—Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math—across 34 all-Girl Scout robotics teams...engineering workshops for more than 300 girls...and thousands of girls earning new badges in mechanical engineering, programming, and cybersecurity.

Through last year's summer camps, we helped 5,000 girls find adventure and independence and involved nearly 600 girls in the counselor-in-training leadership program. In total, we fostered more than 21,000 outdoor experiences, with girls gaining fresh insights into themselves and the natural world around us.

The results are impressive. And many more are provided in our 2019 Annual Report, available on our website now. You can find a link to it on our homepage. But I'd like to spotlight just a couple of the countless stories lived out by our girls last year.

When Josie's troop began using their cookie proceeds to benefit local charities, the decision was motivated in part by the community service project component of earning the Bronze Award—the highest honor a Girl Scout Junior (grades 4-5) can earn. The troop decided to help children experiencing homelessness. They collected toys and hosted a party for children at Homes for Hope, an organization providing temporary housing. They felt honored to brighten the kids' day. The troop recognized that service was core to their values and decided to always use cookie money to help the community.

Josie and her troop, now sixth grade Girl Scout Cadettes, are earning Girl Scout Silver Awards. This time, they are focused on helping children with disabilities. The spirit of giving that transformed Josie and her fellow Girl Scouts continues to help them do the same for others. "We like to do projects to help kids," Josie says, "and if I can make other children happy, it's so worth it."

And, as a junior at Mira Costa High School, Ella made and donated 80 medical therapy dolls with three different skin tones to the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center Child Life Department, also earning the Girl Scout Gold Award.

So inspiring, and those are just two, we've got almost 47,000 girls like this in our council.

I also want to update you today on our financial standing, which is strong. Not every council CEO can say this. Once again, we received a clean audit opinion from our external auditing firm. You can review our detailed financial statement in the 2019 Annual Report as well as the audited financial statements, both of which are available on our website.

As of September 30, 2019, our total assets were 42 million dollars, with total liabilities of over \$4 million and total net assets of \$38 million. We finished last year with an increase of \$438K in net assets thanks to our strong fall product season and strongest ever cookie season.

Our GSUSA charter requires us to have at least six months of operating costs on reserve, and we ended last year with right at six months. Such reserves allow us to build and maintain an adequate level of unrestricted net assets to support our day-to-day operations in the event of unforeseen challenges. And due to the skill and preparedness of our finance team, I'm happy to tell you that as part of the federal government's stimulus package, GSGLA has received a \$1.9M PPP Loan or Payroll Protection Program Loan.

As you can imagine, this is particularly relevant now as we evaluate our financial sustainability for the months and years ahead.

For 2020, the coronavirus is a real and significant disruption, one that's impacting our ability to recruit and retain Girl Scouts, add new troops, and raise support. Even so, I can assure you that we are responding, we will continue to adapt, and, together, we will persevere.

As I begin to wrap up, I want you to know that, despite the challenges of Covid-19, this council is strong. We are changing in ways large and small, adapting our operations to serve our girls in fresh and meaningful ways...ways that help Girl Scouts at every age learn and grow and advance in their journey as leaders. Not only for tomorrow but also for today.

As we evolve, we're doing so with an enduring respect for our heritage...and the generations of girls and volunteers and supporters who have come before us. We are here today because we're continuing the journey that they began and advanced over the past 108 years.

Our founder, Juliette Gordon Low, described Girl Scouts as "a circle of friendships, united by our ideals." Today, this circle of friendships remains unbroken across Los Angeles and around the world. We continue to be united, as we always have, by our ideals. And we remain committed to developing girls of character and courage—changing girls so they, in turn, can change the world.

Even now, in this present darkness, our work goes on, and our mission continues. We serve and partner with an amazing group of girls...We are powered by a faithful and

committed staff of professionals...And we are lifted up by a generous and inclusive family of volunteers and supporters.

It will take all of us, working together, to keep building on our current momentum.

But I know that we will come through this season stronger and better...and together. Your voice matters. I'm here for you, and I want to hear from you. Thanks to all of you and your commitment, your compassion and your love for our council, our communities and our girls, who even now, are leading the way.

Thank you very much!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Theresa Edy Kiene".

Theresa Edy-Kiene  
Chief Executive Officer  
Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles