

Relationship between Girls Scouts of the USA and the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas

Girl Scouts of America has had an important role in forming girls in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas for many decades. Traditionally, families have looked to Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) to form girls in many areas including character, values and decision-making. However, over the past several years, GSUSA has come under fire from Catholic and Christian families in GSUSA, pro-life advocates and many concerned parents in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas for its relationship with organizations that do not share pro-life and traditional family values. These concerns are both with GSUSA and the international umbrella organization, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann and the Office of Evangelization and Catholic Formation for Youth have received numerous impassioned letters asking the Church to look into these areas of concern. We have diligently researched the concerns (see timeline below) and worked with priests, parish Girl Scout leaders, Mid-Continent Council of Girl Scout leaders, and top representatives from the national office of GSUSA. We continue this dialogue today, but find many troublesome areas of disagreement.

Archbishop Naumann, through his Presbyteral Council (priest advisory council to the Archbishop) and the Youth Office, is asking priests, Girl Scout leaders and concerned parents to meet and discuss these deep concerns about WAGGGS, the role models that are held up in the Girl Scout materials, website and blogs, and the prudence of supporting and funneling our children into a world view that is often in opposition to fundamental Catholic beliefs. Second, the Archdiocese is asking the same groups to consider whether other organizations might better fit the Catholic mission for forming our youth and providing the same social experiences provided in Girl Scouting, i.e. field trips, socials, over-night events, camping and other experiences for leadership development. The Archdiocese appreciates and values Catholic Girl Scout leaders and members, but we must review these troublesome realities and make informed and prayerful decisions about future formation offerings in our Catholic parishes.

CONCERNS: Here is summary of the concerns – much more information is available on the Archdiocesan website, www.archkck.org/scouting.

WAGGGS is part of an influential lobby group. It is closely tied to and celebrated by International Planned Parenthood. WAGGGS advocates for women's health legislation that specifically includes artificial contraception and abortion as a right of all women. GSUSA contributes more than a million dollars a year to WAGGGS and offers numerous international experiences for older scouts. Catholic girls, parents, priests and the bishops of these international countries objected to United States Catholics supporting these so-called advocacy efforts.

Margret Sanger, Betsy Friedan and Gloria Steinem are frequently presented as role models in Girl Scout materials. They do not support a Catholic worldview. Many other role models in the *Journeys* series (GSUSA's new manuals) and web content are troublesome. Several offensive and completely age-inappropriate role models and/or sections of the *Journeys* series were recently removed by GSUSA after the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas raised specific concerns with national leaders. The Archdiocese is grateful for their response in these matters.

Girl Scouts is a secular organization that caters to the whole country and represents current values and trends. The Catholic Church is a 2,000-year-old institution with strongly held beliefs that often differ from current trends and values.

The Archdiocese is fully aware that this impasse with GSUSA is a painful situation. Our families are both leaders and participants in Girl Scouting and our long-standing relationship with Girl Scouts makes it difficult to believe many of the facts. Please read these issues carefully – with an awareness that many online articles are very slanted to the author's point of view. Archdiocesan staff have read nearly everything available on the subject and invites parish decision-makers and parents to do the same. The staff of the Office of Evangelization and Catholic formation of youth are available to assist in this process.



March 17, 2014

Timeline of Activity on the Concerns Surrounding Girl Scouts of the USA

- Extensive research begins in 2008 due to numerous concerns- Results: few major concerns
 - Met with Mid-Continent representatives to share concerns
- Extensive research begins in 2010 due to continuing concerns- Results: mounting concerns
 - Problematic *Journeys* series replaces traditional curriculum 2008-2010
 - Met with Mid-Continent representatives to share concerns.
- Presbyteral Council briefed in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014
- An initial letter sent to GSUSA summer of 2011 to GSUSA CEO Kathy Cloninger and Connie Lindsey, chairman of the GSUSA Board of Directors outlining grave concerns in the areas of: GSUSA's relationship to WAGGGS, concerns about WAGGGS, troublesome national activities, concerns with materials (print and digital), preferential inclusion of Planned Parenthood insiders, the natural alliance of Planned Parenthood with GSUSA despite efforts to keep any such relationship unofficial and behind the scenes.
- October 2011 – Issues presented and discussed with USCCB Region Nine diocesan youth colleagues
- November 2011 – Archdiocese launches an education and dialogue phase. All pastors are encouraged to invite priests/Catholic Girl Scout leaders and parents to a meeting on the GSUSA's new curriculum.
- October 2011 - Archbishop Naumann writes Bishop Kevin Rhodes, USCCB Chairman on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, voicing his concerns and asks for assistance in evaluating the situation. The committee agrees to investigate.
- November 2011- Meeting with Robert McCarty of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry, Jan Verhage COO of GSUSA, numerous GSUSA officials, 10 to 15 U.S. bishops, and about 25 different (arch)diocesan officials to discuss the concerns of Catholics over GSUSA curriculum, governance at parish level, GSUSA problematic involvement and funding of WAGGGS and other issues. Meeting took place in Indianapolis in conjunction with NCYC.
- January 2012 - Key members of GSUSA who attended the Indianapolis meeting were invited to Kansas City to discuss specific concerns about GSUSA curriculum, governance at the parish level, GSUSA's problematic involvement and funding of WAGGGS and other issues. Susan Swanson and Gladys Padro-Soler represented the GSUSA national office. Several local Girl Scout leaders, many diocesan officials including, Fr. Gary Pennings, Vicar General, and Fr. John Riley, Chancellor, and top leadership from the Mid-Continent GS Counsel were in attendance. The relationship between GSUSA and WAGGGS was a point where no agreement was possible, but many issues were discussed and the many curriculum issues were acknowledged. Print and digital issues of objectionable materials in the national handbooks were changed by GSUSA in subsequent printings.
- March 2013 - Archbishop Naumann sends a follow-up letter to Bishop Kevin Rhodes, USCCB Chairman on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, asking for a report of finding regarding our concerns, so he can answer the increasing. Load of questions coming to the pastors and chancery regarding the GSUSA position on life issues.
- 2013-2014 - Youth Office meets with pastors and parish groups to further explore issues
- Early 2014 – Presbyteral Council asks pastors to consider and present to both leaders and parents possible affiliation with organizations that are more consistent with traditional Catholic mission and values, such as American Heritage Girls, the Little Flowers, and Challenge.