

The Diocese of Peoria Catholic Committee on Scouting is a committee of the Diocese of Peoria in association with the National Catholic Committee on Scouting which is a subcommittee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and which maintains formal relationships with the Boy Scouts of America. As such our primary mission is to encourage the faith formation and Duty to God of members of the BSA. The Diocese of Peoria CCS has also embraced the mission of encouraging the faith development and Catholic formation of youth in other youth organizations, namely the GSUSA, Camp Fire, Heritage Girls Association and other youth organizations that are provided in Catholic organizations that may benefit from the advantages of looking at youth formation programs as youth ministry and opportunities for faith formation that is consistent and in fidelity with the Roman Catholic Church.

“The Diocese of Peoria Catholic Committee on Scouting exists to promote the formation of youth and adults consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church and in association with the National Catholic Committee on Scouting [NCCS] and the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministries [NFCYM]. Through these associations we hope to help teach and live the Faith and life of Jesus Christ using the programs of the Boys Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of America and the Campfire programs for girls and boys.” (DCCS website 2011)

It is with great sadness that we experience the controversies surrounding the GSUSA. First we note that no organization is totally free from suspicion and potential scandal in these days of secular humanism and that the tentacles of immorality reach into the fabric of our lives in all its dimensions. We also realize there is great good in the programs of the GSUSA with its goal of empowering young women to be the best they can be and teaching them the skills necessary to fully realize their potential in the world. We feel this can be done in a way that is consistent with Catholic values and teachings. It of course remains the responsibility of the family and the parish to ensure that no material is presented to the youth that is contrary to Catholic morals and teaching. We feel the training of Girl Scout leaders (available for review on line) and the flexibility of the GSUSA program allow this to happen. As is the case with all youth leaders, they undertake a great responsibility to present and live a life that is a model of the life of Jesus Christ as an example to the youth in their charge.

At the current moment there appear to be several issues with the GSUSA program that have caused concern. First there appeared to be local GS councils that supported or had an affiliation with Planned Parenthood. It is not the policy of the national GSUSA to support Planned Parenthood and there is no affiliation with that organization. Additionally Erica Douglas of the Girl Scouts of Central Illinois council reiterated in a communication to the DCCS dated July 19, 2011 that the GSUSA and the GSCI (our local council) have no affiliation with Planned Parenthood. She further went on to say that GSUSA does not take a stand on family planning and that issues of this nature are best decided by a girl and her family, which is consistent with Catholic teaching that parents are the primary educators of their children. The National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) has also addressed this concern at the national level. Please see their statement; [Position statement Jan. 28, 2011](#)

Secondly, concerns have arisen that the proceeds from the sale of Girl Scout cookies is used to support the programs of Planned Parenthood. Pam Kovacevich, Chief Executive Officer of Girl Scouts of Central Illinois reiterated in an email dated Aug. 16, 2011 that all proceeds from cookie sales stay within the council and none are used to support Planned Parenthood.

Thirdly, concerns have arisen about content in the new Journeys Program that has just been developed and is in use now for Girl Scouting. Specifically women are listed as role models who have espoused views that are not in keeping with Catholic teaching and faith. Parents and leaders should read through these materials before presenting them to their young girls. In the AMuse journey book on pages 50 – 51 playwright Josefina Lopez is referenced. Although not stated, her views and her play itself are not appropriate for young girls. Also, in two journey books (MEdia pg. 71, Bliss pg.25) reference is made to link to www.womensmediacenter.com, which offers links that our girls should not be pursuing. The books also suggest surfing to the WAGGGS site where there are issues of sexuality, contraception and access to abortion espoused that we do not support. As with all content that is presented to young people, parents and leaders play a crucial role in screening the materials presented to their children and choosing what material to present. This is easily done with the Journey programs and leaders should choose to avoid these inappropriate links and role models.

We will continue to maintain a supportive relationship with leaders and parishes that choose to utilize the programs of the GSUSA. We will continue to provide materials for the faith development of GSUSA youth, specifically the religious emblems programs that are outstanding examples of youth ministry and the inclusion of Girl Scouts in the Scouting activities of the diocese. We will continue to provide diocesan religious experience opportunities for all youth organizations, such as the diocesan youth retreat and the Scout Mass. And most importantly we will continue to pray for a renewed evangelization of youth to fidelity in the Catholic Faith in which our salvation lies.

We will also continue to closely follow these events and the policies of all youth organizations that involve our Catholic youth, including the GSUSA, and will continue to advise and recommend policy as indicated to the youth and youth leaders of the diocese.