

New volunteer conference calls

March 26 – Celebrating your success! End of the year celebrations, recognizing those who have helped you, and next steps for leaders.

What are appropriate activities for my troop to do to at the end of the year?

The same activities that were appropriate the rest of the year! Do the girls want to end the year with a big adventure? Then they might go camping or take a trip. Do they want to celebrate their accomplishments? They might plan a party, celebration, or ceremony. Want to show off to, or say thank you to, their families? How about a family field day or dinner and a dance? Share with others? They could do a community service project. Some other activities the troop might consider are ways to say good-bye to girls who are moving away or leaving the troop; make plans for summer activities, or figure out ways to stay in touch; agree on how girls will keep track of “badge” activities they do over the summer.

My troop wants to do a ceremony for our last meeting, what kind of ceremonies are for that and where can I get ideas?

You will get the best ideas from the girls! This is a great opportunity for girls to create something meaningful for them, by choosing an opening, main section, and closing; deciding who to invite and how; and planning the details around a theme they choose.

Some troops will do one last Court of Awards before they break for the summer. That's a ceremony where they are awarded the recognitions they have earned during the year such as Try-Its or badges or their Journey patches. If the girls are bridging to the next age level they will probably plan a Bridging Ceremony. You could have something as simple as a special closing ceremony. But the most meaningful “last meeting” ceremony will probably look more like a Girl Scouts' Own Ceremony, where the girls put their own ideas and feelings into the ceremony. Girls choose a theme – friendship, for example - then decide how they will open the ceremony, express the theme and close or end the ceremony. Typically a Scouts' Own includes songs or music, poems or readings, the girls' own thoughts and feelings, and, if it fits the theme, symbolic things such as candles, flowers, friendship knots and so forth. *If you have a large troop, you might ask the girls to work in committees to plan different parts of the ceremony.*

Is there a training for ceremonies?

Yes, the “Ceremonies and Traditions” workshop is a very popular three-hour training. Girl Scouts of the USA also has a book about planning ceremonies with girls, *Let's Celebrate!* (available in the Girl Scout Badge & Sash Store). Margaret Paschal in the Atlanta Resource Center (404-527-7672) is another great source of information, and there are lots of resources you can check out from her.

What are some creative ways for me to show appreciation for other adults who have helped with the troop during the year?

Do you have pictures of the girls doing the activity these adults helped with or using the supplies these adults provided? If you do, frame (or have the girls make frames for) the pictures and include a short, hand-written thank-you note. If you don't have photographs, purchase and frame "thank-you" patches from the Girl Scout Badge & Sash Store and present them at a Volunteer Court of Awards ceremony.

Another girl-generated gift is hand-painted/decorated flower pots with marigolds or other hard-to-kill plants. The council Web site has certificates and ideas for informal awards. The council Web site has certificates and ideas for informal awards. Here's a link for that:

http://girlscoutsofgreateratlanta.org/volunteer_zone/default.asp?page=adult_recognition&page2=resources

Here is another site for some of the informal (fun) Appreciation Awards:

<http://www.kidslist.uc.edu/kidslist/gs/neil/recog.html>. Examples: **Fizz**. For adding pizazz to our undertaking (container of Alka Seltzer tables, mounted) - **Football**. For being willing to tackle the job (toy football) - **Fresh Air**. For bringing a fresh approach (roll of mints or Certs).

I heard about Leader Appreciation Day, when is that and what should I know about it?

April 22 is Girl Scout Leader Appreciation Day, when girls show their leaders how much they appreciate them. This is a great opportunity for the other troop parents and the troop's committee to step up and help the girls find ways to say "thank you" to the leaders. One troop recorded each girl on video tape saying why she liked being in the troop and saying thank you "for making it so fun." It's great to look back on something like that in future years. Another idea is to make a scrapbook of pictures or mat and frame a set of pictures and have the girls write their own comments next to the pictures. Leaders especially appreciate something that speaks right from the heart of the girls and their families.

Here are some ideas from <http://gsleaders.org/files/thisthat.htm>.

My troop wants to go on a trip for the end of the year, what procedures do I need to follow?

Involve the girls in planning of course, but also use the travel and activity guidelines in *Safety-Wise*, and the trip and travel guidelines in the *Council Guide for Volunteers*. Girl Scout trips require council permission. It's easy to get that permission by using the online Trip Permission Guide. Here's the link:

http://girlscoutsnwga.org/events_and_things_to_do/default.asp?page=trips_permission_guide_Main Just click on the red words “Begin Now!”

Any time troops meet at a time and place different from their regular meeting time and place – whether it is a field trip to the local grocery store or an overnight at the leader’s house - you will need written permission from parents and your troop First Aider will need to travel with you.

My troop wants to do an overnight outing as a celebration; we want to spend the night at the church we meet at. What do I do to make this happen?

For overnight outings, even in a church or at the leader’s house, the troop must be accompanied by a trained troop camper. Any troop leader or any parent whose Volunteer Application has been approved can get this training by taking the Cabin Camping course – available in a classroom or online. The class discusses whether girls are ready for a night away from home, how to help girls plan and pack for an overnight, and other tips for a successful experience. The best part is that once your troop has a trained troop camper, you will also be set to take an overnight at one of the great cabins any of our five council camps.

Equally important, your troop must have a first-aider to have an overnight. If one of the volunteers in your troop is a doctor, nurse, EMT or one of the other professions listed on page 36 of *Safety-Wise*, that person can attend as your first-aider. A parent whose Volunteer Application has been approved can take training in first aid and adult and child CPR (Red Cross, American Heart Association Heartsaver course, or one of the other classes listed on page 37 of *Safety-Wise*) to be the first-aider. Classes are available at a reduced fee through the council. Register through Learning Opportunities on the Web, which is accessed from the Training section of our Web site.

Can my troop continue to meet during the summer?

Absolutely! Have fun! Many troops take the summer off from their regular troop meetings, but some continue to meet on their regular schedule. Regardless, you might consider planning a special get together for the girls and their families so the troop can stay connected and excited about Girl Scouts. How about a pot luck supper at the park or a game of family kick ball? A back to school event just before school starts is also a great way to start your troop year.

Should we carry over some of our cookie money from this year to next year?

Troops should have a plan for how they want to spend their money – and, of course, the girls should be involved in making that plan. It’s good to carry over some funds to start the new year, and if there is a plan for camping or another event in the fall, funds can be carried over for that. However, it’s good to spend the majority of your funds in

the spring as not all of the girls may return in the fall. Examples of good uses for troop funds include:

- Troop outing
- Camping
- Troop supplies
- Spring Registration
- Buying supplies for or making a donation to a service organization
- Refreshments for an end-of-the year celebration
- Small “thank-you” gifts for adults who help the troop

My troop will be going to the next level, what do I do next?

Explore the *Journey* materials (adult and girl books) at the next level. If the girls are not in *Journeys* yet and would like to do them, take the *Guiding the Journey* training to get an overview of the books and tips for expanding the experience by incorporating field trips, speakers, the cookie program and program events. This training is available in the classroom and through a Facilitated Home Study (workbook) option. You can register for either through Learning Opportunities on the Web.

Program-level specific classes such as *Junior Leader Training* are offered in the classroom and provide information about age-level characteristics, troop government, behavior management, planning a troop calendar with your girls and determining if the girls are demonstrating the intended outcomes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. *Money Management*, a short online course, is another class that would be helpful as the troop collects enough money to open a checking account. This training can be taken by the treasurer as well. It is designed for anyone on the troop’s checking account.

What about earning badges and Try-Its?

Few troops are staying in the traditional handbooks when they move to the next level, but some decide to earn the traditional awards (Try-Its, badges, patches, charms) in conjunction with their *Journey* book. You may want to purchase one set of the badge or Try-Its books for the troop to use together if you are mainly working in the *Journey* materials; you may also need one copy of the age-level handbook, since some of the awards reference the handbook. Each girl is encouraged to have her own *Journey* book.

What is bridging?

When girls move from one Girl Scout grade level to the next, it’s called *bridging*. Why? Well, bridges connect things and girls who are ready to move to the next age level do activities that help connect them with girls already in that level. This could include attending troop meetings where the older Girl Scouts talk about the things

they do, taking trips or going camping together, planning and doing service projects together and planning a special ceremony that celebrates bridging. One way to structure this bridging experience is by earning the Bridge To....Award for your troop's grade level (Girl Scout Daisies earn the Bridge to Girl Scout Brownies Award; Brownies earn the Bridge to Girl Scout Juniors Award, and so forth.) Your troop may choose to plan their own Bridging Ceremony, help plan a service unit ceremony, or plan a ceremony that links them with a specific younger and older troop; for example, third grade Girl Scout Brownies might be part of a ceremony that involves both Girl Scout Daisies they helped bridge, and Girl Scout Juniors who have helped *them* bridge.

The bridging ceremony for Girl Scout Brownies is called a Fly-Up Ceremony because they receive their Brownie Wings and "fly up" into Juniors; this is a tradition reaching back to the days when Brownie leaders were called "Brown Owls."

Should both the leader and assistant obtain the same training?

Yes, for the basic leadership classes, in the event the assistant leader is responsible for running the troop meeting or other activities in the absence of the leader (another adult would be present in order to maintain the girl/adult ratio). We encourage you to get your other parents involved by taking other roles and training. Try to recruit a First Aider and troop camper so other parents can join in the fun of working with the girls.

How is it determined where trainings are held in my area?

Based on where previous trainings were held successfully the previous year, the membership staff works with service unit directors to determine what the training needs in a certain area will be for the next training year (Aug. 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010 for the next catalog). If classes are requested in a certain area and are successful, they are automatically added to the schedule for the next year.