

# FAQ 2010 River Valleys Girl Scout year

Welcome to the 2009-2010 Girl Scout membership year! River Valleys wants to ensure that all volunteers have the most pertinent and up-to-date information possible. Following, you will find some questions asked by Girl Scout volunteers and families along with answers from River Valleys' staff. Please feel free to contact River Valleys' staff with any questions or concerns at 800-845-0787.

Wishing you a successful Girl Scout year,  
River Valleys staff

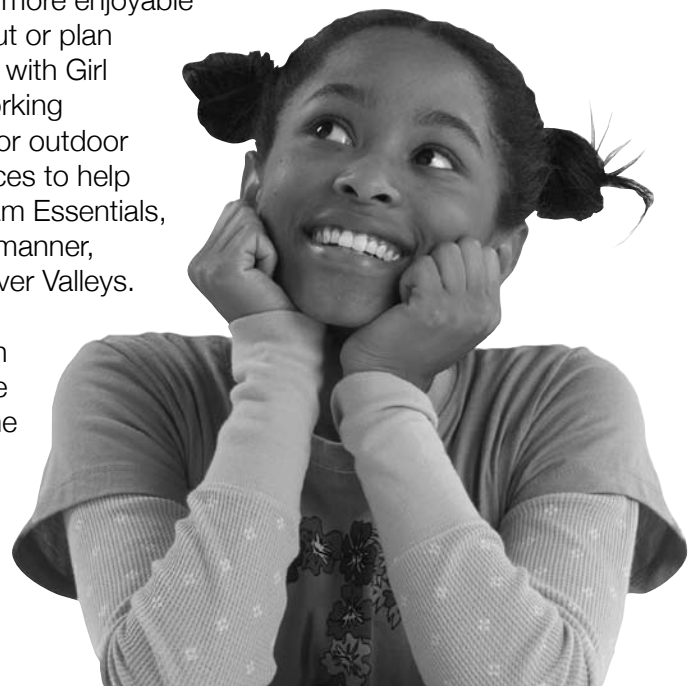
## The Girl Scout Leadership Experience: Program Essentials

### **What is the Girl Scout Leadership Experience: Program Essentials?**

Program Essentials is the core plan that girls and leaders use to implement the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in River Valleys. The national Girl Scout Leadership Journeys curriculum is the foundation of Program Essentials, which is complemented by additional skill building activities.

Service unit volunteers and River Valleys' staff have heard new (and sometimes experienced) leaders who have asked: "What should I be doing with my girls?" Program Essentials is the tool leaders and volunteers have asked for to guide them as they deliver a fun, well-rounded Girl Scout core program for the entire year. Along with the Leadership Journeys curriculum, we've drawn from the best-of-the-best of activities in Girl Scouts that have resonated with girls. Girls and troops may add additional activities should they want to further explore particular interests.

Girl Scouting is girl-led. In Program Essentials, girls, with support from their leaders, choose grade-appropriate programs that interest them, as well as the pace and order in which to do activities. Program Essentials is easy and vital for Girl Scout volunteers. It helps busy leaders spend more enjoyable quality time with their Girl Scouts, rather than trying to figure out or plan an entire year's worth of activities. It also better assists leaders with Girl Scout programming in areas they may not feel comfortable working with girls (e.g. science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) or outdoor awareness) by giving them more directed activities and resources to help girls discover their talents in a variety of program areas. Program Essentials, which presents program content in an organized and specific manner, helps ensure a consistent experience for all girls throughout River Valleys. Using the 15 outcomes of the GSUSA Girl Scout Leadership Experience, Program Essentials defines what girls do and learn in the Girl Scout year, helping volunteers and staff articulate the importance and value of Girl Scouts to families, donors, and the larger community.



## **Who uses Program Essentials, and how?**

Beginning with the 2009-10 membership year, Program Essentials will be distributed to all troops in grades K through 5:

- Brand-new troops at the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior levels will receive Program Essentials in their Welcome Kits. (Daisy and Brownie Welcome Kits will also contain detailed troop meeting plans based on Program Essentials.)
- Returning troops at the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior levels will receive Program Essentials via direct mail.

During the 2009-2010 membership year, the following will be developed, to be distributed beginning with the 2010-2011 membership year:

- Program Essentials for Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador troops.
- Detailed troop meeting plans based on Program Essentials for the Junior Welcome Kits.
- Detailed troop meeting plans for second-year Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior troops.

## **What is the transition timeline for Program Essentials?**

- All brand-new troops at the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior levels (grades K-5) will use Program Essentials beginning fall 2009.
- All second-year troops at the Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior levels also will use Program Essentials beginning fall 2009, unless they planned their 2009-2010 troop activity schedules last spring in which case they should integrate Program Essentials with their activities as much as is possible.
- Third-year and older troops at the Girl Scout Brownie and Junior levels are strongly encouraged to use all or parts of Program Essentials in 2009-2010.
- By the end of the 2010-2011 membership year, all Girl Scout Daisy, Brownie, and Junior troops will be fully transitioned to utilizing Program Essentials.
- Again, Program Essentials will be developed for troops in grades 6-12 for the 2010-2011 membership year.

Troops that have had well-rounded programming up to this point will find that Program Essentials links directly with what they have already been doing.

Program Essentials ties directly to the 15 outcomes of The Girl Scout Leadership Experience, and troop leaders are asked to help measure those outcomes through an easy-to-use evaluation tool. Program Essentials contains 18 grade-appropriate activity sessions (with options at the troop, service unit, and council levels) across these focus areas:

- Leadership Development
- Taking Action
- Building Practical Life Skills
- Building Outdoor Awareness & Skills
- Building STEM Skills
- Building Healthy Living Skills
- Building Cultural Literacy Skills
- Building Girl Scout Connections
- Celebration/Reflection/Recommitment

If you have more questions about Program Essentials, please contact your service unit manager.

## **Is there a new Journeys series coming out?**

Yes! If the books aren't already in the Girl Scout Shop, they will be soon. The first Journeys series, *It's Your World – Change it!*, was successful last year and, this year, Girl Scouts has released the second series, *It's Your Planet – Love it!*, with an Earth-friendly theme. Girls use leadership skills for the good of the earth and all its inhabitants. For more information on *It's Your Planet – Love it!*, refer to the handout in the fall supplies you receive from your service unit.

# Program highlights and events

## **Where can I find information on the 2009-2010 council-sponsored program events?**

The coming program year features many new council-sponsored program events to engage girls in the three Girl Scout Keys to Leadership: Discover, Connect, and Take Action. The complete 2009-2010 council-sponsored program event listing is online at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org). Use the search tool to find events by program grade level, location, date, and more; new features of the tool include searching for newly-added events and searching for past events. You may register electronically (note: not live/real-time), or download a registration form to fax or mail.

This year's events will focus on these program areas: healthy living, leadership progression, literacy (career, cultural, and financial), outdoor awareness, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). Brand-new events include:

- Design It, Build It
- Interest & Inquiry Interest Project Day
- Future You Career Workshop
- Media Mania
- Movie Making Magic
- Zink the Zebra Rodeo
- Forest Management Environmental Day
- Smart Cookie Money Basics
- School House Rock
- Troop Jam Overnight
- Healthy Girls: Eat, Live, Play Well
- Take Action Workshops: Girl Scout Gold, Silver, and Bronze Award
- Girl Fest 2010 – Everything Cool About Being a Girl Scout!

## **Will there be a River Valleys council-wide community service project this year?**

Yes, a Take Action project called "Forever Green" will be launched after the first of the year. Watch the website and River Valleys' newsletters for information and details.

## **I've heard people talking about "Girl Fest 2010" and got a save-the-date magnet in the fall supplies from my service unit. Can you tell me more?**

Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys hosts exciting council-sponsored program events year-round, and this year is adding the first "Girl Fest 2010!" The event will take place on Saturday, January 9, 2010, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Girls in grades K-12, with their troops and/or parents/guardians, from across our council will come together and celebrate everything cool about being a Girl Scout and learn while having fun. At Minnesota/Wisconsin's first all-girl festival, participants will:

- do activities in science, technology, engineering, math, healthy living, outdoor awareness, and literacy (career, cultural, and financial);
- be part of the World's Largest Friendship Circle;
- hear presentations from national and local celebrities;
- meet exhibitors who will share their expertise, products, services, and volunteer opportunities;
- be the first to get information about our new council-wide community service project, "Forever Green;"
- learn about our many council offerings, including camps, program events, site and equipment rentals, and program kits, with opportunities for on-site registration;
- be part of the World's Largest Cookie Rally and learn how to make the most of their Cookie Program Activity experience.

To register, visit the River Valleys website.

# Money-earning activities

## What can troops do to earn money to support their activities?

This year, there are two great educational money-earning opportunities for girls: the Fall Product Program and the Cookie Program Activity. If girls need money for a specific activity goal beyond what they've earned through the Fall Product Program and Cookie Program Activity, additional money-earning projects require approval. Refer to River Valleys' *2009-2010 Council Reference Guide* for details.

## What is the 2010 Cookie Program Activity theme?

Girls turn Girl Scout cookies into amazing achievements that change the world for all of us. Those achievements are the basis for the 2010 Cookie Program Activity theme, "A Better World ... Inspired by U!" Watch the girls grow in their leadership skills and be inspired by their efforts. River Valleys Girl Scouts will be challenged to set two goals for their cookie proceeds:

- A fun and learning goal
- A service goal to benefit their community

## What's new for the 2010 Cookie Program Activity?

- New cookie, "Thank U Berry Munch," featuring tangy cranberries, white fudge chips, and a crispy rice crunch. These cookies were inspired by all the Girl Scout cookie customers who, year after year, help girls reach their goals and live their dreams.
- New mascot, Miranda the Panda, who will lead girls as they discover, connect, and take action during the Cookie Program Activity.
- New award and recognition levels, plus the introduction of the Cookie Credit debit card for girls.
- New look to Cookie Program Activity Kits from Little Brownie Bakers; check out the new program grade level flip books in the fall supplies you receive from your service unit. Books include great ideas on goal setting, activities, family meetings, and how to sell beyond family and friends to incorporate the Cookie Program Activity early into their troop year
- A special one-day only council-wide "Cookie Walkabout." More details to come!

Look for more information on all aspects of the cookie season in our special *2010 Cookie Program Activity Guidebooks*, which will be given to all service unit cookie managers and troop cookie managers, as well as in a special informational piece distributed for parents/guardians later this year.

## What are the most important dates for the 2010 Cookie Program Activity?

- Cookie Go Day is January 16, 2010.
- Initial cookie deliveries will arrive February 19-27.
- Three additional cookie order dates for troops will be offered March 1, March 8, and March 15.
- Cookie Booths can be held February 26 - March 28.
- Troop council proceeds deposit due in council bank account by March 31 with final paperwork due early April.
- Award and recognition items will arrive to service unit cookie managers the week of May 10.



### **What is the River Valleys-wide 2009 Fall Product Program?**

2009 marks the initial year of the River Valleys Fall Product Program for the entire council area. Three of River Valleys' five service centers have been participating in the GSUSA Fall Product Program for many years, selling high-quality nut and chocolate products and/or magazine subscriptions and renewals to friends and family. We are pleased to offer this approved troop money-earning activity to all troops in River Valleys this fall. Ashdon Farms and QSP are River Valleys' Fall Product Program partners for 2009. Troops have multiple avenues of participation in the program, as we offer nut/chocolate product and in-person and online magazine order and renewals options. Ashdon Farm's Girl Scout nut/chocolate products range in price from \$4-\$7, while QSP offers over 700 magazine titles for customers to select from, including the top 200 most popular magazine titles.

### **What is the Fall Product Program theme?**

When girls work as a team, the final result of their efforts is greatly multiplied. River Valleys Girl Scouts will become GSIs (Girl Scout Investigators) as they team together to "Unlock the Mystery" of day-to-day life. Girls will be led through challenging and thought-provoking activities with the program grade level specific booklets that will encourage them to utilize the greatest tool available to them—their minds!

### **What are the benefits of participating in Fall Product Program?**

- Complements the Cookie Program Activity as an opportunity for troops to "self-fund" the entire Girl Scout program year.
- No council approval process required. It's already a council-approved money-earning activity.
- Has established time frame, format, and supporting materials for troops to use.
- Ashdon Farms and QSP offer a lower retail price than other youth groups/schools; their research indicates 93 percent of magazine subscribers in the market are not being approached by other youth groups/schools.
- Research shows girls who participate in a Fall Product Program typically have greater success in reaching their Cookie Program Activity goals.
- Award and recognition items can be earned by girls participating in either or both the nut/chocolate portion and magazine portion of the program. All items are cumulative.
- Troop award levels include a drawing for a trip to Ashdon Farms.

Your service unit/troop still has the opportunity to participate! For more information on participation in the River Valleys Fall Product Program, including volunteer training opportunities, contact [productsales@girlscoutsrv.org](mailto:productsales@girlscoutsrv.org) or 800-845-0787 to speak to a River Valleys product sales manager.

### **What are the most important dates for the 2009 Fall Product Program?**

- Fall Product Program Go Day is October 3.
- Nut/chocolate order delivery week of November 9.
- Council proceeds deposit due in council bank account by November 30.
- Service unit Fall Product Program managers will receive award and recognition items in November.



# Adult development

## **How do I register for Girl Scout training?**

Online! All learning opportunities will be listed online at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org). Volunteers can search and register for individual training sessions with the click of a mouse. There is a wealth of information on the Training page of the River Valleys website about requirements for Leader, Beyond the Troop, and service unit team training. Training sessions and information are updated frequently, so check back regularly.

## **What is a trained troop?**

A trained troop is any troop where all the leaders have completed their required training and one leader has attended a Fast Start training *and* one or more registered adult members have successfully completed:

- *Safety-Wise* First Aider requirements as needed for activities (e.g. biking or ice skating);
- Beyond the Troop training as needed for activities (e.g. camping or extended travel);
- Fall Product Program and Cookie Program Activity training.

## **What is the GSUSA Volunteer Orientation?**

The GSUSA Volunteer Orientation (in both English and Spanish) is the first required, close-up, introductory view of the Girl Scout organization for new volunteers. The program content is standardized with consistent national Girl Scout messages and information. Access the orientation by going online to <http://training.girlscouts.org>. When you log on, please use the assigned password: discover. Be sure to access the learning log and include [orientation@girlscoutsrv.org](mailto:orientation@girlscoutsrv.org) when you are asked to enter an e-mail address. It takes about 25-45 minutes to complete. If you don't have high speed Internet, the orientation also is available as a self study in PDF at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org).

## **What is Fast Start training?**

Fast Start training provides new leaders with information to help them get started with their troop, such as holding a family meeting, registering girls and adults, setting up a troop bank account, planning troop meetings, and connecting with other Girl Scout volunteers. Service unit Fast Start coaches set up and facilitate Fast Start meetings, as well as provide guidance and answer initial questions from new leaders. One leader from each troop must attend the Fast Start meeting.

## **What is Leadership Essentials training?**

Leadership Essentials training is a three-hour training session from GSUSA to help all leaders learn about the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and the Leadership Journey books – the GSUSA curriculum for girls in all grade levels. Leadership Essentials is required learning for all new leaders. Facilitated learning session dates will be posted online at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org); Leadership Essentials is also available as a self study in PDF on [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org). *NOTE: New leaders must complete GSUSA Orientation and Leadership Essentials to complete their required training as a leader, and one leader from each troop must attend the Fast Start meeting.*

## **What is “Beyond the Troop” training?**

Beyond the Troop is a group of training sessions for any registered adult member who is looking to do activities and programs beyond a regular troop meeting, including working with girls to prepare food and cook on a fire, plan an overnight in the backyard or a tent camping trip, and plan an extended trip to Savannah, Ga. All sessions incorporate girl planning and cooperative learning and meet the *Safety-Wise* training requirements for camping activities and travel. For more information on the various Beyond the Troop training sessions or to register, visit [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org).

## **What if I have outdoor experience or previous outdoor training?**

Any previous Girl Scout outdoor training counts! Review the information on the Training page at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org) or contact your adult development specialist to discuss what training you have completed and which Beyond the Troop training you may still need. If you have camping experience or training, you may be able to receive “equivalent qualification” by completing and submitting the equivalent qualification application available in PDF on the Training page of the River Valleys website.

## What is enrichment training?

Enrichment training is a chance to learn more about girls and Girl Scouting, songs and games, crafts and traditions, outdoor activities and leadership skills, and so much more. Enrichment training is offered in the service unit with SUMores, short and snappy learning opportunities on key topics; at the five annual River Valleys adult education enrichment events: Lakamaga Conference, Super Saturday, Leadership Conference, Mid-Winter Warm Up, and Outdoor Education Conference; and through council-provided facilitated learning sessions and certification courses. For more information, contact your service unit manager or check out the Training page on the River Valleys website.

## Communications tools

Anyone interested in helping spread the word about Girl Scouting in their local media can volunteer to serve as a service unit communication representative. Training is available. Spokesgirls also are sought for the coming Girl Scout year. Not only do the girls learn about marketing, public relations, and media relations, they also have opportunities to be featured in newspaper articles and television shows featuring Girl Scout cookies! For details on either of these opportunities, contact Barbara Boelk at [barbara.boelk@girlscoutsrv.org](mailto:barbara.boelk@girlscoutsrv.org).

River Valleys has several online opportunities to help service unit volunteers stay connected and exchange ideas.

- Follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/GirlScoutsRV](http://www.twitter.com/GirlScoutsRV).
- Keep up with girl, troop, and service unit activities, announcements, and stories on the River Valleys blog at <http://girlscoutsrv.wordpress.com>.
- Network with other River Valleys Girl Scouts on Facebook. Check out the Facebook Fan Page at [www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsRV](http://www.facebook.com/GirlScoutsRV).

## Transportation update

On July 1, Minnesota joined several other states, including Wisconsin, in requiring that all children under age 8 and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches tall be transported in booster seats while in automobiles. Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys staff and volunteers who drive Girl Scouts, either in council or personal vehicles, will be expected to abide by the new law, as they are with other traffic laws. Parents who send their children with other drivers for Girl Scout activities must provide a booster seat for their child. For more information, contact the Minnesota State Patrol online at <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/patrol/>.

## Camp 2010

### When will we find out about summer Camp 2010?

Resident camp sessions will be available for registration the week of August 17. All girls who register and pay the \$50 deposit before September 30 will receive an early bird discount of \$40 off the camp session fee. We know Girl Scout families are busy. To help with planning, a camp brochure with 2010 camp sessions, dates, and rates will be mailed late summer/early fall. Information can be found in our brochure or online at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org).

## Council Chat

Girl Scout members and families are invited to join the council leadership team for the monthly Council Chat phone discussion on Thursday, August 27, 6:30-7:30 p.m. To register and participate in the Council Chat, please visit [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org).

## Girl Scout Shop online

The Girl Scout Shop is available online! If you need patches, fun Girl Scout apparel or accessories, books, uniforms, or gifts, check out the River Valleys Girl Scout Shop online at [www.girlscoutsrv.org](http://www.girlscoutsrv.org).

# Financial update and short-term property plan

*This information has appeared in previous River Valleys publications. We are including it here to ensure that leaders and other volunteers have received it:*

Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys began the year by investing in the council infrastructure to help achieve the organizational goals. This investment was reflected in the 2009 budget (a deficit budget) that was approved by the board of directors in September of 2008. By December 2008, the economic crisis rendered many of the budget assumptions out of date and River Valleys identified additional revenue risk due to the declining economy. To help close the gap and get back to the approved 2009 budget, we made some tough decisions, including, staff reductions, salary freezes, and suspending 2009 summer resident programs at Camps Greenwood and Sanderson.

As we look ahead to 2010, River Valleys will face additional challenges. Industry experts are saying that nonprofits will continue to feel the impact of the economic downturn through 2010, possibly into 2011. Given this situation, we are taking a conservative approach to projecting our revenues for next year. We also know that River Valleys needs a balanced budget in 2010 because this is an important indicator of financial responsibility that individual, corporate, and foundation donors consider when supporting nonprofit organizations. Even with the full-year impact of the 2009 cuts, we will not be able to achieve a balanced budget for 2010 without additional expense reductions. Property-related overhead is one of the few remaining expense categories we can tap for reductions that have the least impact on girl programming.

In addition to dealing with the 2010 budget issues, our strategic planning process has identified that we must take a critical look at River Valleys' property portfolio in light of how it supports the long-term needs and interests of our girl membership. Currently, the cost of operating and maintaining our 17 properties far exceeds the revenues generated from these sources. Although properties are partially subsidized by cookie revenues, there is still a large gap – in excess of \$2 million annually – that must be funded out of other income sources, leaving fewer dollars available to support other programs and services that girls want and volunteers need.

In order to create a sustainable financial structure for River Valleys, the board of directors established a volunteer task force comprised of Girl Scout members, as well as financial and property management professionals, who will evaluate all River Valleys properties – including camps and service centers. The task force is charged with developing a long-term plan that will adjust the property portfolio to meet the needs and interests of our girls at an affordable cost. The recommendations will be presented to the board of directors in December 2009.

While the task force is working on the long-term plan, we will again need to consolidate summer camp programs and suspend usage at some council properties in order to meet our 2010 budget goals. The plan for 2010 summer camp is based on 3,200 girls (comparable to our projection for this year at approximately 1/3 of our total capacity). This plan provides a variety of rich camping experiences for River Valleys Girl Scouts and contains sufficient flexibility to accommodate additional campers if more girls want to attend.

Following is a summary of the plan that will be implemented for 2010. This plan was approved by the Board of Directors on May 16. While we understand some members may be disappointed about the changes for specific properties, we are confident that Girl Scout troops and members will discover and enjoy the many top-notch facilities that River Valleys has available.

## No changes to property rental/programs

- Lakamaga: year-round rentals; programs; summer resident camp/day camp
- Lockeslea: year-round rentals; programs; summer day camp
- Rolling Ridges: year-round rentals; programs; summer day camp
- Sagata: year-round rentals

## Modified property rental/programs

- Edith Mayo: no year-round rentals for lodge; troop house rentals will continue; fewer day camp offerings

(shared seasonal staff)

- Greenwood: no summer rentals; programs; summer lease to outside group
- Elk River: year-round rentals; programs; shortened summer programs
- Northwoods: closed winter for rentals and programs; shortened summer programs (shared seasonal staff with Elk River)
- Singing Hills/Sanderson: closed winter for rentals and programs; shortened summer programs/rentals (shared seasonal staff)

Suspended property rental/programs for the entire year

- Piper Hills
- Whispering Hills
- Windy Acres (at Rolling Ridges)



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