



Dear Girl Scout Family,

First and foremost, I hope that this message finds you healthy and well. These are uniquely trying times and I believe it is important that we are all here to support each other. Please know that I, along with our team of staff, are here to support each of you and all of our girls.

Our leadership team has been working through the weekend to assist members and formulate additional guidance and updates for the GSCCS community, which I am writing to share today.

Reminder of COVID-19 Symptoms and CDC Guidance

We have become aware of several individuals within our GSCCS Girl Scout community experiencing flu-like symptoms that appear to be consistent with symptoms of COVID-19. Out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of transparency, we felt it was important to share this information with you. Please know that, at this time, we are not aware of any confirmed (lab-tested) COVID-19 cases within our GSCCS Girl Scout community. However, the Governor and health officials have stated that as this pandemic continues and community spread occurs, up to [56% of the California population may become infected with coronavirus](#) and as such impact within the GSCCS Girl Scout community is likely to occur at some point in the future.

We recommend that all members of our Girl Scout community ensure that they are familiar with the published COVID-19 [symptoms](#) and seek immediate medical care in the event that you feel unwell. The CDC has established helpful guidance on how we can all limit the spread of COVID-19. We previously shared these tips, but wanted to again share the [link](#) for our members.

Governor's Shelter-at-Home Order and Social Distancing

As of March 19th, the Governor of California issued a [stay at home order](#) to protect the health and well-being of all Californians and to establish consistency across the state in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Because we previously closed our offices and began remote work with our employees on March 17th, we were ahead of the curve in responding to this directive.

Questions have arisen relative to the impact of the shelter-at-home order on those Troops on extension for Cookie Season. Our recommendation is that Troops on extension utilize digital tools such as social media for marketing and selling cookies and consider making deliveries after the order is lifted. While the final decisions for health and safety of our girls are ultimately the responsibility of parents/guardians, we have previously communicated the cancellation of cookie

booths for Troops on extension and recommended that, to the extent to which sales take place in person, all individuals practice contactless delivery and social distancing measures. We are happy to share additional best practices and examples of what we are seeing Troops doing on social media that are working well.

Special Considerations for Cookie Program Closeout

We understand that these are difficult times, and we want everyone to know that we are in this together as one Girl Scout family. We have talked with all Troops over the past several days in order to determine how we can best support our girls, volunteers, and families in the wrap-up of the 2020 Cookie Season. We have several updates to share:

- **For Troops that have completed the sale and did not request an extension**, the final ACH (100% of remaining balance due to council) will be processed and withdrawn from Troop bank accounts on March 26th as scheduled. We have discussed this with all affected Troops and this date worked for everyone in this group that staff talked with. In the event circumstances have changed or you require special consideration, please e-mail our Controller, [Melody Mattos](#).
 - **For Troops that requested an extension**, we understand that the current stay-at-home order issued by the Governor has impacts and implications for your sale. We had previously communicated that Troops on extension had until 3/29 to complete their sale, had until 3/31 to submit parent delinquencies, and would have their final ACH (100% of remaining balance due to council) withdrawn on 4/2. Given the Governor's stay at home order, we have automatically extended the sale through 4/12 for these Troops, with parent delinquencies due on 4/14. Based on our discussions with these Troops, we will pull 50% of the remaining balance due on 3/26 and will pull the final ACH (100% of remaining balance due to council) on 4/17. We developed this plan in consultation with Troops to ensure Council has the funds to pay the baker for the cookies, while delaying the remainder of the funds due to Council to give Troops additional time. In the event circumstances changed or you require special consideration, please e-mail our Controller, [Melody Mattos](#).
 - We recognize that, depending on the area and circumstances, **some Troops may have parents who have not been able to deposit funds and thus are at-risk for being considered parent delinquencies**. We recognize that these are extraordinary times and will work with any parent or Troop member that has not been able to get the funds to the Troop Cookie Coordinator. In the event that you have these circumstances, please do submit these to council as a parent delinquency. The form is available [here](#) and should be sent to customercare@girlscoutscs.org. This will ensure that the Troop is not financially penalized. As long as all policies were followed, signed receipts are attached, and documentation is appropriate, Council will take on these payment collection activities and make the Troop whole. Please know that we will **not** refer these individuals to collections unless they continuously refuse contact and/or are unwilling to work with Council on payment arrangements. We understand how difficult these times are for our families and will act with integrity and compassion in working through these situations, factoring in the individual circumstances in each case.
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- **We also recognize that parents/guardians and/or Troops may have excess inventory that has not been sold.** While it has been and remains Council policy not to accept returns of cookies, we understand that there may be individualized circumstances that may necessitate and warrant consideration from Council in cases where the excess cookies are the result of the coronavirus pandemic. Based on the data we have gathered utilizing SmartCookies, we believe that this is a relatively small number in total. If you have a girl, parent/guardian, or Troop circumstances that fall into this category, we want to discuss ways to help. Please e-mail us with your request at customercare@girlscoutscs.org. We ask that you provide as much detail as possible, including the amount of cases of cookies, the girls and parents/guardians affected, and the specifics of how the coronavirus pandemic created these circumstances. We will be working with those Troops that reach out on a one-on-one basis to assist. Please understand that it is our intent to help as many Troops and parents/guardians as possible that need assistance, while managing our resources wisely and minimizing financial impact for all involved.

In addition, I wanted that share several other ways we are working to support the Troops, girls, and parents/guardians:

- **We will be extending virtual cookie share for all Troops via the online links through 4/19.** We are currently working with our vendors to implement programming changes to support this. We hope to have this functionality live early this week. We encourage girls to promote this on social media and to family and friends in order to support cookies which have not been sold by girls and/or Troops. All Cookie Share this year will be pulled from excess inventory that exists with girls and/or Troops and **will not** come from the Council's excess inventory. We are doing this to maximize the help and assistance we can provide to Troops, girls, and parents/guardians. We recognize there are logistic hurdles to work through on this, but are confident we will be able to do so.
 - We have seen a variety of creative digital marketing ideas that have worked well and have assisted Troops in selling their final inventory over the past week. One such example has been **digital cookie booting via video** on social media. We will be sharing these best practices with Troops.
 - We will be launching an online donation campaign called the **Cookie Relief Fund**. As a Council, we will be asking our friends and supporters in the community to contribute funds to buy-back cookies from excess inventory that girls and Troops have to be donated to first responders and others that are serving our community during this crisis. All funds collected will go directly to support girls, parents/guardians, and Troops with excess cookies. We will share additional information as it launches.
 - **We encourage the use of digital money management tools such as Venmo and PayPal to move funds between parents and the Troop bank account.** We have heard a variety of concerns relating to parents' ability to get funds to leaders and we believe these tools are potential options to support this while remaining safe. Further, as banks are an essential function and remain open, we are in discussions with our region's financial institutions to see if there are potential solutions they can offer to assist Troops with cookie funds collection
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- We understand that last season's Cookie Dollars are expiring soon and that the closure of our offices/retail stores has impacted girls' ability to utilize these incentives. **We will be automatically extending all Cookie Dollar expiration dates to one month past the re-opening of our offices/retail stores to give girls time to utilize them.**

Launch of New Virtual Programming and Social Media Resources

Our Girl Experience Team is working quickly to pivot and adapt to the current shelter-at-home order by offering virtual programming to our Girl Scouts. Please keep an eye on our [social media](#) as we share and engage in these new programs together through the internet. We have virtual at-home camp-outs, sing-a-longs, and much more that are planned!

Speaking of social media, if we are not yet friends on Facebook, I would love to [connect](#) with you to be able to be a resource. In addition, if you haven't already joined our [GSCCS Troop Leader and Volunteer Group](#), I would encourage you to consider it. This group facilitates and allows for two-way communication amongst Troops, volunteers, and council staff.

We're Here for You

The number one message we hope to convey is that we are here for you in this challenging time. Like most organizations, we are working hard to adapt and serve our members in new ways while being fully remote. This presents new challenges, but we are working through them. At the same time, while we have been working throughout the weekend to finalize and share these announcements, we recognize that there are likely additional questions and individualized concerns we have not touched on. We want to ensure that we are considering individualized circumstances as appropriate, so I encourage you to reach out to us at customer care@girlscoutscs.org or 1-800-490-8653 if we can assist in other ways.

On behalf of our entire team, thank you for continuing to support Girl Scouts and for all that you do. Each of you truly are what makes our Girl Scout community so special.

Best,
Russel

Dr. Russel Statham
Chief Executive Officer
Girl Scouts of Central California South
