SERVICE UNIT

COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR

MANUAL

Date of Training _____

Adult Educator(s) Name(s) _____

Contact Information: _____

Notes

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GSGLA WEBSITE

There is a wealth of information accessible to all volunteers at a given time on the GSGLA website.—**http://girlscoutsla.org** ---Including *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

WHAT I NEED FOR….

There is a handy tool called "What I Need For" which details what forms and trainings are needed for different types of activities. A copy is on page 37 and will be on the council website with direct links to the forms and training registration pages needed.

WELCOME TO THE SERVICE UNIT TEAM

Thank you for agreeing to serve as the communication coordinator for your service unit (SU). Your role is important to the Girl Scout Movement. As the communication coordinator, you will help leaders bring the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to life.

So much happens behind the scenes in Girl Scouts. Most girls have no idea how many adults it takes to keep troops running smoothly. Thank you for supporting leaders in building a great experience for girls.

Your position has 5 key components:
• Promoting the Girl Scout Leadership Experience
• Organizing the flow of information within the service unit
• Using and maintaining the communication tools within the service unit
• Monitoring publicity and press releases from your service unit to your community
• Actively participating in service unit team and service unit leader meetings

There is a whole volunteer team around you—your service team. Your service unit manager has appointed you to be part of the service unit team. As a team you help determine the success and sustainability of your service unit. There is a whole staff behind you, too. Your service unit support specialist is your direct liaison to Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles (GSGLA). As communication coordinator, you will receive additional support from GSGLA marketing and communications staff.

This course manual is a resource for the service unit communication coordinator, and should be used in conjunction with the recorded orientation webinar and PowerPoint PDF (on the GSGLA website under "Resources and Training" for volunteers. The information in these resources will help you engage volunteers, connect them to the service unit, and answer general troop and Girl Scout related questions. **There have been a few changes to this manual since its June 2014 creation. These changes (published in July 2015) are highlighted in yellow throughout this document. If you are renewing your position, please note these updates.**

SERVICE UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS
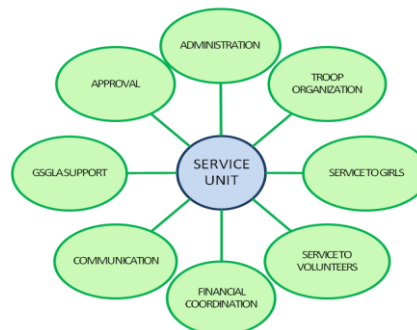
The service unit is delegated the responsibility to organize and service Girl Scout troops/groups and girls within its boundaries through one of the pathways girls choose. This includes troop organization, recruitment, placement of girls and adults, and providing assistance to troops and other pathways. This consists of supporting the volunteer on-boarding process, communicating with leaders, community engagement, inter-troop programs, along with celebrating and recognizing the volunteers.

The service unit serves as an important link between the council and troops. It is important to communicate to the council what triumphs and challenges your service unit is experiencing and to pay careful attention to notices and information that come from GSGLA and GSUSA. Participation in council-wide meetings and events and administration of GSGLA annual product sales are also important service unit responsibilities

Within each of the functions of the service unit, support will be consistent, flexible, and provide ease of access to the Girl Scout Experience.

SERVICE UNIT TEAM

In the service unit there are essential responsibilities that must happen to ensure we are working toward the mission and goals of the Girl Scout organization. These functions are carried out by a group of volunteers working together as the service unit team. While each team member has a specific job, a solid support system and shared responsibilities make the service unit function more smoothly.

Before the service unit team can work to support girls and adults, each member must not only know and understand the role of the service unit team, but also the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and GSGLA goals.

The service unit team is responsible for:
- Extending membership reflective of the diverse community
- Providing direct support to girls and adults
- Community engagement

SERVICE UNIT TEAM POSITIONS

This is a suggested listing of service team positions. Additional positions may be added to suit the needs of your service unit.

- Service Unit Manager
  - Manages the service unit
  - Oversees service unit team and troop leaders
  - Oversees service unit events and finances
- Treasurer
  - Manages the service unit checking account
  - Assists troops with all financial matters
  - Facilitates Annual Troop/Group Finance reports with troop leaders
  - Maintains accounting for Independent Girl Scouts within the service unit
- Placement Coordinator/Registrar
  - Supports troop registration through eBiz
  - Analyzes monthly membership reports from the council
- Events Coordinator
  - Manages and approves events for the service unit
  - Assists troops in hosting events
- Troop Consultant
  - Provides support to troop leaders
  - Reviews troop trips and activities
  - Approves overnight activities
  - Is familiar with *Volunteer Essentials* and Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Recruiter
  - Coordinates recruitment events
  - Manages girl and adult placement
  - School organizer
- Product Chairs (Fall and Cookie)
  - Train and support troop product chairs and troop leaders
  - Manage products sales tasks per the council guidelines
- And other positions
  - Communication Coordinator
  - Cookie Mentor
  - Family Partnership Champion
  - Secretary

SERVICE UNIT PLAN OF WORK

The Service Unit Plan of Work is a guide for what the service unit team has accomplished in the past year and plans to accomplish in the upcoming membership year. Your team planning should take place before August, so your plan is ready for the beginning of the new school year! The Plan of Work should be tailored to your service unit needs and is a working tool to achieve goals and needs to be reviewed ongoing throughout the year. The Plan of Work will include what you will be doing to meet the goal, when it will happen and who is responsible. Your service unit team will work with you and your member services team to complete the Service Unit Plan of Work. Items of priority include:

- Service unit membership goals
- Girl recruitment
- Volunteer support and retention
- Reaching out to lapsed girls and adults
- Communication
- Product sales
- Finances
- Program

Leader meetings are essential to implementing and achieving service unit goals and communicating key messages to your leaders. As the team sets dates for the service unit leader meetings or events, be sure to consider GSGLA program and training dates as well as special Girl Scout dates and celebrations. Meetings should be scheduled to meet the needs of your volunteers and service unit; monthly meeting are recommended, but if not meeting monthly, some type of communication piece should go out to the volunteers in your service unit in the interim.

With your service unit team, develop a take-action plan to:

- Create a welcoming environment – helps with retention
- Work as a team – helps the service unit run smoothly
- Set goals – provides service unit direction
- Establish a yearly calendar – everyone is able to plan activities
- Solve service unit problems as a group – helps all team members develop problem-solving skills
- Develop an agenda for service unit leader meetings and service unit team meetings – using a team approach keeps everyone involved

Reaching our goals together!

SERVICE UNIT LEADER MEETINGS

Providing effective service unit leader meetings give the service unit the opportunity to build the leadership skills of the adults within the service unit. When facilitating a service unit leader meeting, it is important to keep in mind three key concepts that help produce an effective meeting:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere
- Engage the audience
- Make the time productive

By focusing on these three concepts leaders will have a positive experience and feel their time was well spent.

PROVIDING A WELCOMING SERVICE UNIT LEADER MEETING

Do you remember what it was like when you attended your first service unit leader meeting? Wouldn't it have been easier if there was someone there you knew who could explain the ins and outs? As a service unit team member, you have the opportunity to get the leaders off to a good start and give them a positive experience.

Dear Girl Scout Service Unit:

It amuses me to think your organization spends so much time looking for new members when I was there all the time. Do you remember me?

I'm the person who came to every meeting, but nobody paid any attention to me. I tried several times to be friendly, but everyone seemed to have their own friends to talk to and sit with. I sat down among some unfamiliar faces several times, but they didn't pay any attention to me. I hoped someone would ask me to join one of the committees or somehow participate and contribute – but no one did.

Finally, because of illness, I missed a meeting. The next month, no one asked me where I had been. I guess it didn't matter very much whether I was there or not. On the next meeting date, I decided to stay home and watch a good television program. When I attended the next meeting, no one asked me where I was the month before.

You might say I am a good person. I have a good family and love my community.

You know who else I am?

I'm the volunteer who never came back.

Don't let your leaders be the volunteer who never came back! Take action with your team and brainstorm welcoming ideas to make every service unit leader meeting a positive experience!

Here are some ideas to get you started:
- Provide time in the meeting for the different grade levels groups to meet and share information and concerns
- Include a "fun thing" on the agenda (*i.e.*, learning a new song, playing a game, having a contest, teaching a new craft)
- Regularly thank individuals and recognize special services or achievements

PROMOTING THE GIRL SCOUT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Everything we do is aimed at helping each girl develop her own unique leadership skills. The Girl Scout program—what girls do in Girl Scouting—is based on the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, a national model helping girls become leaders in their own lives and as they grow.

Using the Girl Scout Leadership Experience as our guide:

- Activities are designed to give girls the opportunity to **DISCOVER** themselves, **CONNECT** with others, and **TAKE ACTION** to make the world a better place.
- Activities are **GIRL-LED**, which give the girls the opportunity to **LEARN BY DOING** in a **COOPERATIVE LEARNING** environment.

Implementing the Girl Scout Leadership Experience:

- **Girls First** – Build a team relationship. Allow girls to benefit from adult guidance and mentoring.
- **Girl Choice** – with younger girls, use girl choice.
- **Journeys & Badges** – Use *Journey* and *Girls Guide to Girl Scouting* to facilitate girl development. Use the *Adult Journey Guide*.
- **Feedback** – Solicit girl and parent feedback. Everyone's feedback counts.
- **Team Work** – Work with younger/older troops to help facilitate bridging requirements and girl development. Requirements are found in *Girls Guide to Girl Scouting*.

The National Program Portfolio has two main parts—the National Leadership Journeys and *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. Complemented by the Girl Scout Cookie program, Girl Scout travel and Girl Scout awards, the National Program Portfolio is designed to help girls develop as leaders and build confidence by learning new skills. It also ensures that Girl Scouts at every level are sharing a powerful, national experience—girls together changing the world!

Journeys include three series of subjects for each Girl Scout program level:

- **It's Your World – Change It!**
- **It's Your Planet – Love It!**
- **It's Your Story – Tell It!**

The Girl's Guide **Handbook Section** is designed just for girls, and allows girls to personalize their Girl Scout experience by scrapbooking and documenting their activities

- **Legacy Badges:** Artist, The Girl Scout Way, Citizen, Cook, First Aid, Athlete, Naturalist,
- **Financial Literacy Badges:** Girls can earn a different Financial Literacy Badge each year. Daisies earn Financial Literacy "leaves."
- **Cookie Business Badges:** Girls can earn a different Cookie Business Badge each year. Daisies earn Cookie Business "leaves."
- **Skill Building:** Brownie through Senior: Outdoors, Performance, Animals, Practical Life Skills, Healthy Living, Manners, Do It Yourself, Digital Arts, Adventure, Craft, Storytelling, Creative Play, Investigation, Science & Technology, Innovation
- **PLUS:** Make Your Own, My Promise, My Faith Pin, Journey Summit Pin, PA, CIT, VIT, Bronze/Silver/Gold Awards

RECOGNITIONS

ADULTS
There are many ways to recognize volunteers for their time and dedication. Whether in the form of a simple "thank you" for a small job well done or a formal commendation for years of faithful service in a key position, acknowledgment is a signal to the recipient that she/he is noticed and appreciated.

You can honor any Girl Scout leader, service unit team member or adult volunteer by nominating her/him for an award or by making a special recognition of your own! Recognitions usually take the form of pins, badges, certificates, or other tangible tokens. They may be presented at a special service unit ceremony, Girl Scout meeting, or recognition event such as GSGLA's volunteer recognition ceremony, held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

It is important to let your leaders, service unit team members, and other volunteers know the information about the awards and adult recognitions in a timely manner. Nominations and requests for awards are due the second Friday in January. Information about the awards is posted on the GSGLA website.

A few of the awards are below.

| Volunteer of Excellence | Thanks Badge | Platinum of Service | Appreciation Pin | Honor Pin | First Year Leader Award | Years of Service |

GIRLS
The Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards are the highest awards a girl can earn as a Girl Scout. These are national awards with significant standards that must be met, representing a girl's skills, leadership, creativity, values, and efforts contributed to make the world a better place. Requirements for these awards can be found in *The Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting* and on the GSGLA website. Girls must rely on GSGLA forms and requirements.

It's important to let your leaders, service unit team members, and other volunteers know about these awards and recognize the girls who have earned them. Gold Awardees are recognized annually at a council-wide event; recognitions for Silver and Bronze awardees can be done on a regional, service unit, or troop level.

| Bronze Award Juniors | Silver Award Cadettes | Gold Award Seniors & Ambassadors |

COMMUNICATION

It's important to know how each volunteer wants communication from you. Everyone is different—establishing how to communicate with each volunteer right from the beginning will prevent problems in the future.

Do you know how each generation communicates?

Generations	Communications	Messages that Motivate
"The Greatest Generation" Prior to 1945	Formal - written	Your experience is respected
Boomers 1946 - 1964	In person	You are valued, you are needed
Gen X 1965 - 1980	Direct and immediate E-mail Voice Mail	Forget the rules. Do it your way.
Nexters – Gen Y 1980 - 2000	Text messaging Twitter Facebook	You will work with other bright, creative people.

Communicating by social media is becoming popular and is an acceptable way to communicate for adults as well as girls. The term "social media" refers to the tools that allow the sharing of information and creation of communities through online networks of people. It is a method to have two-way conversations online.

Remember the Internet is an open forum and its benefits of easy access and sharing of information can also attract those who would use that information to cause harm. To ensure the girls' safety:
- Girls must be 13 years and older and have parental permission to be involved in a project that involves creating/maintaining a troop web page or social media profile;
- Girls and volunteers make great partners to ensure that Girl Scout environments and activities are safe. Before girls participate in any troop/service unit or organized online activity, they need to sign the GSUSA Online Safety Pledge,";
  http://www.girlscouts.org/help/internet_safety_pledge.asp
- If you wish to post Girl Scouts' names on a website, use first names only (no last names). Remember: Do not identify the Girl Scouts pictured in any photos you post online! Never identify the schools, addresses, phone number, or email addresses of Girl Scouts.

For more information regarding social media and computer safety, refer to the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoint for "Computer/Online Use."

Consistent communication with volunteers is just one way to be successful. Here are others:
- Understand and support the Girl Scout mission, vision, and values
- Promote the Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- Provide timely and effective communication
- Provide guidance; not directive
- Be willing to invest time, energy, and personal know-how to assist the growth of another person
- Be discreet and maintain confidences

Ask Volunteers: "How would you like me to communicate with you?"

Summary:

The communication coordinator will manage and organize communications from sources outside and within the service unit. This will include distribution of information to the service unit team, leaders, and parents of the service unit in an effective and efficient manner, using various tools within the service unit, as well as coordinating communications from the service unit to the community or others within GSGLA.

Term of Appointment:

The communication coordinator position is appointed from October 1 through September 30 for a term of 1 year with re-appointment occurring annually.

Appointed by/ Accountable to:

Service unit manager (SUM) and service unit support specialist

Duties and Responsibilities:

To the Service Unit
- Use a variety of methods to distribute and share information according to the resources within the service unit.   These tools may include: email, service unit website, service unit newsletter, social media, fliers and/or announcements at leaders' meetings, phone trees, mail, etc.
- Based on the service unit's needs, the communication coordinator may oversee the following communication roles, or others as needed, within the service unit.   (If desired, the communication coordinator or SUM can assign these roles to communication facilitators or others, who must also receive training related to their role.)
    - Website: If the service unit employs a website, maintain and organize it for storage and sharing of information important to leaders and the team. (may appoint a website facilitator)
    - Social media: Maintain and use any of the service unit forms of social media to disseminate information to leaders and parents. (may appoint a social media facilitator)
    - Public relations: Share and/or promote service unit events and stories, working with GSGLA marketing and communications staff liaison to support publicity for the event or story, using basic grammar, writing, and proofreading skills. May also include gathering, editing or creating press releases in accordance with GSGLA guidelines. (may appoint a publicity facilitator)
- Take all appropriate training for this position and, if using communication facilitators, confirm that they have taken training as well.
- Receive information from service unit team members and leaders to be distributed within or beyond the service unit.
- Keep informed of all activities within the service unit that may be newsworthy and pass information on to the appropriate person.

To the Service Team
- Keep the service unit team informed on the state of communications within the service unit.
- Attend and participate in service unit team meetings and service unit leaders' meetings.
- Remain informed about and comply with the most current policies, procedures, and guidelines of GSGLA and GSUSA including *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Provide informal recognition of leadership teams and recommendations for formal recognitions to the service unit recognition committee.

Core Competencies: All GSGLA Volunteers will effectively demonstrate these behaviors:

- **Girl focused:** Empower girls to choose and adapt activities, learn by doing, cooperate with others, and reflect on what they've accomplished (as well as on current issues that involve their interests and needs) while having fun.
- **Demonstrates personal integrity:** Demonstrate dependability, honesty, and credibility.
- **Demonstrates adaptability:** Adjust, modify own behavior, and remain flexible and tolerant in response to changing situations and environments.
- **Demonstrates effective oral communication:** Express ideas and facts clearly and accurately.
- **Fosters diversity:** Understand, respect, and embrace differences.
- **Demonstrates adequate computer skills:** Access to e-mail and the Internet, plus knowledge of social media.
- **Additional requirements:**
  o Must be in good standing with Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles (GSGLA), be a registered adult member of Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA), complete a Volunteer Application / Criminal Background Check and update these items every three years.
  o Believe in the purpose and philosophy of Girl Scouting, and adhere to the principles of the Girl Scout movement and the goals of GSUSA and GSGLA
  o Have a working knowledge of the goals, objectives and policies of GSGLA. Is accepting and willing to promote these items with a focus on One Mission, One Goal.
  o Is familiar with the appointed service area.
  o Performs tasks willingly and effectively; and is a team player.
  o Ability to communicate effectively under pressure while maintaining good working relationships with leaders and other volunteers.
  o Is willing to bring issues to the appropriate person and respect decisions made.
  o Has the commitment and the time needed to perform specified duties.
  o Takes additional training as needed.

As a supportive partner with the service unit team, I agree to fulfill my duties for the upcoming membership year.

Volunteer - Print Name _____

Signature _____Date_____

Service Unit Manager - Print Name _____

Signature _____Date_____

Membership Specialist - Print Name _____

Signature _____Date_____

THE COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR'S JOB WITHIN THE SERVICE UNIT

The communication coordinator (CC) is a vital member of the service unit (SU) management team. The CC is responsible for:

- Working with the SU team and GSGLA staff to create and implement a communication plan for the SU.
- Communicating important Girl Scout information to the SU members, other volunteers, and members of the community.
- Using and maintaining all current and future communication tools within the SU, such as a website or social media.

Putting this responsibility in the hands of one person will keep communication consistent, available to all, and prevent duplicate distribution of information. To avoid overload, the CC may decide to share different aspects of the job with others who will be part of the communication team. A familiarity with internet communication tools and pathways will facilitate this job. To prepare for this position, CCs should view the recorded orientation webinar and use the PowerPoint PDF as a guide, along with this manual. These resources are located on the GSGLA website under "Training and Support" for volunteers. Once training is complete, please notify your SUM for official appointment as CC.
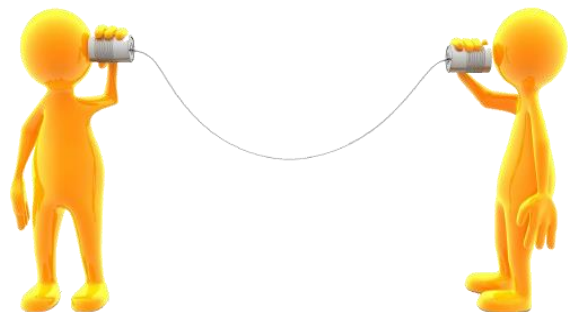
HANDLING INFORMATION

HOW INFORMATION IS RECEIVED

New information comes to the SU in many different ways. Most SUs receive the majority of their information from service unit manager (SUM) meetings, member services staff, e-newsletters, and the GSGLA website. Member services staff will notify the CC through updates about information staff has distributed. Each month the SUM, along with the entire service unit team, will also receive emails from member services staff containing new information and fliers—in addition to the regular e-newsletters the CC receives as a registered member of GSGLA. For questions about any of these communications, email **communications@girlscoutsla.org**. **.** When information is received by a SU team member, it may be distributed directly by email or saved for the leader meeting. To avoid duplication, work out a plan so that all team members will either notify the CC when they distribute information or ask for help.

The CC and the SUM will need to be informed regarding all information that originates within the SU. The CC may be the one coordinating distribution of information, but the SUM needs to be in the loop about everything that is going on in the SU. It is very helpful if two people are assigned to receive all incoming information, so they can act as backups for each other to be sure nothing is forgotten. Discuss this with your SUM.

In order to be sure that everyone in the SU is informed about important GSGLA information, the CC should sign up to receive all current GSGLA communications, including newsletters and social media sites. For details of these GSGLA resources see the chart of "Important Resources" below, under "Distribution Methods."

IMPORTANT: The CC should be very familiar with the GSGLA website and make an effort to check key web pages as often as possible. Keeping informed about all current activities within the council and passing along pertinent information assures that the SU will remain informed about important developments or changes.

WHEN TO DISTRIBUTE

The next step is to assure that everyone who needs to know will receive the information. This is where the CC comes into the picture.

- Prepare, with the help of the SU team, a plan for how information is best distributed and whether or not different kinds of information should be handled differently.
- Establish if information will be circulated on a regularly scheduled basis or as received. Non-urgent information might be sent out by email every Thursday or posted on the SU website the second Saturday of the month. A regular schedule allows leaders to know when to expect information and be on the lookout for it. **When using email, consolidate as much as possible so that the number of emails can be kept to a minimum.**
- Assist SU team members with distribution of their communications. This might include the use of such tools as: email, website, social media, regular mail, newsletters, or announcements or fliers at meetings.
- The CC should be prepared to speak each month at the leader meeting as one way to disseminate and gather information. Be selective about what you discuss—make it count.
- Prioritize what you receive so that the most important information is distributed first. If urgent information is emailed or posted immediately on a website, there could also be a tweet or Facebook post to let everyone know that something urgent needs their attention. Urgent means it can't wait until your weekly/monthly post or update.

DISTRIBUTION METHODS

Understanding the current methods of communication used within the SU is of utmost importance. The CC will need to attend the SU team meetings to explore how communication should be handled. Use this opportunity to discuss any new methods of communication that might be added, such as a newsletter or a website. As the year progresses, reevaluate the success of your plan.

Distribution of information will depend on the resources within the SU. Emails or other means of direct distribution should be based upon who needs the information. Emails should contain the troop level as the first word in the subject line so distribution is easy and does not require opening of the email to know who should receive it (e.g., Registration information goes to everyone. Brownie information only goes to Brownie leaders.) This way you can see that a flier for the SU Brownie event is not only sent to all Brownie leaders, but also posted on the SU website. The event can be included on the SU calendar and on the individual page for Brownies. You could also tweet that the flier has been posted. Ask your leaders what they prefer, and use as many tools and pathways as you can to make information available. However, keep in mind that some people do not use electronic communication at all. Consider a phone tree or regular mail for those who need it.

When distributing information from any source, it is imperative that the information passed on is correct. One way to do this is to always ask that the information be given to you in writing. There is an optional "Service Unit Request to Post" form included in the "Forms" section at the end of this manual. This form should be available on your website and at your team and leader meetings so it can be filled out immediately when someone needs your help. The "Service Unit Request to Post" can be used as a checklist to see that all the necessary information, as well as the recipients, and how the information should be communicated, is included.

DISTRIBUTION EXAMPLES

- **Example 1:** You are emailing a flier about an upcoming Brownie-specific event to all Brownie leaders. Include a link to where the Brownie event and flier are displayed on the SU website.

- **Example 2:** A leader has contacted you directly asking if you can email her a specific form. Instead of simply sending her the form, explain to her how she can access forms on the GSGLA website. This way, you are empowering her to solve the issue on her own—now, and in the future.

> **IMPORTANT TIP**
>
> When distributing information always include a link or directions to the source of the information, i.e. where it is stored for anytime access.

REDISTRIBUTING GSGLA INFORMATION

Remember all those GSGLA newsletters, websites, and social media that you are following? Not every leader in the SU is doing the same thing. No one should miss out on information that you know about. You could use any or all of the SU tools and pathways of communication to be sure everyone gets the information. The SU website, newsletter, and leader meeting should always be considered. Use social media to expand your reach and to let others know what has been posted by re-posting and sharing important information. Check out the "Important Resources" chart below for a list of ways to receive GSGLA information.

Important Resources: Council-wide information

- **GSGLA website (**girlscoutsla.org**)** – Key web pages to consistently "check" include: the homepage buttons and "What's New" section. The Calendar features GSGLA-hosted program events (and save-the-dates for future events), adult trainings, office closures, and service unit and troop-hosted events. Access the calendar under the Activities & Events tab on the homepage. **(Note: GSGLA will be reorganizing its content on the website in 2015/2016. CCs will be included in an early tutorial of the redesign. GSGLA marketing and communications staff will contact CCs with more information.)**

- *Great News!* **(Monthly membership e-newsletter)** – Typically sent to all registered members on the first Thursday of each month, this newsletter features updates on new program events and trainings, important deadline reminders, latest council news, and more.
  Anyone who is signed up to receive *Great News!* and general council updates will automatically also receive the seasonal e-newsletters listed below. (To update your email information and to make sure you are signed up to receive emails from the council, go to girlscoutsla.org, and type in your email address in the field under "Great News!" in the bottom right-hand corner of the homepage. Questions? Email communications@girlscoutsla.org.)
  - **GSGLA Cookie Gram (Cookie season weekly e-newsletter)**
  - **GSGLA Nut Gram (Fall product season weekly e-newsletter)**
  - **GSGLA *Campraderie Courier* (Camp season monthly e-newsletter)**

- **GSGLA Level Newsletters (Monthly Girl Scout grade-level specific e-newsletters)** – These newsletters sent from troop support go to all registered troop leaders for each level (i.e., Brownie leaders receive Brownie News, etc.) The emails contain level-specific programs and announcements, and is typically sent on the third Thursday or Friday of the month.

- *Great Friends!* (Monthly e-newsletter for alumnae, donors, and nontraditional volunteers) – Typically sent on the third Thursday of the month, this newsletter highlights nontraditional volunteer opportunities (one-off events, non-troop leader opportunities, etc.) as well as spotlights on alumnae, Girl Scout facts and news, ways to donate to GSGLA, and more.

- **GSGLA Facebook (**facebook.com/GSGLA**)** – "Like" this page, and find out first on Facebook! Here's where the latest and greatest information is shared regarding upcoming events, deadlines, special contests, and opportunities. GSGLA members can also submit photos, which council staff can choose to share on the page. Discussion and feedback as a "Comment" is both welcome and encouraged.

- **GSGLA Cookie & Nut Friends Facebook (**facebook.com/GSGLACookieNutFriend**)** – During Girl Scout Cookie and Fall Product Program seasons, staff share real-time information regarding these two programs.

- **GSGLA Twitter (**twitter.com/girlscoutsla**)** – The Twitter page is where GSGLA shares Girl Scout

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information that is relevant to the community at-large.

- **GSGLA CEO Lise Luttgens Twitter (**twitter.com/gsgla_ceo**) –** The council CEO shares updates and thoughts on the Girl Scout Movement in greater Los Angeles. She encourages discussion with Girl Scouts, volunteers, and community members.
- **GSGLA Instagram (**instagram.com/girlscoutsla**)** – Tag @girlscoutsla or use the hashtags #girlscoutsla and #gsgla in your service unit's social media posts, and the council might share it!
- **GSGLA Pinterest (**pinterest.com/girlscoutsla**)** – This is a fun way for leaders to get ideas for troop meetings, activities, field trips, ceremonies, and more.
- *Greater* **mailer** – This is a quarterly direct mail piece, a program events guide, sent to homes of all registered girls as well as all SUMs and CCs.
- **Pixie List (**thepixielistla.com**)** – This is GSGLA's classified website where volunteers can post listings about needing volunteers or supplies, etc.

To mitigate the issue for parents and volunteers of not knowing about a program event or deadline until it is too late, the CC should work to promote and educate the SU on the resources listed above, so that the SU is aware of how to access them.

WEBSITE OR STORAGE SITE

Websites can be used as a central place of communication for the SU. Team members may send the CC information using the "Request to Post" form. The CC will monitor all files, photos, and information; organize the website to make it easy for leaders to find what they want; and use the website to store information for future reference and as a back-up for information that may have been emailed. **Remove information as it becomes outdated so that the website always contains only the most current information.** A website ensures that the information is available day or night, and on holidays and weekends. No more searching through past emails for a date or flier—the most recent information is always there.

Examples of types of information to go on the SU website:	
Event fliers – store these by level	Pictures from past events
A "What's New" spot on the home page for a list of what was added during the last week	Calendar – SU and GSGLA important dates and deadlines
Member registration – link to the GSGLA page	Product sales – link to the GSGLA page
Volunteer Essentials and *Safety Activity Checkpoints* – link to the GSGLA page	Changes in policy – on the front page in a "What's New" section
Adult education/trainings – link to the GSGLA page or post on your SU calendar	Forms: "SU Request to Post," permission slip – link to the GSGLA page when possible
Recruitment	SU roster
Link to GSGLA, GSUSA, or other councils with great websites.	Discussion board or blog
Leader meeting notes, agendas and handouts	Newsletters – Decide if you want to archive and for how long
Links to all GSGLA social media. Go to the website and find these icons at the bottom of most pages. Copy and paste them on your SU website for easy use by your leaders:	
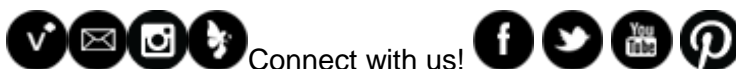
Connect with us!

GUIDELINES FOR WEBSITES

If you wish to post Girl Scouts' names on a public (not password-protected) website, use first names only (no last names). Remember: No matter if the website is public or password-protected -- **Do not identify the Girl Scouts pictured in any photos you post online!** Never identify the schools, addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses of Girl Scouts.

For more information regarding social media and computer safety, refer to the Girl Scout *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for "Computer/Online Use." (*Safety Activity Checkpoints* is located at girlscoutsla.org alongside *Volunteer Essentials*.).)

For more in-depth information regarding the website guidelines, please consult the "Troop/Group Web Page Guidelines" in the forms section of this manual and posted on the Volunteer Resources & Tools page: **girlscoutsla.org/pages/for_volunteers/Cool_Tools.html**.

Here are a few free links you might consider using to develop a service unit website.
- Google Sites - **http://www.google.com/sites/overview.html**
- Shutterfly Share Sites -
  https://www.shutterfly.com/sites/create/welcome.sfly?fid=abbe1fe408924de0
  (For help, see "**How-tos of Online Communication**" at the end of this manual, and **Sample Shutterfly Sites** for service units and troops—both are on the volunteer resources web page on the GSGLA website)
- Scoutlander - **http://www.scoutlander.com/PublicSite/home.aspx**
- Rallyhood - **http://hello.rallyhood.com/**

SOCIAL MEDIA

You can enhance information shared with leaders in the SU with something other than standard email distribution. The use of social media sites has risen in the past few years, especially among young adults, and an increasing number of leaders are sharing information this way. It is important that the SU is communicating with these adults who may not use email or websites as their primary source of communication. The CC is responsible for posting on all formats that the SU is using and to keep the sites current if files are posted. Keep in mind the needs of your members—not everyone uses email or social media. Balance those needs against the time and effort the CC has to offer.

Social media needs to be faster and more "now" than other forms of communication, so be committed to that. Make certain you can devote enough time to social media, or ask someone else to help. (It is better to delete the account if no one can maintain it.) On the other hand, if the SU does not use a certain type of social media, and it would be a benefit, talk to the SU about signing up. Try the GSGLA "**How-to's of Online Communication**" for resources for getting started with Twitter, Facebook and Shutterfly. Use the "Request to Post" form to be sure you have the details of any post in writing. (Both the "How-to's" document and the "Request to Post" form are located on the Volunteer Resources & Tools page.

GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

When representing Girl Scouts on social media channels, make safety and respectfulness a priority.
- Make sure the privacy standards settings **ensure the safety of girls**.
- Practice diligence to ensure that groups you are joining or linking to have **standards consistent with Girl Scouts**.

- Make sure the messages you post **do not conflict with Girl Scout positions**. Please contact **communications@girlscoutsla.org** if you need clarity.
- Use **good judgment and common sense—**do not write or post anything that would embarrass or upset Girl Scout members and volunteers, or reflect badly on Girl Scouts.

Treat others as you want to be treated; do not use the Internet (a public space) for private conflict resolution. Careful monitoring of social media is important in maintaining a positive, inspiring image of Girl Scouting.

Remember, if you wish to post Girl Scouts' names on a social media site, use first names only (no last names). Do not identify the Girl Scouts pictured in any photos you post online! Never identify the schools, addresses, phone number, or email addresses of Girl Scouts. For more information regarding social media and computer safety, refer to Girl Scout *Safety Activity Checkpoints* "Computer/Online Use" chapter.

Examples of some social media communication tools:

- **Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/about/groups)** – Establish a closed group. Use this tool to post announcements, information, and photos for the SU. You can interact with leaders, or post files and events to these pages. The leaders can also post to this group. Be sure to keep the Facebook events up-to-date and accurate, and remove all outdated files. As the account administrator, the CC will be responsible for accepting new Facebook members and monitoring posts. Be sure to re-post and "share" timely announcements GSGLA makes on its Facebook page. For the "About Us" section of the group, see the disclaimer below under "Blogs," which also applies here.

- **Twitter (www.twitter.com)** – Think of it as mass texting directly to your SU members. Alert them about events and happenings. Create hashtags for SU events, such as #GSGLAThinkingDay and then SU members can follow those hashtags for information. Inform them when an important post has been made on the website, or keep them up-to-date on what is happening during a SU event.

- **Pinterest (www.pinterest.com)** – Use this to share ideas and interests with team members, leaders, and parents. Monitor the Pinterest site, add to it, and keep it relevant. Establish multiple boards to keep information organized. (There are tons of cool ideas on GSGLA's Pinterest page: **pinterest.com/girlscoutsla**)

- **Instagram (www.instagram.com) –** Instagram is a great way to engage with older Girl Scouts. Post pictures of your service unit or troop events or count-downs for upcoming activities and drum up excitement. Hashtags work the same way as they do on Twitter.

- **Vine (https://vine.co/)** – Use as an advertising tool for SU events. Mini six-second videos of event fliers can be posted to Vine for your members, or you can post six-second videos from events or SU meetings for your members to watch after-the-fact.

- **Sign-up Genius (http://www.signupgenius.com)** – Not truly social media, but rather a tool for signing up volunteers to help at an event or bring items to a pot-luck.

NEWSLETTER

Consider distributing or posting a monthly newsletter. The benefit: a nice summary of what is important in the coming month. Include deadlines for paperwork as well as events that are happening. When sent in a Word format, the leader can just add troop information, and have a newsletter to send out to parents. **Important**: Try not to schedule the newsletter to go out on the same day that other emails will be arriving in inboxes (so as not to bombard parents/leaders with too many emails on one day). For instance, *Great News!* (the GSGLA membership newsletter) is typically sent on the first Thursday of the month so consider sending your newsletter on a different day.

Here are a couple of websites that offer not only free email distribution, but also numerous free templates that could make the publishing of a newsletter much easier. These sites could allow your subscribers to view the newsletter without opening an attachment, unsubscribe on their own, or click on embedded links.

> **Free newsletter and email distribution:**
> - Mail Chimp - **http://mailchimp.com/pricing/entrepreneur/**
> - Vertical Response - **http://www.verticalresponse.com/features**

BLOG

Do members of the SU love to talk and share information? Is it hard to get them to sit down when the leader meeting starts? Then perhaps the SU would benefit from a private blog (free options include Facebook, Yahoo, Google Blogger, WordPress). Take conversations to the blog and everyone can join in, offering advice on badges or letting others know about the great field trip they just had. Blogging extends the conversation between leaders on many topics. Some blog administrators set up rules that remind everyone to be respectful of the community and others. Keeping topics on a positive note helps everyone and keeps the blog from turning into a gripe fest. As a retention strategy, consider having older girls blog about their experiences in order to inspire younger girls to continue in Girl Scouting.

> **Possible topics of discussion:**
> - Field trips
> - Who is going to the annual meeting
> - Holiday party
> - Topic for leaders' corner at meeting
> - Agenda items for the leader meeting
> - New cookie boothing spots
> - Older girl guest blog posts—advice to younger Girl Scouts, Gold Award recaps, etc.

If the SU chooses to allow commenting on blog posts, use the following **disclaimer** as a template to include on the blog's "About" page. This can also be used on a Facebook Group "About" page:

This page is moderated by [Insert SU name here]. [Insert SU name here] encourages all Girl Scouts and Girl Scout friends to post questions, feedback, and discussions. [Insert SU name] reserves the right to remove any post or comment that is vulgar, inappropriate or offensive, as well as posts advertising non-Girl Scout related product and services. Comments posted by fans of Girl Scouts do not represent the views of the Girl Scout organization. We respect everyone's privacy. Do not post any personally identifiable information (especially things like telephone numbers, addresses, or SSNs) for yourself or a child.

SU CALENDAR
A SU calendar should include all events as well as all important dates for registration, trainings, product sales, form due dates, etc. The more inclusive it is, the more useful. Provide links to pages on the GSGLA website, such as the calendar, for access to the details. Arrange for emails to be sent from the SU calendar to remind leaders about the most important deadlines if your calendar supports this feature.
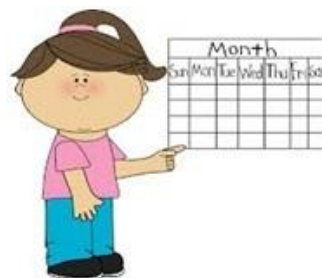
It may be possible to subscribe to the GSGLA online calendar if your calendar allows ICS-formatted subscriptions. More info at: girlscoutsla.org.

PUBLICITY
Positive media coverage is one of the best ways to promote the non-stop fun, amazing opportunities and tangible benefits today's girls experience in Girl Scouting. When we share our Girl Scout news and activities, we:
- Increase our visibility in the community
- Promote our brand and signal value for the Girl Scout program
- Boost our membership
- Increase financial support

What's the challenge?
GSGLA does its best to report all the interesting stories, latest news, and important information related to Girl Scouting within the greater Los Angeles region—but with more than 60,000 girl and adult members, it would take considerable resources in staff time, energy, and funding to issue media releases on everyone's activities! That's where the CC comes in—you can focus on promoting your SU's stories to *hyper-local* media outlets (community newspapers, Patch, neighborhood blog, etc.), while GSGLA staff will handle *regional* stories and media relations. GSGLA's marketing and communications department will offer guidance, training, tools, and templates to support your efforts. Basic grammar, writing, and proofreading skills are required.

Before creating a publicity plan for your SU, the CC must take a brief (and fun!) additional webinar training with GSGLA's marketing and communications staff. This Publicity Training (recorded webinar) is available on the **Training and Support** page of the GSGLA website. For questions, contact **pr@girlscoutsla.org**.

What is news?
The most important question to ask before sending a press release or a pitch to local media: IS IT NEWS? While many of your Girl Scout activities are interesting and important, not all are going to be "newsworthy." Reporters and editors are inundated with press releases and they're going to review your submission for its news value to determine whether or not it gets into their publication. Examples of stories to share with local media: Gold Award/Silver Award or other impressive Take Action projects, volunteer profiles (during volunteer recognition season), upcoming SU events open to the public (especially recruitment events), community service

> *Before submitting any press releases or articles to local media, the CC is required to first send their draft to the GSGLA communications manager at pr@girlscoutsla.org who will review and approve the piece within three business days for submission. The communications manager will also evaluate the story for inclusion in possible council-wide coverage (or for posts on GSGLA's social media pages).*

achievements, etc. Develop a system for troop leaders to submit potential news items to you for consideration.

Process

Throughout the year, the marketing and communications department will develop and provide news releases regarding council-wide Girl Scout news (e.g., Feed Your Neighbor, the Girl Scout Cookie Program, volunteer recruitment, etc.) to major metro media (*Los Angeles Times*, all Los Angeles-based TV networks, etc.) as well as local newspapers, if appropriate. **The CC will be on the list to receive all press releases that GSGLA sends out, so that she will always be in the loop as to what stories the council is promoting.** This also gives the CC the opportunity to provide the SU's angle on a council-wide program/initiative to its own local media contacts.

Seasonal press release templates for CCs/publicity facilitators to use (cookie program, volunteer appreciation, Gold Award, etc.) are posted in advance of each season on the GSGLA website on the Volunteer "Resources & Tools" page under "Communication."

Photos

Including a picture with your release increases the chances that your news will get printed! Here are some helpful tips:

- Take pictures that support your event and try to take a lot of pictures so you will have many shots to select from.
- Unless your intent is to wow people with the number of girls you can put in a straight line… avoid those group shots if you can. The group shot has its place, but action shots are more fun and can make your event look more interesting. Get in close to capture faces and girls doing something awesome!
- Only submit bright, focused, good quality photos. Pictures should be saved as JPEGs or TIFs and be at least 300 dpi (dots per inch).

Make sure you obtain permission from the subjects in the pictures prior to releasing the photo to the media. Note: All girl and adult members check a photo permission box when they register for Girl Scouts. Do not include names of girls, unless you get separate permission from parents/guardians.

Publicity training outline

The publicity training with marketing and communications staff (one-hour recorded webinar) includes the following:

- News submission process
- Writing tips
- Story ideas
- Overview of Girl Scout messages, editorial style, and voice
- Tips for getting articles/news published by media
- Press release templates
- Media contact list template

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

The CC is in a unique position to observe all the communication needs within the SU and determine how to facilitate the communication pathways and tools to best serve the SU. This is your job. Make it your own and help the SU in the process. Suggest improvements or the addition of a website, newsletter, or blog. Make sure that everyone has choices that fit their lifestyle. Share information in a multitude of ways to ensure that all SU members are an active part of the communication loop. Remember not to overload people with information and to always consolidate information and direct people to the source (e.g., the website) where the information can be accessed anytime, anywhere.

Come up with new ideas. Perhaps your SU team could have monthly meetings electronically. Try a site such as Google+ Hangouts where you can all participate and share your screen or documents. This saves everyone from driving to another meeting and might avoid needing a babysitter. Give a mini lesson on how to do this at your leader meeting, and encourage the leaders to try it for their parent meetings.
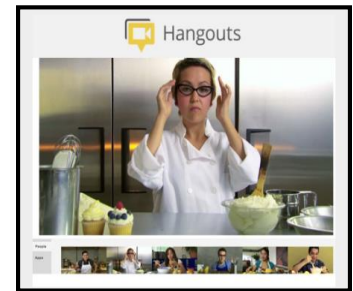
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

- Offer help and education to your SU about different ways to communicate and how to use these varied tools.
- Inspire a leader to follow *your* lead and develop a website, newsletter, or Twitter account.
- Reference the GSGLA website and other tools. Soon leaders will start going there for information as well, instead of always asking you.
- Recruit someone (or multiple people) for your own communication team! It's all about empowering your SU to be able to find and access information easily and in consistent ways. As they become more proficient, you might find people more willing to join your team.

THE COMMUNICATION TEAM IN YOUR SERVICE UNIT

COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR AND FACILITATORS

The job of the communication coordinator (CC) will vary in each service unit (SU) depending on the tools used, the size of the SU, and the skills of the CC. It makes sense to recruit help for any of the jobs that need an expert. The communication spectrum is so broad that the CC job may become overwhelming for one person. The CC may need a team effort to support communication in the SU: more heads to put together and more hands to share the work. The CC or the service unit manager (SUM) may appoint others to help. Members of the communication team will be called *facilitators*. These facilitators will report to and take direction from the CC in order to streamline communications and avoid redundancy. All facilitators should keep the CC informed about what they do. Facilitators should also review relevant parts of this manual, view the recorded orientation webinar (and additional publicity training, if applicable) and use the PowerPoint PDF as a guide. These resources are located on the GSGLA website under "Training and Support" for volunteers. Once training is complete, please notify your SUM so that they are aware of who is on your communication team.

HANDLING INFORMATION

Communication jobs may currently be distributed among other SU team members, such as the SUM secretary, registrar, or even the consultant. These people may wish to continue with that job (or be happy to give it up to the CC). Selecting a communication team to assist the CC will relieve the current SU team members of this responsibility. This allows the new communication team to focus efforts on being proficient in the area of communication. Facilitators are not required, and the CC may find, that in a small SU with few tools, the job can be done by one person.

The most important thing to know is that you are not alone. You may enlist the help of others to do some of the specific jobs such a handling the website, newsletter, social media, or publicity. To further assist you, a member services staff member and GSGLA's communications manager will be partnered with you to provide the expertise needed. For ongoing assistance and networking, there are quarterly webinars for all CCs and staff liaisons to share successes and challenges.

```
                        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │ Website          │        │ Maintain and post    │
                        │ Facilitator      │────────│ information on the   │
                        │                  │        │ SU's website         │
┌──────────────┐        └──────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘
│ SU Support   │
│ Staff        │        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
└──────────────┘        │ Social Media     │        │ Maintain and post    │
                        │ Facilitator      │────────│ information on all the│
┌──────────────┐        │                  │        │ SU's social media    │
│ Communication│        └──────────────────┘        │ sites                │
│ Coordinator  │◁                                   └──────────────────────┘
└──────────────┘        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │ Publicity        │        │ Facilitate publicity │
┌──────────────┐        │ Facilitator      │────────│ and press releases   │
│ Communications│       │                  │        │ in collaboration with│
│ Manager      │        └──────────────────┘        │ communications dept  │
└──────────────┘                                    └──────────────────────┘
                        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │ Other as needed  │        │ Assist with any job  │
                        │                  │────────│ where expertise is   │
                        │                  │        │ helpful or the job is│
                        └──────────────────┘        │ time-consuming       │
                                                    └──────────────────────┘
```

All facilitators will:
- Report to the CC
- Assume all duties of the CC for their assignment
- Keep the CC informed

WEBSITE FACILITATOR

The website facilitator will receive direction from the CC regarding what information to post. Any information received from another source should be emailed to the CC to avoid duplication and to coordinate all pathways of distribution for that information. Duties may include establishing or maintaining the SU website, posting and keeping information current, and organizing the website for ease of use.

SOCIAL MEDIA FACILITATOR

The social media facilitator will consult with the CC regarding what information to post. Information received from an alternate source should be emailed to the CC to avoid duplication and to coordinate all pathways of distribution for that information. Duties may include establishing or maintaining the various social media accounts, posting information in a timely way, and instructing leaders in how to access and use these social media accounts.

PUBLICITY FACILITATOR

Training from the marketing and communications department is required before any information is released to the public. The CC must always be notified of pending publicity. The publicity facilitator will work to gain local media coverage about SU activities and news, promoting the amazing opportunities and tangible benefits today's girls experience in Girl Scouting. She/he will assist with publicity for upcoming public events or in the preparation of press releases for past events or recognitions. This information will be passed on to marketing and communications staff for final approval (or editing assistance). The Publicity Training (recorded webinar) is available on the **Training and Support** page of the GSGLA website. For questions, contact **pr@girlscoutsla.org**.

OTHER FACILITATORS

Any duties of the CC which may take a lot of time to complete or that require special knowledge, expertise, or interest, can be shared with another person in the SU. This could include such things as maintaining a SU blog or newsletter.

GETTING STARTED AS A SERVICE UNIT COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR

FIRST STEPS

Not sure what to do first? Here are some suggestions:

- Become familiar with the way communication is currently being handled in your service unit. Schedule a meeting with the SUM and other appropriate SU team members to discuss the current communication climate in the SU.
- Talk to your SU team about how communication should be handled. Develop standard operating procedures.
- Sign up for all current newsletters and social media from GSGLA (listed under "Distribution Methods" in this manual).
- Decide if you need any communication team members (facilitators).
- Connect with your staff from member services and the marketing and communications departments (and register for the publicity training).
- Share your job with the service unit at a leader meeting and ask them for suggestions.

HELPFUL HINTS

Here are a few ideas that may help the CC get organized:

- Decide how leaders/team members will contact you. Get a separate email for yourself (e.g., **oaktreecc@gmail.com**), or ask the former CC if you are inheriting her/his email address. If so, obtain log-in info.
- Decide how you will respond to contact (acknowledge in a certain timeframe).
- Calendar those quarterly CC/facilitator webinars. Register on the GSGLA Adult Education calendar
- Set a schedule to remove outdated information from sites.
- Organize contact information for your SU in a spreadsheet by level. Set up email lists according to need.

After you decide, be sure that you let everyone in the SU know your preferences.

FORMS AND GUIDELINES

All forms and guidelines for the communication coordinator (CC) and (if applicable) communication team facilitators are listed below. They are all posted on the Volunteer Resources & Tools page on the GSGLA website under "Communication."

Forms and guidelines included in the manual:

- Service Unit Request to Post
- Troop/Group Website Guidelines
- How-To's of Online Communication
- What I Need For My Girl To Attend A…

Additional forms and guidelines on GSGLA's website that might be helpful:

- Shutterfly Sample Sites – Sample Shutterfly Share Sites for both **service units** and **troops**
- **Event Flier Checklist** and the **Design Cheat Sheet**
- Event Flier/Announcement Templates: for **Word** and **Publisher**
- **Press Release Templates** (there are also seasonal templates, e.g., cookie program, recruitment, etc.)
- **Publicity Training**
- **Media Alert Template** and **Contacts Table**
- **GSGLA Editorial Style** and **Fact Sheet**
- Photo Consent Forms: for **minors** and **adults**

Contact the marketing and communications department for questions: **communications@girlscoutsla.org** or **pr@girlscoutsla.org**.

Tips and Tools for Communication Coordinators

girl scouts
greater los angeles

SERVICE UNIT REQUEST TO POST

Please include all information that you wish to have distributed/posted via service unit-hosted communication tools (e.g., service unit website, newsletter, social media, etc.) and return this to: _____.

A digital fillable version of this form can be accessed at: girlscoutsla.org/pages/for_volunteers/Cool_Tools.html

Name (include troop # and level):_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date submitted: _____ Preferred date to distribute/post: _____

Write-up/Details – This event was approved on: _____ by _____

Event name: _____

Event date(s): _____ Event time: _____

Event location: _____

Adult to contact: _____ Email/phone: _____

Other details (If submission is NOT an event, put full write-up here):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Distribute or post using (SU website, Facebook, newsletter, etc.):_____

_____

Who is to receive this information (community, age level, all leaders, etc.)?_____

_____

 Flier? Attach to this form or email. An electronic copy is needed if this is to be posted on the internet or distributed by email.

TROOP/GROUP WEB PAGE GUIDELINES

NOTE: This guide was developed by GSUSA with some modifications by GSGLA staff.

These guidelines are written for adult volunteers, older girls, and others considering developing a Web page or "home page" for a troop or group in Girl Scouts. Although there is some "how to do it" information, the guidelines are not meant to lead you through the construction process. We leave that to the experts. We suggest that you find someone who knows the technical and legal aspects of web construction. **Please consult with your service unit's communication coordinator, website facilitator, or service unit manager before creating a group web page. Or, email marketing and communications staff at** communications@girlscoutsla.org **if you have any questions.**

Information posted to the Internet on a web page can be read by people all over the world. Therefore, safety and how you represent yourselves as Girl Scouts should be the guiding principal of any web-based endeavor, even if your information is password-protected. This includes issues of privacy, language use, sponsorship, links, and use of any kind of copyrighted material (writing, music, brand images, and pictures).

Is a web page right for your troop or group?

Unless you have expertise within your group, such as parents, or are using a web development template supplied by your service provider, consider recruiting technical expertise. Your council might have a list of volunteers, or you might approach a community college computer lab, a professional in web development, or someone who develops websites for a hobby. Girls can be involved in the process at all levels—decision-making, research, writing, graphics, and the web page creation.

Consider the following when deciding whether or not to develop a troop or group web page:

Poll your service unit/troop members regarding Internet access. Family Internet access will determine whether a web page will be limited to advertising your group, or used as a communication vehicle. If most families don't have web access, you will have to communicate information in a different manner.

As a group, determine why you want a web page. Is it because your service unit or council is giving you an opportunity to post information about your group? Is it to post important dates and notices? Is it a scrapbook record for girls and their families to share? Is it a place to keep track of girls' work?

How much will it cost? Are you part of someone else's site, or are you purchasing your rights to your own web address? Will there be additional costs for a password protected site? Does that site provide a way to keep individual files and downloads? Does it have a calendar function? Does it have email and bulletin board features?

Consider the time needed for site upkeep. Who will be responsible for posting changes? How often do you want to change the site—weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly?

Discuss whether your site will remain an information-only site, or whether you want additional functions, such as an interactive component, which will require password protection. Below is a chart comparing the features of public pages to password-protected pages on the Internet.

Comparison between public and password-protected web page Features

Possible features for your web pages obtained through	Public Internet pages...OR..	Password-protected pages and community collaboration space
Space for description of group	YES	YES - this can be your entry page for group members to sign in
Downloads for permission slips	NO - unless they are generic, not listing specific information	YES
Group email address for public and other Girl Scouts	YES	YES - if you place on the sign-in page
Individual pictures and pages for each troop/girl	Not recommended for security purposes	YES - each troop/girl can have her own page and/or file
Links to council and GSUSA websites	YES	YES
Links to other websites	YES - with qualifications.	YES - with qualifications.
Listing on search engines	YES. Meta-tags can be placed on the page.	YES, meta-tags can be placed on sign-in page.
List-serve of individual emails or phone list	NO. This is against all safety guidelines.	YES - with permission.
Meeting notes	Possibly - with edits. No descriptions of where girls will be meeting or going.	YES - protected with password.
Picture of group for public; pictures of group activities	Yes - if have parental permission. Use of first names only.	Yes - if have parental permission. Recommended first names only.
Records of girls' work	NO - not recommended.	YES- if folders are an option.
Troop/service unit calendar	NO - unless very general as to dates, not including place and time.	YES- if calendar function is an option.
Use of GSUSA/GSGLA trademarks (e.g. badges)	NO	NO
Use of GSUSA/GSGLA Logo (e.g. GS "three faces" logo)	With permission only. Email **communications@girlscoutsla.org** to discuss	With permission only. Email **communications@girlscoutsla.org** to discuss
Use of copyrighted music	NO - unless you have permission to use from music company and/or owner.	NO - unless you have permission to use from music company and/or owner.
Use of artwork from books or web	NO - unless you have permission to use from owner.	NO - unless you have permission to use from owner.

Getting Started

If your troop or group decides to post a web page, begin with the following:

Spend time looking at other websites. Note what you like about them. Search for other "Girl Scout troop" or group sites, as well as "Girl Scout council" sites. Note any safety or copyright issues you encounter when looking at other Girl Scout sites after you have reviewed the sections on safety and copyrights. (See http://www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder/ for a listing of council sites.)

Research hosts for your site on the Internet. This is where your council and your technical person can be of great help.

Here are a few website platforms many service units/troops currently use for their websites:

- Google Sites - **sites.google.com**
- Shutterfly Share Groups - **http://www.shutterfly.com/classroom-share/?esch=1**
- Scoutlander - **http://www.scoutlander.com/**
- Rallyhood - **http://hello.rallyhood.com/**

Consider learning simple html or other web language, or utilizing a more sophisticated program, such as DreamWeaver or FrontPage, which writes the code. Girls can also learn how to prepare photos and graphics for the web, as well as video and music posting. Be prepared to scale back your graphics or to break your content into separate pages (files) so that your audience will not have to wait a long time to see your web page. Learn how to create versions of graphics that require less time to download.

Create an outline of the information of your site. It can be very simple on one page, or it can take the form of more than one page, with links between. The kind of hosting you decide upon will either limit or broaden your options.

Developing your web page

Write the text for your page(s). Check for spelling and grammar carefully. Ask other people to help you proofread as well.

Create or find graphics on the web for your page. Be sure not to use graphics that are copyrighted by someone else without their permission.

Consider any links you want to create between your site and other sites carefully. Each linked site should contain only material that is safe and suitable for Girl Scouts (and children) using the web. Avoid sites that contain inappropriate advertising or lack of educational value. Ads change frequently, sometimes every few seconds, so it may be impossible to keep track of these links from your site!

Rather than saving and re-uploading council forms, simply link to the GSGLA web address for each form. That way, when forms are updated, they will be updated on your site too. Remember: Always link to the source of the document/form when possible rather than duplicating (and possibly distorting) information.

Publishing your web page

There are many ways to post the pages you create on the Internet. You may have to pay a monthly fee, especially if you go over allotted space for free services, or if you want extras, like chat, file sharing, etc. Most Internet service providers or search engine sites, such as AOL, Yahoo, or Google have publishing options. They also provide a list of suggested hosting options, as well as many helpful hints about website development and establishing "user communities." Look for security features, privacy features, amount of space available, and cost from a provider. (The free sites are listed on page 3 of this document under "Getting Started.")

If you are offered space on a website that is a private business or owned by an individual, be very cautious. You become associated with that person's domain name (Internet address). You should NOT be associated with a commercial business unless it is clear that they are sponsoring space only, and you should check out the site content and its links, as well as the business to see whether you are in appropriate company for a Girl Scout group. For example, it might not be appropriate to be sponsored by a winery or a gun shop, but it would be OK to be on the site of your local library or your public newspaper with other nonprofit youth groups. A site that has links to sex shops would not be appropriate. If your group's sponsor offers you space, you should check with your Girl Scout council before accepting; and they can help you word a statement that needs to be placed on your page or the page of your sponsor to indicate that the sponsorship of the page does not indicate Girl Scout endorsement of the host site.

Create an email account specifically for your website. It should be monitored by an adult. Never use a personal email account for your troop/group website.

Never post full names of girls, girl email addresses, family email addresses, or troop or group meeting places on a public web page. Have only one or two adults as the administrators or a girl/adult in partnership. Rotate the responsibilities if girls are interested in learning how to administer a site. Determine a schedule for updating your site before it is posted. Some sites will only need to be updated quarterly, or when something is meant to be shared, such as pictures from a camping trip or service activity. Ideally, sites that are password-protected should be updated after each meeting or event in preparation for the next meeting or event. Be sure to remove old sites from free hosting services. If you choose a service that has password-protected space, you must set up ways to protect the password for the users. Limit it to girls and parents or guardians and use a tier of different user rights.

Determine a schedule for changing the passwords and discuss the importance of keeping the password within the member group.

Corresponding with the public

Never post live messages from other people on your website, in a guest book, or on a bulletin board. Every message should be read by someone (the service unit communication coordinator or service unit manager is recommended), edited where necessary, and then posted. Do not post full names and addresses or emails of individuals posting to guest books or bulletin boards. You may post first name, troop/group, and city or state. You do not have to post every message sent to you. Rules or "netiquette" should be discussed and posted on the site. (e.g., no full names; no put-downs, bad language, etc.) Do not offer to

act as a broker for girls or groups wanting pen pals. Pen-pal requests must go through a council pen pal coordinator.

Never correspond on any topic not related to your website or Girl Scouts on your Girl Scout email. For example, you should never respond to ads, requests for money, or questions about where your group meets.

FAQs about Girl Scout symbols and clip art

Q: What are Girl Scout symbols?
A: GSUSA and GSGLA symbols are trademarked graphics, such as the Girl Scout logo, Girl Scout badges, and official pins and awards.

Q: Are there guidelines for use of these symbols?
A: Yes. GSUSA and GSGLA symbols cannot be used without authorization from Girl Scouts. Permission may be granted to Girl Scout groups wishing to use the Girl Scout logo on their web page, but they must consult with GSGLA's marketing and communications department first. Please email **communications@girlscoutsla.org** to get permission. There are rules for use of the GSUSA logo. For example, the logo must appear on a solid background, it may not be put into another graphic or used as background "wallpaper" or watermark, or be made into buttons.

For more about obtaining permission, go to Terms and Conditions, on girlscouts.org. Or, email **communications@girlscoutsla.org** to talk to a council staff person in the marketing and communications department.

Q: If I have used Girl Scout trademarked symbols and haven't followed the guidelines, what should I do?
A: Change your design.

Q: Why get excited about the misuse of Girl Scout symbols?
A: Girl Scouts must protect the integrity of its trademarked symbols and their use. If the symbols are misused, they no longer send a clear message about who we are. If Girl Scout symbols are used with a product, people may assume that GSUSA endorses that product. If they are used without permission, they may be used inappropriately.

Q: What about using art work from Girl Scout books?
A: Artwork is also protected by copyright laws. More important, it may be owned by the artist. Even Girl Scouts of the USA doesn't always have permission to reproduce it, once it has been used for a specific purpose.

Q: Where can we get graphics for use on our site?
A: Many sites on the web, maintained by companies and individuals, offer free graphics for use by individuals and nonprofit organizations. It is important to read the legal statements and special instructions for downloading from each site you visit. Make sure that the artwork is owned by the site giving permission for use.

Glossary

Browser - software and a "user-friendly" interface that allows access to pages and sites on the web, as well as a search function for finding pages related to specific topics. A browser has features that allow the user to do things once there, such as downloading files or saving pictures. Popular browsers include FireFox, MSN Explorer, and Yahoo. Yahooligans is just for kids.

Bulletin board - an electronic message center, where visitors can leave messages, which are either live or screened, then posted. Usually focused on specific topics.

home page - a name for the first page of any collection of web pages or a website, often referred to as the "front door" of a website.

html - abbreviation for hyper text mark-up language, which is the basic code-based language used with text to create web pages.

list serve - a collection or list of email addresses that are kept together. When you send out an announcement, you place the name of the list serve in the address window and the email goes to everyone on the list serve.

Password protection - ensures that unauthorized users do not access the computer or web pages. A password is a secret combination of characters (letters and numbers) that allow the user to access a page or files online.

Search engine - this is a program, often included in or linked to by a browser or found at its own address, such as google.com, which allows you to search a database of web pages.

web server - a dedicated computer or system of computers that allows content to be served to a web browser and sent to a user's web browser. The browser and server communicate using HTTP language. There are different types of servers that provide different functions using different computer languages, such as Audio/Video servers that allow for streaming video; Chat Servers, which allow groups of people to talk with each other; Groupware Servers, which allow for people to work together online; and FTP or File Transfer Protocol Servers, which allow files to move through cyberspace.

URL - stands for Uniform Resource Locator, or the address used to locate a Web page. Girl Scouts of the USA's URL is http://www.girlscouts.org. The first section (http) says it is written in hypertext markup language, then that it is on the World Wide Web (www), under the name of "girlscouts" and that we live in the domain name of organization (org). You have to register to have your own unique URL; however, you can be hosted by a website, sharing their URL, with an extension that gives you a specific address.

web host - provides server space, Web services, and file maintenance for websites created by individuals or other companies who do not have their own server. Subscribers to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) often are given limited Web space for their own website, or there is a fee charged, depending on the complexity.

web page(s) - printable pages on the Internet. Often used in place of "home page" when describing a personal site. Each page has its own URL or Universal Resource Locator.

website - a name for a collection of Web pages hosted on a website. Most individuals refer to their page or pages as "home page" or "web page" rather a website, which is usually much more extensive, expensive, and professional. GSUSA calls its collection of web pages a website because of its size and complexity. Its "home page" is at www.girlscouts.org.

How-to's of Online Communication

In an effort to provide a starting place for service units and troops wanting to enhance their communication with members of their service unit or troop, the GSGLA Communications Go Team compiled a list of handy resources. The team hopes that this will provide enough information for volunteers to feel comfortable getting started with Twitter, Facebook, and Shutterfly in Girl Scouting. The Go Team welcomes suggestions for additional "How-to" resources to enhance this document; please send helpful links to **data@girlscoutsla.org** with an explanation of its benefits.

More in-depth information about using social media within a service unit can be found in the Communication Coordinator Manual **on the GSGLA website. Before launching a website or social media page/group for a service unit or troop, please review** GSGLA's Troop or Group Web Page Guidelines**.**

TWITTER

Why Twitter? Twitter is a social media site for getting information out in the moment and with limited space (140 characters). Pictures and links to websites and Facebook can be inserted. Consider using it as a quick reminder of due dates or deadlines, or as an up-to-the-minute record of what is happening at an event.

Twitter is public, though you may create a private account in which only the followers you approve may view your Twitter page. If you choose to have a public page, there is no expectation of privacy. Private pages are only viewable to your approved followers, but be sure to communicate with your followers that you do not want your tweets to be shared with others. There is no storage of documents. Keep in mind that when tweeting about girl events you may not want to say anything about where you are. But it is a fun way to keep friends and family in the loop about what is happening right now. Older girls can be in charge of tweeting about the camporee throughout the weekend, giving parents a look at what is happening. You could tweet about your next cookie boothing spot, or the deadline to turn in your permission forms.

Twitter Tutorial 2013, four parts, on You Tube by Anson Alex: This tutorial has good information about setting up a Twitter account and then using Twitter. It is not Girl Scout specific.

Part 1: Introduction and User Interface – 12 minutes

Part 2: @ Mentions and Interactions – 10 minutes

Part 3: Using Hashtags – 7 minutes

Part 4: Privacy Settings – 7 minutes

FACEBOOK GROUP

Why Facebook? Facebook is a social media tool used by many people. Its main focus is sharing information and discussion. Discussions are in the moment and can be difficult to find after a few days. Facebook has storage for documents and pictures, but not in an organized way. These items are listed in the order they are uploaded.

Facebook Group – A group account is different than a regular Facebook account. To belong to a Facebook group you must be invited. There are various levels of privacy for groups which are explained in the third link below by Eric Spellman. GSGLA suggests that any Facebook Group that lists personal information such as phone numbers, addresses or locations of girl events is a CLOSED group. Troops should consider only having closed groups. The Open option should be discussed in detail with parents as it is totally public for viewing. Anyone can see everything. Service units might decide to have an OPEN group, but please be very careful about posting personal information, such as a service unit roster.

Facebook Group Instructions: Simple written instructions from Facebook about how to set up a group. A side bar on the left gives additional information about groups and how to administer them. – 15 minutes

Facebook Group Set-Up: This YouTube video has step-by-step directions provided by Tamara Swedberg, a professor at Rutgers University, who demonstrates setting up a group for her class. – 3 minutes

Facebook Group Privacy Settings: This You Tube video by Eric Spellman gives a detailed explanation of the three privacy settings for Facebook Groups. – 4 minutes

SHUTTERFLY SHARE SITE

Why Shutterfly Share sites? These sites are very much like websites. They offer the ability to store information in an organized way. Things like forms and event information can be stored to be accessed by members whenever they are needed. These sites also have the ability to send notifications out to members to remind them of events or commitments they have made.

A Shutterfly Share site can be as simple or varied as you like. It is a free site with no obligations of any kind. It gives you a place to store information such as a roster, calendar, event information, messages, photos, or sign-up sheets in an organized and easily accessible way. Shutterfly Share sites can be "Open" or "Members Only." An Open site can be viewed by anyone in the public who has the site address. In a Members Only site, the members must be added in advance by the administrator and sign-in through their personal Shutterfly log-in. GSGLA recommends Members Only if any personal information is listed such as a group roster, or if location of girl events is posted. This is recommended for all troop accounts.

Types of Shutterfly Share Sites: This Shutterfly-created web page provides information on different types of Shutterfly Share sites: youth groups, families, etc., showing how you can specialize the pages to match your group's needs. You can see sample sites for each kind of Share site. But you can also add or change the types of pages you use once the Share site has been established. There is also a three-minute video that gives a short overview, and a link to start the set-up of your new site.

Share Site Set-Up Instructions: This Shutterfly-created site provides step-by-step instructions for setting up the share site using the left side bar. It also has the option to print a PDF of the instructions. If you want to know all your options for the site in advance, this would a good resource to read through before you begin.

Troop Leader's Experience Using Shutterfly: This link is to a Missouri Girl Scout Leader's Blog, Lora Brinkman – Girl Scout Leader 101. She talks about her experience setting up a Shutterfly Share site for her troop. You will get a leader perspective, but it does not cover all the options that are available for a Share site. She gives some information about using a Share site page for different purposes.

(Note: This document was created by volunteers as a service to Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles (GSGLA) members. Resources listed do not constitute an endorsement of approval by GSGLA for any products, services, opinions of any corporation, organization, or individual. Furthermore, GSGLA bears no responsibility for the accuracy or legality of content presented in these links to third party resources.)

WHAT I NEED FOR MY GIRLS TO ATTEND A....

girl scouts — greater los angeles

Before participating in any activity with girls, verify latest VE & SAC for all requirements.

- **D+** - Daisies and above
- **D1+** - Daisies 1st grade and above
- **B+** - Brownies and above
- **J+** - Juniors and above
- **C+** - Cadettes and above
- **@** - Written notification to parents

Adults Participating in Troop Activities
1. Registered
2. Online Volunteer Application
3. Background screening (print copy for 01)

Review/Check Adult-to-Girl Ratio:
- ✓ Volunteer Essentials (VE)
- ✓ Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC)

Activity	Yearly — Health History and First Aid Kit	Over the Counter & Medication Form	Product Program Agreement Form	Approval — Parent/Guardian Permission Form – SUM or Designee Notification	Parent/Guardian Permission Form – SUM or Designee Approval	Extended Travel and/or High Risk App – SUM, Go-Team, & GSGLA Approval	SEME Application – SUM, Go Team, & GSGLA Approval	Additional Insurance may be needed, check training requirements	Online Modules — About Girl Scouts & Troop Management	Girl Scout Safety & Troop Driver Safety	Troop Finances	Training — First Aid/CPR/AED	Special Event & Money Earning – (SEME)	Indoor Overnight – Taken 6 - 8 weeks before activity	Camping Skills – Taken 4 months before activity	Domestic Troop Travel – Taken 6 months before activity	International Travel – Taken 12+ months before activity
Troop Mtg. – Permission Form (done yearly)	D+	D+	D+	D+					D+	D+	D+						
Troop Mtg. Location Change	D+	D+		@					D+	D+	D+						
Troop Mtg. Day/Time Change – 2 wks	D+	D+	D+	D+					D+	D+	D+						
Day trip – 2 wks	J+	J+			J+			D+	D+	D+	D+	D+					
High Risk - Day or with Overnight – 4 wks	J+	J+			J+	J+		J+	J+	J+	J+	J+					
Product Sales & Boothing	B+	B+	B+						B+	B+	B+						
Group Money Earning – 6 wks	B+	B+	B+				B+		B+	B+	B+	B+	B+				
Run an Event – 6 wks	B+	B+					B+	B+	B+	D1+	D1+	B+	B+				
± 1-2 Nights ▲Local – 4 wks	D1+	D1+		D1+				D1+	D1+	D1+	D1+	D1+		D1+	B+	J+	
± 1-2 Nights ▲Regional – 3 mo	J+	J+		J+	J+			J+	J+	J+	J+	J+		J+	J+	J+	
§ 3+ Nights ▲Local – 4 wks; Regional – 3 mo; National – 6 mo	J+	J+		J+		J+		J+	J+	J+	J+	J+		J+	J+	J+	
▲Int'l Travel – 18 mo (exc. Mexico/Canada -12 mo)	C+	C+		C+		C+		C+	C+	C+	C+	C+		C+	C+	C+	C+

▲Indoor = Homes/Buildings ▲Outdoor = Tents/Campground
▲Regional = California, Arizona, Nevada ▲National = Inside USA borders & US Territories
▲Travel = Hotels/Hostels

± Including Federal Holidays   § Excluding Federal Holidays

Federal Holidays: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King Day; President's Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans' Day; Thanksgiving Day; Christmas Day.

± First Aider Level depends on remoteness of activity and danger involved

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
30 min. or less	First Aid/CPR/AED Adult & Child as defined in VE
30 min. or more	Wilderness First Aider or Higher

▲Local = From San Luis Obispo to San Diego
▲International = Any trip requiring a passport

+ First Aider Level depends on remoteness of activity and danger involved

Rev. 11/2015-3