

PRESS RELEASE

INVESTED IN THEIR COMMUNITY:

Watts Girl Scout Troop Celebrates the Beginning of its Second Year with an Investiture Ceremony at Grape Street Elementary, Dec. 4, 2013; Troop sponsored by LAPD and HACLA

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 4, 2013 – For the second year in a row, several community groups are coming together to support Watts girls—bridging divides and giving girls a number of opportunities to reach their full potential. Supported by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, more than 60 girls will either renew their membership in Girl Scout Troop 19785 or begin their first year in the troop during a special investiture ceremony at Grape Street Elementary School on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2013.

Part of Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles' work in underserved communities is to develop and sustain community partnerships to strengthen membership, engage new volunteers in Girl Scouting, and provide flexible ways to participate for both girls and adults.

Remembering the positive benefits Girl Scouting gave them as children, Grape Street Principal Jera Turner and Vice Principal Judith Jackson formed the troop a year ago with the help of Officer Jesse Ruiz, a part of the Community Safety Partnership division of LAPD, and HACLA. The troop brings together girls from Imperial Courts, a Section 8 public housing project, and other residences in Watts. Ms. Turner and Ms. Jackson are now coordinators of the program, and Grape Street teachers serve as troop leaders after school.

Community support for Girl Scouting in under-served areas such as Watts is important now more than ever, according to a report conducted by the national Girl Scout Research Institute to be released Dec. 4, 2013. The report found that although girls in the United States have made substantial progress in the classroom and elsewhere, persistent disparities and challenges exist that could keep many girls from achieving their full potential. Written in conjunction with the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C., *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business* is the first report of its kind to focus exclusively on girls, and it paints a detailed picture of the social and economic lives that the 26 million American girls ages 5 to 17 lead today.

The report, titled *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business*, charts the often-vast disparities that cleave the girl experience along racial and ethnic lines. For example, the report finds that poverty rates among black/African American, Hispanic/Latina, and Native American girls ages 5 to 17 are more than twice that of white and Asian American girls. In the United States today, 21 percent of all girls live in poverty, and the rates are higher for black/African American girls (37 percent), Hispanic/Latina girls (33 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native girls (34 percent), as compared to white girls (12 percent).

Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls are far more likely than their white counterparts to face an array of socioeconomic hurdles that range from growing up in poverty or a low-income household to dropping out of school and struggling with obesity.

"The key to keep in mind, though, is that data is not destiny," said Judy Schoenberg, a lead researcher at the Girl Scout Research Institute. "As a society we can do something about this. At Girl Scouts of the USA, we are doing something about this, and will continue to develop programs that meet the needs of all today's girls."

Here in Los Angeles, Officer Jesse Ruiz, who helps organize field trips for the troop at Grape Street—including a recent trip in which he took 90 of the girls to Girltopia, Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles' huge expo for girls at the L.A. Convention Center—says that the LAPD investment in the troop was a no-brainer.

"The girls are learning that their life does not have to structure around violence—they are relating to other kids in their community and it's filtering up to the parents who are now communicating better with one another," he said. "They are discovering new skills and learning about the positive avenues they can choose in life. It's a win-win situation."

About Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles:

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles serves more than 40,000 girls in partnership with more than 25,000 volunteers throughout the diverse communities of Los Angeles County and parts of Kern, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. The council's programs engage girls in the areas of Leadership, Arts & Culture, Business Smarts, Environment & Outdoor Adventure, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), and Wellness & Healthy Living. To join, volunteer, reconnect, or support, visit www.girlscoutsLA.org or call 1-888-GSGLA-4-U.

MEDIA NOTES:

- The media is invited to Troop 19785's investiture ceremony, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2:30 p.m., Grape Street Elementary, 1940 E 111th St, Los Angeles, CA 90059. Please contact Melanie Glover: 626-677-2339 or cell 916-833-0579.

###