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Girl Scouts: One of the best values available

"I want the best for my daughter. Part of that means exposing her to activities and programs that will expand her horizons, develop new skills, increase her self-confidence and encourage her dreams. By being a Girl Scout, she is compassionate and caring about others and the community. She can complete tasks, work well with others, and problem-solve. She shows integrity and trustworthiness. Now I am confident that she will accomplish anything she sets her mind to in the future!"

This is a quote from one local dad who is grateful for the comprehensive experience his daughter gets in Girl Scouting -- even before the topic of cost arises. Once he considers the value he gets for his investment, the smile broadens like the Grinch discovering the true meaning of Christmas.

Flyers come home in school folders regularly with opportunities galore for our children. In good times, we might select one or two, because of the cost, in which our kids really want to participate. In our current economic state, though, we're fortunate if we can even let the kids select one. The costs add up faster than we can say "second job."

Here is what I found in a comparison of popular youth activities:

- Soccer: \$40 to \$50 per month.
- Piano: \$55 per month.
- Figure skating: \$100-plus per month.
- Dance: \$100 to \$200 per semester.
- The Girl Scout Leadership Experience: \$1-a-month membership, plus troop dues, events and supplies for the year for a total of \$10 per month.

Does this mean Girl Scouting lacks an equivalent value? Far from it. Girl Scouting has more youth development research behind it than the rest combined, and offers far more decision-making and leadership experiences for its participants. The value is inherent, but subsidized unlike any other.

The actual cost to provide the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to one girl is approximately \$260 per year. But this cost doesn't all fall on parents' shoulders. A large portion falls to the council, as well as community partners like United Way, corporate sponsors, and community members that understand the full and long-term value of rearing strong, well-rounded youth. A portion even falls to the girls themselves, while they build financial literacy skills in the Girl Scout Cookie Sale Program.

Warren Buffet is a brilliant investor. In fact, he is one of the world's most successful investors, with a net worth of \$37 billion. The man understands a good value, and that "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get."

So don't be fooled by the unbelievable price tag. Girl Scouting is the best value available for your daughter, so invest in her value ... and values.

Ann Saris is VP of Brand and Marketing for Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, Inc., serving 24,000 girls and 6,600 volunteers in 58 counties across Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

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