



**For Immediate Release**

November 1, 2008

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According to my calendar of national observances, November is "One Nation Under God" month. This got me thinking. Girl Scouting is one Movement, under god... as the Girl Scout Promise reads "On my honor, I will try to serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout Law." With regard to girls from all regions and races, all religions and tax brackets, Girl Scouting is resolute in its commitment to inclusivity. So committed to diversity and tolerance are we that Girl Scouts of the USA made a seemingly obvious move at its National Council Session nine years ago.

By vote of thousands of volunteer delegates from across the country, the Girl Scout Movement opened its arms and the Promise that girls make to themselves every day to be more inclusive and accepting. When written, the Promise always sites "God" in the first line, but as of 1999, whenever the Promise is spoken by a girl, it is officially acceptable and expected that she will Promise whatever higher power, if any, is in accordance with her own belief system and that of her family.

Ever since this flexibility has been offered to show our sister Girl Scouts that we understand and live "love thy neighbor" and embrace them all in their own image, I have been surprised by the occasional questioning or even ridicule of the intent. Some have seen it as utter 'removal' of God from the Girl Scout Promise and from our founding principles. On the contrary, I have understood it to be an even deeper implantation and infusion of "God", albeit "god", into the ideals of Girl Scouting. Never have I heard of a faith, in its purest sense, whose god did not promote love, understanding, sympathy, tolerance and support of one's neighbors.

As one nation, under a shared vision, let us hope this great country of ours can remain and extend itself as the shining example of a cooperative, collaborative, synergistic, allied, aligned, United country. One nation, under "God", whomever thine neighbor may be referring to. We need all remember that the United States is only an idea in and of itself. It is the spirit and everyday actions of its people, toward those alike as well as those diverse, that enable us to claim to be "united" states, communities and neighborhoods...or not.

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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