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Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, Inc.

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Girl Scouting provides self-discovery

My baby just started Kindergarten. Like any parent, I can't believe how quickly the years pass. And suddenly I feel pressure to get him involved in things, or risk losing that competitive edge we hope will put our kids on the path to a happy, self-reliant life. But which activities? He's a bright-eyed little boy, open to any kind of fun offered! And there's the natural tendency to simply follow the path of older siblings.

So how do I help him begin the process of finding himself, his hidden talents and own interests? How can I deliver the seemingly infinite world of opportunities, in a way that won't overwhelm him or break me financially?

If he were a she, my answer would be Girl Scouts – because I know what amazing experiences are offered and I have a full understanding and confidence in the manner in which it's done. It's in that unique and critical all-girl environment, where the girls lead the way by deciding what direction their own program experience takes.

As I look ahead to the vast array of opportunities being offered in coming months, I see that Girl Scouting truly is the best way for kids to discover themselves, from hobbies that will help them manage stress throughout life, to potential careers that will help them support themselves, to community service that helps them see their role in the big picture. Here is just a quick sample of upcoming opportunities:

- **Into the Woods** – investigating and exploring trees, animals and the environment
- **Amazin' Race** - a teambuilding challenge to solve clues and perform fun tasks
- **Creation Sensation** - painting, sculpting, acting and more
- **Crazy Olympics** – a chance to get active and learn the history of the Olympics
- **GSI (Girl Scouts Investigate)** – girls will collect and examine evidence from a mock crime scene and experience firsthand forensic analysis techniques to solve a mysterious case.
- **Girl University** - a two-day leadership conference for girls 7th-12th grade, with hands-on seminars and activities that will challenge them to solve problems and tap into their leadership potential

Then there's the *Get Your Groove On* dance clinic, *History Mystery*, *Gearing Up* engineering experience, *Sense-ational Relaxation*, *Silly Science*, *Free 2 B Me*, *Passports* (with sessions by university students from the International Speakers Bureau), or *Spike*, *Swing and Swim*, to name a few more.

I can't imagine any better choice than Girl Scouts for girls of all ages to discover their own skills and interests, connect with others of every background, and see that they can make a difference in the world. I guess it's time to call Boy Scouts to see what self-discovery awaits my bright-eyed little boy.

Ann Saris is VP of Brand and Marketing for Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, Inc., serving nearly 20,000 girls and 6,000 volunteers in 58 counties across Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

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