

## Managing Sensitive Issues at Cookie Booths

Occasionally, our volunteers report that community members make statements or ask questions at Girl Scout Cookie booths. Follow these simple steps to address customer concerns.

**1. Be respectful.**

Give those asking questions the respectful treatment that Girl Scouts give to everyone they encounter. Keep the Girl Scout Promise and Law top of mind in everything you do – you are the public face of Girl Scouts!

**2. Make Girl Scout safety and well-being a top priority.**

If sensitive conversations take place, ensure they do not take place in front of girls – step out of earshot, or invite the individual to contact Girl Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) directly. Do your best to ensure pamphlets or other materials are not handed to girls. If at any time you do not feel safe, don't hesitate to notify facility management or, if needed, local law enforcement.

**3. Use Girl Scouts of the USA's (GSUSA) FAQ as needed.**

GSUSA's FAQ, found at <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/footer/faq.html>, provides factual information about many sensitive topics. Before supporting a booth, take a moment to review this information. If you feel comfortable providing facts, you may do so; however, do not feel obligated to engage in sensitive discussions. You are not expected to discuss sensitive topics with customers. You may refer any customer with questions to email the GSNEO Marketing & Communications team at: [marketing@gsneo.org](mailto:marketing@gsneo.org).

If you need talking points or factual information not specifically addressed by GSUSA'S FAQ, please contact GSNEO for specific messaging.

**4. Tell your Girl Scout story!**

You are the face of Girl Scouts in your community (and beyond!) and you have the most direct connection with girls. If you are comfortable doing so and feel it may benefit the conversation, talk about your Girl Scout experience and the benefits you've seen for girls and for yourself. Nothing speaks more strongly to the purpose, values, and impact of Girl Scouts than your personal story. Talk about your experiences with leadership development, outdoors, STEM, life skills ... what you love and value about Girl Scouts!

## Sample Messaging for Sensitive Issues

### Price Increases

For the 2024 Cookie Season, GSNEO increased the price of each cookie package to \$6.00 a box. The extra \$1.00 will be used to give back to troops, while also helping GSNEO with its offering of quality girl programs. The price increase will help offset the impact of the higher costs that have occurred since the last price increase five years ago. Per the troop manual, troops are not permitted to change the price or discount cookies at any time.

### Palm Oil

As you may already be aware, palm oil is found in most baked goods sold in the United States, and it remains a necessary ingredient in our cookies to ensure their shelf life, serve as an alternative to trans fats, and bring consumers the highest quality products, per our licensed bakers. Girl Scouts continues to explore other alternatives to palm oil, but at this time, there are currently no viable or readily available options that would allow us to simply replace it with an alternative oil.

GSUSA's licensed bakers are aiming to achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil products for all Girl Scout Cookies, and they continue to work with their suppliers to explore strategies and determine timelines to achieve this goal. Girl Scouts and our licensed bakers have been members of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) for nearly 10 years. RSPO is a not-for-profit organization that works to enforce these environmental and ethical standards in parts of the world where we are not present. *(RSPO ensures our bakers are sourcing palm oil from reputable, ethical, and sustainable producers by auditing farms and decertifying and decommissioning those that are not adhering to these strict guidelines.)*

### Planned Parenthood

Girl Scouts has no relationship with Planned Parenthood and does not plan to create one. Girl Scouts does not take a position on or develop materials about human sexuality, birth control, and abortion. Our role is to help girls develop self-confidence and good decision-making skills that will help them make wise choices in all areas of their lives. Parents or guardians make all decisions regarding program participation that may be considered sensitive nature. GSNEO suggests that staff and volunteer leaders get written parental permission for any locally planned program that could be considered sensitive.

### Fundraising

We follow our governing documents regarding fundraising for other organizations and causes. Our policies state that Girl Scouts or volunteers may not fundraise for purposes other than Girl Scouting. In extraordinary circumstances, these fundraising restrictions are lifted for a specific amount of time. Most recent examples of lifting fundraising restrictions include support for people impacted by natural disasters as well as support for children impacted in Ukraine and the Israel-Gaza wars.