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Girl Scouts®

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE . . .

**GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS THROUGHOUT THE HUDSON VALLEY
MAKE HISTORIC TRANSFORMATION**

For the past two years, girls and adults in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties have been among thousands nationwide who voiced their opinions and shared ideas to decide the future direction of Girl Scouting. The conclusion: the organization, which since 1912 has inspired 50 million girls and women, must seize the opportunity to revitalize the Girl Scout Movement to remain compelling, contemporary and relevant to today's girls.

On Aug. 26, 2006, Girl Scouts of the USA's (GSUSA) National Board of Directors voted to endorse a plan to realign 312 councils into 109 high-performance, community-based councils. The new structure will make the most effective use of resources to better serve the local community and create more opportunities in Girl Scouting for even more girls. As part of this national realignment, Girl Scouts of Dutchess County, Rockland County Girl Scout Council, Sarah Wells Girl Scout Council, Girl Scouts of Ulster County and Girl Scouts of Westchester/Putnam will join to form one Girl Scout council serving 35,000 girls by October 2007.

"By merging with the other councils, we will be combining our strengths into a new organization with exceptional potential. This alliance will make it possible for us to provide even better programs, more opportunities and better service to the most important piece of our organization -- the girls," stated Barbara Sampson, Executive Director of the Sarah Wells Girl Scout Council.

Jane Goldwasser, President of the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of Westchester*Putnam echoes Sampson's excitement, "Forming a new council with Dutchess, Ulster, Rockland and Westchester Putnam will create an enhanced Girl Scout experience consistent with the Girl Scout Mission to build girls with courage, confidence and character who will make the world a better place."

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“In a country as culturally diverse as America, Girl Scouting, and our philosophy of leadership, must be inclusive and respond to the needs of girls from all communities, cultures and walks of life,” commented Patricia Diaz Dennis, Chair, GSUSA National Board of Directors. “Thanks to the collective vision and support of the entire Girl Scout Movement, Girl Scouting has demonstrated what it means to truly listen to girls and react in a way that will most positively meet their individual needs.”

Under the leadership of GSUSA CEO Kathy Cloninger, who took office in 2004, the transformation began by asking girls and adults from throughout the Girl Scout community what they want and need from Girl Scouting today.

“From the very beginning, this process has been a partnership between the national organization and our local councils. Our first step was to reach out to as many people as possible – girls, volunteers, staff members from throughout the organization – to hear their ideas on the future direction of the organization,” says Cloninger. “For the past two years, we have taken those ideas and shaped a strategy that is transforming every aspect of Girl Scouting while refocusing on what, historically, has always been our biggest strength: developing leadership skills in girls.

Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson, Inc. will serve more than 34,000 girls in seven counties in the Hudson Valley. For more information about Girl Scouting and how you can get involved, call the council office at **914-747-308** or visit our website at www.girlscoutshh.org.

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