



## 55<sup>TH</sup> National Council Session Journal

### Re-imagining the NCS

### October 23 – 25, 2020

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December 2020

Held every three years, the National Council Session (NCS) brings Girl Scouts' democratic process to life in a big way. For one weekend this year, October 23 through October 25, over 1100 delegates from across 111 councils across the nation and GSUSA Girl Scouts Overseas came together virtually – our first ever virtual NCS – to discuss, debate, and vote on issues important to the Girl Scout Movement and elect national leaders for the 2020-2023 triennium. This year, a record number of girl members – approximately 400 – aged 14 to 17 represented their councils as delegates. Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson (GSHH) was represented by three young women.

The NCS ties into Girl Scouts' long history of civics education, a history that found new momentum this summer with the launch of new civics badges.

Our National Delegation and other delegations, volunteers, and lifetime members joined with our Girl Scout sisterhood to watch Girl Scout history being made. The 2020 event was like no other in our Girl Scout history. Grab a cup of coffee or tea, settle yourself in a comfortable chair with a warm afghan, and read all about this year's historic event from the perspective of our National Delegation.



**Although we couldn't meet in person, our spirits weren't dampened. Each National Delegate received a "spirit box" from GSUSA full of many goodies and swag to get us inspired!**

**The candy and cookies got us through some very LONG debate sessions!**

# Proposals

Proposal	Result
1. Gold Award Scholarship Foundation Task Group	Adopted as Amended
2. Constitutional Amendment on Membership Dues (Article IX)	Adopted as Presented
3. Adoption of a Procedure for Communication on Dues Actions by the National Board	Adopted as Amended
4. Membership Dues Increase Restriction	Adopted as Amended
5. Constitutional Amendment on Consistency in Delegate Terms (Article IV Section 7)	Adopted as Presented
6. Lifetime Membership Discount	Adopted as Presented

## Proposition 1

That the National Council establish a task group overseen by GSUSA and 2 council representatives, that includes volunteers, council staff, GSUSA Board members, and GSUSA representatives, charged with examining the feasibility of developing a college scholarship foundation to benefit Gold Award Girl Scouts. The task group will report back for a vote at the 2023 NCS on the feasibility, recommendation and timeline for potential establishment of the foundation by the 2023 National Council Session. All members of this task force shall be appointed by the GSUSA Board of Directors.

## Proposition 2

Every person accepting the principles of the Girl Scout Movement and desiring to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America shall pay annual, lifetime, or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. Dues are set by the National Council or the National Board. The National Board shall implement procedures for communicating with and seeking input from Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates prior to any membership dues change by the National Board.

## Proposition 3

Prior to any vote by the National Board to change membership dues structure or amount, Girl Scouts of the USA shall communicate with and seek input from all local Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates on the proposed changes, intended use of the funds, and potential impact on the Girl Scout Movement. After action is taken by the National Board, there shall be a report to all local Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates of the decision taken and the impact of the dues change.

## Proposition 4

In order to be a member of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States of America, a person must register with and pay annual, lifetime or other applicable membership dues to Girl Scouts of the United States of America. This is done locally through the Girl Scout council of USA Girl Scouts Overseas committee with which she or he is affiliated or through national headquarters if she or he has no council affiliation. The National Board of Directors must obtain approval from the National Council whenever a planned dues increase will result in dues increasing more than a total of 25% in any one triennium. Girl Scout councils account for membership dues in the custodian fund and transmit to GSUSA within two months of receipt all monies received for membership dues. These funds are not to be invested by the council for the purpose of generating income for the council.

### Proposition 5

Subject to the requirements of the preceding sections of this article, delegates elected by local councils shall be elected in the calendar year preceding the National Council Session and shall serve as members of the National Council for three years from the date of their election or until their successors are elected, provided they remain the delegates of the local council which elected them; delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas shall serve as members for three years from the date of their selection or until their successors are selected, provided they remain delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas; members of the National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee shall be members of the National Council during their term of office; those persons elected by the National Council shall serve until the next regular session of the National Council.

### Proposition 6

Lifetime members pay \$400 lifetime membership dues at the time they become lifetime members; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who was a registered Girl Scout member before the age of 18 and is under the age of 30 at the time of becoming a lifetime member; discounted lifetime membership dues of \$200 shall be offered to anyone who is a registered member and has served as a volunteer for a period of 10 or more years at the time of becoming a lifetime member.

### Did you know?

The National Council is composed of:

- Delegates elected by chartered Girl Scout councils
- Delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas
- Members of the National Board of Directors
- Members of the National Board of Directors
- Members of the National Board Development Committee
- Past presidents of Girl Scouts of the USA
- Other persons as may be elected by the National Council

The total membership of the National Council shall not exceed 1500 and at least four-fifths of the entire membership shall consist of delegates from local councils and from USA Girl Scouts Overseas. A formula is used to determine how many delegates each council may send to the National Council Session. This same formula is also used to select delegates to represent USA Girl Scouts Overseas.



## **2017 NCS? 2020 NCS? What a difference three years makes!**

By Pat Allen, Maureen Delia Connolly, Liz Poling-Hiraldo

This 55th National Council Session was unlike any other due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While GSUSA's constitution states that the NCS must be held in person, the National Board added an emergency provision to allow us to hold this triennial session online. As former delegates, Maureen, Pat, and I wondered how this experience would compare to the 2017 NCS...

The similarities to previous years ended with debating and voting. Aside from those items, there really was no comparison. For starters, thanks to Zoom, the preparation for the NCS was much more thorough than in the past. Both GSUSA and other unofficial Delegate groups offered an ongoing schedule of online meetings to learn about the proposals, express opinions, meet the Board candidates and learn how to use the virtual technology. Because Delegates had an opportunity to express their views to GSUSA Board Members in these sessions before the NCS, the Board actually changed their position on two of the Proposals and endorsed them after having initially said they did not support them. I think this extensive preparation, in addition to several Delegate Facebook Groups, had both a positive and negative effect. While it was a plus that more Delegates were well informed, I think it shortened Delegates' interest in debating the proposals during the NCS which resulted in many motions to end debate before it had even started.

The NCS was primarily business focused, but our own delegation took advantage of Zoom meetings and chats amongst ourselves not only to get educated and form our own stance on the proposals but to bond as a group and get to know each other.

Unfortunately due to the virtual nature of the event, there weren't as many "fun" sessions for the delegates. At the last NCS, a lot of effort went into making the in-person experience more than just business. Missing this year were the Hall of Experiences, workshops, live entertainment, notable speakers and delegate receptions as well as free chair massages in the Lifetime Member Lounge! There was no special G.I.R.L. experience for our girl delegation, which was a highlight in 2017. (We really enjoyed seeing the girls having fun and bonding as part of that.) However, there was a "Sing Along Room" that was very active and a "Singing After Dark" event as well.

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Because of this, the energy surrounding NCS was also different. The huge sense of connection, of being part of something bigger than just GSHH was definitely not the same. We couldn't run into Board Members in the hallway between sessions, take a pic with Judith Batty or get Kathy Hopinkah's patch, SWAP with others, or meet other delegates over dinner. Seeing a city transformed with signs of Girl Scouting – Girl Scout themed specials at restaurants, scavenger hunts for the delegates, G.I.R.L. signage all over – can obviously not be translated to an online experience. There was one Zoom meeting for delegates to meet each other but that paled compared to singing in person, seeing old friends from across the country, and making new ones during dinner. GSUSA sent all of the Delegates "spirit" boxes with tea, candy, cookies, a water bottle, and pom-poms to help set the mood. This was a very nice and welcome touch and we also received our 2020 GIRL Orlando Pins which will always bring a little laugh because we never stepped foot in Orlando!

With all of the focus on prep work and technology, the expectation for the sessions to run smoothly was high. Overall, it went well but there were a few technical issues with voting. To their credit, the tech team quickly recognized the issues and immediately set to work to resolve them. On the first day of voting, each vote took between 7 - 10 minutes, so we had a lot of time sitting around but we soon figured out that vote tabulation time was a good opportunity for a bathroom break! They shortened the voting time the next evening, which helped a bit.

Voting and debating were interesting. In person, you can see who is in line at a microphone but online you just see a list of names. We started to recognize names of

Delegates who managed to regularly find their way into the queue ahead of others and could begin to predict what they planned to say or propose. As mentioned before, it was quite common for Delegates to propose closing down debate and forcing a vote, instead of hearing arguments out. This happened more and more as the hour got later. There was also a bit of confusion over what the "Interrupting" microphone was for which was a learning experience for many.

With over 1100 Delegates voting, the importance of each vote was highlighted when one motion failed by just one vote and another by just two votes! In addition, on one occasion, a Delegate disagreed with the ruling of the chairperson and moved to appeal the ruling, which passed, and the decision of the chair was overturned. Democracy in action!

On Sunday evening, a Delegate moved to push two proposals to 2023. We spent close to two hours debating and voting on whether or not those proposals should be moved. In the end, it was decided to vote on those proposals rather than postponing them, and we were all frustrated that we had wasted time arguing instead of doing. Another Delegate asked how much it would cost to close things down and reconvene the group at a different point in time, which was disappointing in its short-sightedness. The Farthest North Council also nominated a Board Member from the floor which required us to vote individually for Board Members, rather than voting on a slate. All of these things added to the time and we couldn't help but think about how they would have been handled in person with Delegates needing breaks for meals and having flights to catch on Sunday.

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We heard as much from or more from the Girl Delegates this year. But while the Girls seemed more comfortable with the technology, those from other councils were sometimes coached too much or not enough. We often thought that they were presenting ideas for their adult delegations and not really speaking for themselves. That being said, we were impressed with a number of well-spoken and thoughtful Girl Delegates.

This is not to say that there weren't humorous moments throughout the convention. Outgoing Board Officer Sharon Matthews kept our spirits up by keeping us apprised of her step count and her proposed snacks. As a presiding officer she was sharp-witted and humorous. And then we had a rogue Delegate who called in, apparently from a diner, and ranted incoherently until he was shut down and she kept her cool. While most of us were dressed very comfortably and casually, there were some Delegates that wore their uniforms. This is a stark contrast to the in person NCS where everyone is in full uniform and showing off their pins and patches!



Fortunately for our delegation, we had set up a Group.ME chat that enabled us to confer with each other, as well as to pass the time by engaging in the type of banter we would have if we were in person. GSHH was incredibly generous and provided us with UberEATS vouchers so that we could get a nice meal during the session-and unlike an in-person NCS, we could eat and drink through the entire business session! We had Zoom regroup calls to discuss what had happened and to prepare for what was coming next. We exchanged SWAPS by mail. We realized throughout the convention that we were solid in our knowledge of the issues at hand and that as Delegates we were taking our roles seriously in voting for what we felt was good for the movement as a whole.

That being said, we felt that the democratic process worked as intended, although GSUSA has work to do with building trust with certain councils. Due to all of the pre-NCS virtual meetings we felt more prepared than in prior years. We hope that some of the same types of virtual meetings prior to the NCS are continued but certainly look forward to an in person gathering in Orlando in July of 2023. The shift from October to July was made to allow more Girl Delegates to attend and not have to miss school, which will make it much more feasible for them to attend. More Girl Delegates are sure to make it a vibrant and energetic NCS and we can't wait!

## GSUSA leadership for the 2020-2023 triennium

### OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	Karen P. Layng
<b>First Vice President</b>	Jeanne Kwong Bickford
<b>Second Vice President</b>	Norrain Khan
<b>Treasurer</b>	Valarie Gelb
<b>Secretary</b>	Rachel Roche Walton

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Mary Ann Altergott	Sue Major	Trooper Sanders
Beth Bovis	Lydia Mallett	Earl Simpkins Jr
Eileen Drake	Rumi Morales	Zeta Smith
Wendy Drummond	Brit Morin	Leslee A. Temple
Vivette Henry	Marcus Peacock	Cynthia Teniente-Matson
Vidya Krishnan	Edmond C. Rastrelli	Diane Tipton
Rose Littlejohn	Erika Rotttenberg	Maryann Waryjas

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Vicki Gardner	Lleana Musa
Lorraine Hack	Debbie Nielson

### NON-BOARD MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Felecia Gilmore-Long
Robyn Ratcliffe Manzini
Monica Martinez



## A young woman's view

By Jolie Santiago

With 2020 being the time of virtual settings, Girl Scouts of the United States of America had to quickly transition to an online version of NCS. They did an excellent job of putting it together in a short time. I know a lot of work went into it and for it to still happen was great, because there have been a lot of cancelled events since the pandemic started.

Before starting the convention, I opened DirectVoteLive, our voting platform and Hopin, what we used to view the event. On Hopin were the microphones, where people would click on the one they wanted and either chat or ask to speak. It was very organized and user-friendly. Along with the tech team directing us where to go before the event began, it was almost impossible to be lost.

I enjoyed the NCS opening with the parade of the flags, because I did not know all those places had Girl Scouts. It is a beautiful thing to see. My favorite quote from Kathy Hopinkah, now former Board President, was "The world needs Girl Scouts more than ever" and I totally agree.

Meeting one ran over schedule because of the debate on whether the standing rules for debate should remain at 45 minutes per proposal. It was a tough decision considering 45 minutes seemed so short in order to get enough people to speak and maybe too long because this time did not include technical difficulties. Once we got over that hump, we continued the night and I heard about the WAGGGS report. It was very interesting to me to hear about this, because it gave never before insight to how amazing our Girl Scouts are around the world.

After this we began proposal 1, which I thought was going to be the proposal everyone agreed on. However, some were confused on what the proposal called for and this goes back to preparation. I believe if we were all educated on the proposals in depth, we could save time on answering the generic questions. The next proposals in the following days had very brief debate. I did not like this, because I wanted to hear people's arguments for what they believe should be the wording or occur with each proposal. Since this process was taking a long time, there were delegates who called the previous question, meaning vote on if we should end the debate. This rush to close the debate was not ideal, but I understood people were tired. However, as National Delegates we had to keep in mind this would go long and be a trooper.

Before NCS, I created my council's Group.ME chat, so we could communicate quickly as if we were sitting at our table in Orlando. It turned out to be a hit! I loved talking to everyone and making sure we were on the same page about certain things. We were there for each other when we had questions or if there was a technical difficulty. It was also entertaining because we could laugh together at those funny moments during the convention.

Finally, I am so glad we finished debating all the proposals rather than pushing any of them to 2023's agenda. Personally, I favored the outcomes. This was my first time being a National Delegate and participating in a virtual convention. It gave me so much insight to the Girl Scout organization that I never knew being an actual Girl Scout. I am grateful for my chance to continue being a part of the Girl Scout organization and voicing my opinion as a young woman.

## Get to know your national delegation!

**Liz Poling-Hiraldo, Gina O'Shaughnessy, Marie Reger, and Nicole Zlotnikov rounded out our National Delegation. Behind the scenes, Hada Reed was our council liaison to GSUSA.**



**Patricia Allen**

I started my Girl Scout experience 50 years ago as a Brownie in Syracuse, NY. My Mom was my leader and I absolutely loved being a Brownie, especially wearing my uniform. I continued in Girl Scouting through high school, earning my First Class, and helped lead a troop while I was in college. I then became my daughter's Brownie Leader when she was in 1st grade and guided the troop through their senior year in high school. I have such fond memories of camping and traveling with the girls and watching them grow and take on more responsibility. Just a few years into leading, I became the SU Manager (Community Director I think it was called then) for Larchmont Mamaroneck and over the years added the roles of Annual Giving Chair, Recruiter, Registrar, Council Trainer and "House Manager." I have also been an active member of the GSHH Spring Luncheon Committee. I'm a Lifetime Member and a member of the Juliette Gordon Low Society.

Many of the highlights of my Girl Scout journey include travel. I participated in two International Wider Opportunities when I was in High School (Mexico City and the British Virgin Islands) and have visited Our Cabana, Our Chalet, PAX Lodge and Sangam. I attended the 1978 National Convention in Denver as a Senior Girl Scout and was thrilled to meet Dr. Gloria Scott, GSUSA Board President. Then in 2017 I served as a National Delegate representing GSHH at the NCS in Columbus and was able to meet Dr. Scott again and share a photo of the two of us from back in 1978! I feel that one of my biggest contributions to Girl Scouting was to oversee the financing and construction of a handicap ramp and ADA bathroom at the Larchmont Girl Scout House and was honored to receive the Thanks Badge as recognition for that work. Two bright spots in 2020 were receiving my 50 year pin and of course serving as a National Delegate for the first ever virtual NCS. Girl Scouting has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember and I am excited that I am able to continue to contribute to this amazing organization.



**Andrea  
LaMantia**

My Girl Scout journey began as a Brownie at St. Clare's School in the Bronx. It was exciting because I could show off my uniform every Friday instead of the school one. My mother was my leader, and she too wore her uniform proudly. She was ahead of her time because she modeled courage, confidence, character and to make the world a better place. That was evident on our sleepaways to Camp Henry Kaufman. My city-girl momma knew nothing about the outdoors but made sure I was a G.I.R.L. (She still does at age 93!) In 1962, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Girl Scouts was celebrated at the Bronx Armory. It was the first time I realized Girl Scouts was a BIG deal. Shortly thereafter, I moved to Rockland County and joined the troop at my new school. Mom got to retire. We spent a lot of time exploring Camp Addisone Boyce. Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene put my skills to the test when I was without power, heat and water for a week each time.

High school took me on a different journey. My theater interest time commitment took me away from scouting but only for a little while. After college, I volunteered by doing art and crafts workshops at CAB and badge work in the conference room at my workplace. My oldest daughter joined Daisies in Kindergarten, and I was cookie chair. Two years later, I started a Daisy troop for my twin daughters that stayed together till graduation. Very early on, I became a council delegate for the West Nyack Service Unit, and I chaired the Adult Recognition and Awards Committee for the legacy council. After the merger (long after my daughters graduated), I continued as a Council Delegate, the Annual Giving Chair for WNSU and serve on the council's Adult Recognition and Awards Committee.

I've received the Volunteer of Excellence, Appreciation and Honor Pins, and Thanks Badge. Some of my proudest GS moments are when I celebrated Women's History Month, March 2012 with a tribute to Juliet Gordon Lowe - the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Girl Scouts on my classroom hallway bulletin board, when I recently overheard my adult daughters discussing how positively Girl Scouting impacted their lives and when I was selected to serve as a National Delegate.



**Fay Casatuta**

My journey as a Girl Scout began as a Brownie in Mrs. Watzka's troop in St. Joseph's School in Ulster County and continued through freshman year of high school with Mrs. Lovey's troop. My love of the outdoors, growth in leadership, and a commitment to service had its roots in my early Girl Scouting years. Although I never earned higher awards as a girl, I did earn my Regina Coeli award, which is a Diocesan Award offered to help girls become more aware of God's presence in their home, Girl Scout troop, and community under the care and protection of the Blessed Mother. I was honored and humbled to travel to NYC with my mother and grandmother to receive this award at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Fast forward many decades later when Girl Scouting found me again as a single career woman in my 30s and then as a married raising a son. At a time when I was looking for a place to plant my desire for community service, a troop of 10 Brownies fell into my life. And it's been a heck of a rollercoaster ride ever since! Those Brownies, who I stayed with through high school graduation, are now fine young women in their own rights with their own careers and families. I take great pride having been part of their lives as they grew from girls to young women, knowing I had a small role in shaping the fine women they are today.

I'm a Lifetime Member who, in addition to being a Troop leader, has served the New Oaks SU in many capacities, from event chair for a variety of events through a rotating door of varied Service Team positions, finally landing as SU Manager for many years. In parallel, on a council level I've served on several task forces and committees through the years, as well as a Council Delegate. In 2007 I represented a legacy council, on the Council Realignment Committee that ultimately resulted GSHH. In 2011 I chaired the GSHH Centennial Celebration at Dutchess Stadium.

I've had the honor of serving as a National Delegate for a legacy council in 2008, and then again in 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2020 for GSHH. Of course, serving in 2020 was like no other -- all virtual!

I served on the Board of Directors from 2012-2018 and currently serve as the Board President.

I'm a recipient of the Outstanding Leader, Outstanding Volunteer, Appreciation and Honor pins, Thanks Badge I and Thanks Badge II, and President's Volunteer Service Award (Gold). I'm a member of the Juliette Gordon Low Society.



**Merrill McGarity**

My Girl Scout journey began in 2009 when I became a leader for my daughter's Girl Scout troop. The troop is still together and just bridged to Ambassadors. It's been exciting being part of their Girl Scout experience and watching them grow into amazing G.I.R.L.s who have earned their Bronze, Silver, and are going for Gold! I am so proud of them! I am committed to the Girl Scout movement and volunteer in roles in addition to being a troop leader. I am part of the SU team, SU cookie co-chair, Silver Award Mentor, SU Delegate, and National Delegate. I can't wait to see what comes next.



**Robin Stoutenburg**

Hello! My name is Robin Stoutenburg. I'm a mom to three girls, live in Ulster County, and work as the Director of Marketing for a Wealth Management Company. I also have a consulting business where I am an event coordinator and work with people all over the Northeast.

I began my Girl Scout journey six years ago when I became a volunteer for my eldest daughter's Daisy troop. Since then my role has evolved into Cookie Parent, Troop Leader, fundraising coordinator, and now National Delegate. I'm excited to share my passion of empowering young women, and inspire those who want to make a change in the world. I look forward to a long and fulfilling experience with GSHH.



**Joanne Casella**

Girl Scouting is in my blood! I was told by many I bleed green! I started as a Girl Scout in the early 60s in my elementary school. I was placed on a waiting for many years before a troop had room for me. As a young girl I found Girl Scouting was just what I needed in my life. To insure I would always be a part of the movement I convinced my mother to become a leader of the schools Cadette troop. I think she had more fun as she continued as leader when I moved on to a Senior troop. I was glad to find a Senior troop in another area. I am a part of the special group of Girl Scouts as I am a First Class scout. I enjoyed all the perks of being a Senior Girl Scout. As a troop we traveled to many new places, broadening my horizons.

After graduating high school I took over as a leader of my old Cadette troop. It was easy as I was a helper in that troop while I was a Senior scout. To keep the girls in scouting I also started a Senior troop in my area so the girls would still remain in scouting. It was the best of both worlds to have the two troops meeting together and having the older girls help the younger girls, as well as having the younger girls look up to the older girls and see what was ahead if they continued in Girl Scouting. One of the highlights as a Senior leader was having one of the first Gold Girl Scouts in NYC.

Once I started teaching I started three troops and recruited others to become leaders. When I moved out of NYC I left all those troops in good hands.

When my daughter was born I knew I had a future Gold Girl Scout which happened as she was the first in that service unit. My daughter went troop camping at a year old -- she was the troop mascot for all my NYC troops. When she was five, I started the Daisy troop in her school. We had 28 girls in that troop -- I would never say no to any girl as there was always room for one more. My son at age three use to sing he was a Daisy Boy Scout as he always a part of the troop meetings.

I finally became a Lifetime Member in the 90s and have continued in scouting to help where I am needed in many different ways such as trainer, Gold Award mentor and National Delegate. I have been blessed with grandsons, but my hope someday is that I will be blessed with a future Girl Scout offspring as there is green in my blood!



**Maureen Delia Connolly**

My name is Maureen Delia Connolly and I am a Lifetime Member. I've been a Girl Scout for 35 years and volunteer for over 25 years. I love being part of the Girl Scout Sisterhood. I have camped at Camp Kaufmann, Camp Andre Clark, Rock Hill Camp, Camp Ludington, Camp Addisone Boyce and Camp Wendy. Rock Hill is my home away from home, having spent 15 years as summer camp staff and raising my daughters there! I have facilitated primitive camping for both leaders and girls. I love the outdoors and hope to kick off a Trailblazers Program soon. I helped develop Scavenger Hunt Hikes including Letterboxing and Geocaching for families during the lockdown and have been hosting monthly hikes for my Service Unit since we were allowed to meet in-person including a night hike to a fire tower.

My mother was a Girl Scout and my daughters are both Lifetime Members. One earned her Silver and one her Silver and Gold. Next year their daughters will be Daisies! I have been a SU Manager for 14 years and a SU Cookie Chair for even longer. I was a Troop Leader for my daughters. I really love cookies! I manage a Cookie Cupboard out of my living room! My husband is a very patient man.

My passion in Girl Scouts is the girls and the program but I am committed to the local and national organization. I have been a Council Delegate for over 15 years and this is my 2<sup>nd</sup> term as a National Delegate. I attended the latest Virtual/Orlando and Columbus Conventions as a National Delegate and Salt Lake City Convention as a visitor.

I try to be a positive influence for Girl Scouts on Facebook and I am always willing to help a girl, leader, parent or Service Unit! Feel free to reach out!



**Jolie Santiago**

I started second grade at George Miller Elementary School in Nanuet and my mother put me in Girl Scout troop 40211. She did this in hopes I would make friends at my new school. I was very happy to be there. The meetings were right after school with snacks and games. We would sit around the carpet looking into our Brownie Quest Journey books. My favorite memory as a Brownie was selling cookies outside Pathmark and it was so cold, so everyone was bundled up. I decided that I wanted to wear the cookie costume and by adding this extra layer, I really did look like a cookie. I was having a great time getting customers to buy boxes. Then, all the girls were wearing the cookie costume and we were bonding. Girls I met there are my close friends today.

As I moved up in Girl Scouts, we would do plenty of activities. The ones that I loved the most were the physical ones like rock climbing, zip lining, archery, flying squirrel and high rope courses. My troop went to Frost Valley YMCA a couple of times and that is where I could do all of that in one place. Girl Scouts taught me things about myself that I am so glad I learned at a young age such as my likes/dislikes, communication, kindness, confidence and so much more.

I remained a Girl Scout through middle school and high school even when it was not "cool". I saw Girl Scouts being more than just an after school activity, but something that was bettering me. I think if more girls thought of it that way, more would have stayed. I wish they did as our troop became smaller. I continued participating and supplying my input during meetings and through our group chat. We did a breakfast run and other volunteer activities that solidified my love for helping people. I have taken a lot of career tests to understand what I could do later in life. On every test it has told me I should go into altruistic careers like social worker, disability care, elementary school teacher, etc. While I see myself doing those things, I want to help people in another way. As a journalist, I want to give people the news that they did not know. I wanted to be a journalist since freshman year of high school. Girl Scouts helped me with this because as I learned to understand myself, I learned what I liked to do. I was talking with others and listening to them (what interviews are), researching my journeys (information has to be credible, so research is imperative) and enjoying being on my feet bracing the heat or cold (journalists do that).

After 11 years I said goodbye to my Girl Scout sisters as we bridged over to Adult Girl Scouts and headed to college. Our last bridging ceremony was not supposed to be virtual, but this is the time we are living in now. I was elected to be a National Delegate for GSHH in March 2020. Since then, I have worked with amazing women as we prepared for the National Council Session. I had a great time as I participated in my first virtual convention and really saw the democratic process before my eyes. Since being elected, I appeared on "S'mores Talk" for their first episode. It was a lot of fun to talk to the Cadette, Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts. So far I have had plenty of opportunities brought to me through being a National Delegate. I am continuing to work hard and represent GSHH as we navigate through special times. Thank you for everyone's support and I will continue to make you all proud.

## First timers perspective

By Andrea LaMantia, Merrill McGarity,  
Robin Stoutenberg

It's finally your opportunity to be a National Delegate and you're going to ORLANDO. How exciting – Orlando! The little kid came out of each of us...and then the convention went virtual.

Here we were, new delegates in a new virtual NCS world. It was pretty scary. Merrill worried, "Having a virtual NCS could have led to being very isolated and not connected to other delegates." Andrea felt overwhelmed when she received an email with "A First Timer's Guide," seven pages of instructions and links that seemed impossible to wade through along with an 81-page workbook. Robin was concerned that in the absence of in-person training, she would never be fully prepared to vote on the proposals.

How could we have doubted an organization that is built on leadership? GSUSA worked miracles to successfully prepare us. However, we can all testify it was the outstanding leadership and support from GSHH Board President Fay Casatuta that truly made us a well-informed and connected group of delegates. Merrill noted, "Fay was instrumental in making sure that we were prepared and had all of the information that we needed." Fay turned key information within minutes of receiving it from GSUSA. She connected us to Facebook pages across the country and she arranged for us to meet with five nearby councils in New Jersey and Pennsylvania to broaden our perspectives.

Most importantly, she valued all of our opinions graciously and patiently. Andrea confided in Merrill, "Do you think we will have any purpose or will the experienced delegates overshadow us?" Anything could have been farther from the truth. Our experienced sister scouts were most encouraging and mentored us while they shared their trepidations about a virtual convention as well.

Some of our takeaways:

- ★ We all agreed GSUSA did an amazing online preparation which we hope will remain in practice for the next in-person NCS.

- ★ Collectively, as newcomers, we were very impressed by the girl involvement during debates. Robin said, "Listening to the girls speak so eloquently reminds us why we are so involved in this outstanding organization."

- ★ We recognized that some delegates were not as well-prepared as they should have been. They asked questions that were clearly answered either in our NCS Workbook or during the virtual trainings. It was difficult to envision the in-person pro/con proposal debates because the virtual set-up needed to be controlled in a specific way to comply with Robert's Rules, which took a lot of extra time.

Being part of the democratic process in action was very impressive, and we all hope to attend NCS again. The convention ran very late Sunday night, but we were already in our PJs and not running to catch a flight. All in all, we had an amazing three days staying connected with our council delegates the entire time by the Group.ME chat – when it was over; it was like saying goodbye at the airport.

## Success!

By Fay Casatuta

The 2020 NCS was a total success. With more than 1100 delegates on a virtual platform, we were able to get down to business, navigate through parliamentary procedure, and complete our work. Was it cumbersome, difficult, and frustrating? Of course. There are always those who are negative, who just want to quit, who think something isn't fair. But at the end of a long weekend in front of my laptop, bleary eyed, binge eating, wrapped in my comfy PJs and afghan late at night with a cup of tea nearby and "talking" with my fellow GSHH delegates through our Group.ME chat, all six proposals were adopted and I know I made a difference. My voice and the voices of our delegation were heard. We made the Girl Scout Movement better.

I'm sad we were unable to meet in-person as in past years. I missed the special speakers and breakout seminars and workshops from previous NCSs and conventions. I missed dinners catching up with friends from across the country and dinners with new friends. I missed the Hall of Experiences. I missed the late night sing along. And, I missed the SWAP exchanges.

But our National Delegation is an inventive contingent – thanks to Merrill's enthusiasm and organization we DID exchange swaps among ourselves through "snail mail". I felt the excitement I felt as a girl all those years ago receiving a package in the mail and opening it to find beautiful swaps made with love by my sister Girl Scouts.

Despite missing the usual trappings of an in-person NCS and convention, this NCS still sent me back to "normal" life (well...as "normal" as life can be these days – after all, it is 2020) with a renewed sense of dedication, albeit with some soreness and stiffness from sitting in front of my laptop for hours. But, in the end, I know I made a difference. I changed Girl Scout policy for the better. I am motivated for the challenges, opportunities and successes ahead.

Although our National Delegation was unable to meet in person, I feel connected to them. We all joined together in Zoom meetings to prepare for the NCS and chatted throughout the weekend using our Group.ME chat. We gained insight into everyone's personalities and needs. We bonded over shared experiences, a shared love of Girl Scouting and a world gone crazy! And when it's safe to do so, we WILL meet in person to celebrate new friendships!

### Make New Friends



## G.I.R.L. 2020!

By Jolie Santiago

During NCS, it did not feel like there were portions just for the girls, but more like everything was for everyone. There were wonderful videos that really inspired me to do more in my own community. The young women who received their Gold Award had projects that gave solutions to serious problems. They were clever and significant. I know everyone felt proud because those young women are Girl Scouts.

Also, by including the sing-along and singing after dark at the convention, there was a connection we all needed. Initially I thought the girls would be the only ones participating in this activity, but for the time I was on I saw mostly adults. I was like, "Wow! This is so cute!"



Girls and young women were part of the entire NCS process, which made me feel very included. After a lot of prepping I felt ready to engage in the conference. I did so when I was listening, taking notes in my Girl Scout designated notebook, voting, seconding and using our council's Group.ME chat. My council really made me feel like I was one of them. Usually when there is an age difference in groups, those older tend to take the lead and can be condescending. I have been in situations like that, but throughout this entire time I did not experience that once with GSHH.

Also, we are not told how to vote on the proposals or what to say when we go to the microphone. This is important, because GSHH focused on educating us and we make the best decisions we feel are necessary for Girl Scouts. Each of us have been committed to Girl Scouts for numerous years and only want to see the organization prosper. To have everyday people speak about how they feel and bring ideas to the table is amazing. I had comments that I shared with our National Delegation and it was nice to have it appreciated every time. I feel everything at NCS was geared towards **your role** rather than **your age**. That was great, because I fully experienced being a National Delegate like everyone else.

## Spread the word – Orlando 2023!



To tell you the truth, we could go on for pages and pages but we think it is best to simply reiterate how **WONDERFUL** and **INSPIRING** the NCS is, that it only comes around every three years, and to encourage *you* to look in to becoming a Council Delegate or National Delegate and get involved with council and GSUSA governance.

And, even if you don't attend as a National Delegate in 2023 (it's in Orlando, Florida by the way... Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, sun, warmth) you should try to attend as a guest — we truly feel it will renew your dedication to the Girl Scout movement as well as inspire you to return home, share the experience with your sister Girl Scouts, and inspire your girls to become the next generation of go-getters, innovators, risk-takers, and leaders.