

Girl Scouts – 100 years of creating tomorrow's leaders

By Kathryn Reed

When Girl Scouts was formed 100 years ago this month, women did not have the right to vote, Title IX was 60 years away, and leadership roles for women were rare.

On March 12 the world celebrates the group of girls who number 10 million in 145 countries. Though the numbers are much greater because there is the saying, "Once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout."



Some well known women who started their leadership training in Girl Scouts are: Hillary Rodham Clinton, Laura Bush, Madeleine Albright, Janet Reno, Sandra Day O'Connor, Joyce Brothers, Katie Couric, Lucille Ball, Grace Kelly, Gloria Steinem, Mary Tyler Moore, Dakota Fanning and Queen Elizabeth II.

While the organization is often only thought about this time of year because of the annual cookie sales, Girl Scouts is much more than a box of Thin Mints.

"The emphasis has always been empowering girls and valuing girls and what they can do," explained Shelly Martinez. She was a troop leader in South Lake Tahoe while her daughter, Ali, went through grades K-12. Martinez took a four-year break from Girl Scouts and is now helping again.

On the South Shore about 100 girls are divvied up in the 11 troops that stretch from Meyers to Round Hill.

Karen Tucker, who is a service unit coordinator, which means she oversees the individual troops, said there would be more

troops if leaders could be found.

It's one of the least expensive activities available for youth. It costs \$12 a year, plus any expense the individual troops have.

"It's a great place for girls to grow up being girls. It's a really nice organization. They get to do lot of fun stuff and learn a lot of skills," Tucker said.

While all are Girl Scouts, there are five divisions based on grade level: Daisy is kindergarten-first grade, Brownie is grades 2-3, Junior is 4-5, Cadets 6-8, and Senior is high school.

The name Daisy comes from Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low whose nickname was Daisy.

At the senior level they are working toward silver and gold awards. A gold is similar to an Eagle Scout for boys.

Projects under way include one teenager creating a movie about the dangers of texting and driving, while another is organizing a band to play at the senior center and other places in town for free.

No longer do girls wear the brown Brownie or green Girl Scouts uniforms. There was a time, in this reporter's lifetime, when that brown dress was regularly worn to school on meeting days.

Today, the girls buy the sashes that are worn on special occasions. They also have all their badges on the sash.

Cookie sales are a big part of what Girl Scouts is about.

"Cookies are definitely a fund raiser, but for me it was also a way for girls to learn skills," Martinez said. "They are out there using leadership, learning how to market a product, setting goals, and knowing how much money they earn per box. They set goals not only for themselves, but also for community

service to help others.”

Money from the sales funds activities and camp. The North Shore group has a permanent camp, while the South Shore contingency often finds various places to go. Last year it was to Sugar Pine Point State Park on the West Shore and this year they will be in the cabins at the 4-H camp in Stateline.

Cookie sales will continue through March, with girls setting up in front of local grocery stores. Cookie sales have been going on nearly since the beginning. According to the Girl Scouts' website, “The earliest mention of a cookie sale found to date was that of the Mistletoe Troop in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which baked cookies and sold them in its high school cafeteria as a service project in December 1917.”

On March 12, Girl Scouts throughout the world will celebrate the 100-year mark. On the South Shore they will be gathering at Embassy Suites at 6:15pm.

For more information about Girl Scouts, call Karen Tucker at (530) 541.1204.