

AFA Journal

Culture

Moms form new scouts with focus on God, family and country

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Two little girls, one with a bouquet of flowers, the other clasping her playmate's hand, run merrily across the backdrop of a huge American flag. These elements make up the logo of America Heritage Girls (AHG), a God-centered scouting program based in West Chester, Ohio. According to Patti Garibay, Executive Director, the colorful logo "pretty much tells the story" of American Heritage Girls.

"Those of us involved in the initial start-up of our program wanted a logo that would pay homage to God and to America's heritage," says Patti, "and we felt the American flag met that requirement. We also wanted to portray the joy and innocence of young girls who we hope, by their service to God and others as a part of American Heritage Girls, will ultimately become women of integrity and honor."

Scouting has been a part of Patti Garibay's life as long as she can remember. When she was a little girl, her mom was a scout leader for Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), and Patti began her scouting life as a Brownie in her mother's troop.

"I wore that first little uniform so proudly," she says, "and all during my school years, my family life revolved around scouting. I loved it. I worked hard to earn my badges, and I especially enjoyed the outdoor camping activities."

While attending grade school in Cincinnati, Patti met and became friends with her future husband, Pat, who was also a scouting enthusiast. After growing up together, Patti and Pat were married in 1978. They continued the scouting tradition with their four children who joined their parents in an appreciation for the outdoors and the opportunity to develop values and skills for adulthood.

Over time, Patti's involvement with Girl Scouts increased. At varying times, she served as a troop leader, recruiter, camp director, and delegate to the local council, to name just a few of her responsibilities. "People would say I must 'bleed green,'" chuckles Patti; "that's how involved I was and how much I loved Girl Scouts.

"But gradually, things began to change," Patti explains. In 1993, GSUSA took a step that validated the uneasiness she had begun to feel about various shifts being made in Girl Scout policy. The Girl Scout Promise was revised, and the use of the word "God" was deemed no longer mandatory.

Instead, "spiritual flexibility for the word 'God,'" was allowed; members could then pray to "whatever or whomever they do believe in."

Patti, a Christian, says that action "definitely raised a red flag" because she and several other scout leaders were dismayed that national leadership had begun to downplay the importance of God and His role in America's heritage as a basic element of the Girl Scouts' program. Patti was particularly concerned because the decision was made when she was a council delegate, but she was neither made aware of nor allowed input into it.

Over the next year, additional changes were handed down, and Patti began to realize that she, personally, would need to pull out of Girl Scouts. "I learned during my last Christmas as a scout leader that it would technically be 'illegal' for me to sing Christmas carols with my girls because of the references to God and Jesus (resulting in 'discrimination' against non-believers). I just couldn't handle that."

After much soul-searching and grieving, Patti left the organization.

“As a troop leader and mom, I felt I had no choice but to leave. It was one of the saddest days of my life,” she says. “I still grieve, but I know now the Lord gave me those years of Girl Scout experiences to prepare me for American Heritage Girls.”

Other scout leaders across the country agreed with Patti’s opposition to GSUSA’s stance on the Promise, in addition to her deep concern regarding GSUSA’s mandatory training for scout leaders that promotes the acceptance of homosexuality as normal.

Five leaders in the Cincinnati area joined with Patti to put wings to their vision for a new scouting program that would encourage participants to honor God while also serving country, community and family. After many months of hard work, American Heritage Girls became a reality on August 30, 1995, when it was incorporated in the State of Ohio.

American Heritage Girls supports the Judeo-Christian values upon which America was founded, and girls between the ages of 5 and 18 are eligible for membership. “There is a strong emphasis on servitude,” Patti remarks; “the girls are taught to give of themselves without expecting anything in return.” Since 1997, a favorite activity of the Cincinnati-area troops is to bake cookies for the Kairos Prison Ministry. While baking approximately 260 dozen cookies, the girls pray for the prisoners and others touched by their crimes.

“Another goal of AHG is to teach and stress patriotism to our girls,” Patti continues. “Every year, we honor our local veterans. The girls are also taught to respect and properly handle the American flag.”

Today, there are 1,000 American Heritage Girls in Ohio, Indiana and California. Michigan should be on board by this Fall. “We’re excited about how God has blessed our efforts,” Patti exclaims, “and we’re looking forward to having American Heritage Girls in every state in the nation.”

For more information about AHG or to learn how to start a troop in your area:

American Heritage Girls

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SIDEBAR

Girl scouts stonewall Questions about pro-homosexual video

The Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) continues its refusal to answer questions about comments made by the organization’s president, Connie Matsui, concerning the promotion of a pro-homosexual film.

The controversy surrounds That’s a Family!, an instructional video for children which equates same-sex relationships with marriage and claims that same-sex couples with children are families. Produced by Women’s Educational Media (WEM), the film was screened at the White House at a December meeting attended by representatives of more than 100 organizations, such as the National PTA, YWCA and GSUSA.

At that screening, Matsui addressed the attendees and allegedly called the film “a wonderful product.” She added, “We really look forward to using [That’s a Family!] in our informal education in working with all girls across the country.”

WEM told AFA Journal that they have Matsui on audiotape making the comments, and posted them at their website, www.womedia.org.

Clearing up the confusion

Numerous concerned parents have contacted GSUSA for an explanation, only to be told the story was untrue – that while Ms. Matsui did speak at the White House screening of That’s a Family!, she did not make the comments ascribed to her in the AFA Journal article.

Those concerned parents, in turn, called AFA to question the veracity of the Journal article. Therefore, on four separate occasions AFA Journal asked the GSUSA media relations office to explain their response to parents. The Girl Scouts have refused to respond. Specifically, AFA Journal asked:

1. Does GSUSA still maintain that the quote from Connie Matsui in the April AFA Journal story is false?
2. If so, does the GSUSA maintain that WEM does not have an audiotape of Ms. Matsui's comments?
3. If Ms. Matsui did not make these comments, does the organization have an alternative transcript of the speech given by its president to bolster that claim?
4. If Ms. Matsui did make those comments, does she stand by them (and intend to promote, either formally or informally, the video That's a Family!), or is she now backing away from those comments?

Because of the confusion generated by the GSUSA's vague response to parents, AFA Journal will continue to give GSUSA every opportunity to directly answer the questions listed above.

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