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Girl Scouting Benefits Incarcerated Girls in Kalamazoo and Calhoun County

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Girls who are residents of juvenile homes and detention centers do not have access to typical Girl Scouts activities. The ongoing efforts of the Girl Scouts of Glowing Embers Council outreach program allows girls, ages 12-17, in Kalamazoo and Calhoun County Juvenile Home to benefit from the principals of Girl Scouting.

Typically, Girl Scouts programs take place in a variety of locations with many hands-on activities. Troops and their leaders may attend programs at the Program and Training Center, take part in annual Girl Scouts events and celebrations, visit Camp Merrie Woode and participate in the Cookie Sale Program. Girls who are incarcerated are not able to participate in Girl Scouts activities until they are released, but do benefit from the element of consistency, adult role models and empowerment to make positive changes in their lives Girl Scouts can offer.

Annually, 15 percent of youth served by Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home are girls and 37 percent of Calhoun County Juvenile Home youth are girls. The KCJH program will serve 75-100 girls throughout the year; the CCJH program will serve 190 girls. Regardless of the number of girls in residence at any given time, all girls attend the weekly Girl Scouts sessions designed to help girls build character, confidence and self-esteem and develop skills, such as positive decision making, leading to positive behaviors and productive lives. The Juvenile Home outreach program is held for one hour weekly during the school year. Both detention centers provide security, classroom space and girls for the program.

The program curriculum includes a new component called “Living On My Honor,” which incorporates games, activities and discussion topics that focus on skills and attitudes to promote the appreciation of diversity. The curriculum will also be based on the STUDIO 2B program developed

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especially for girls ages 11-17. Because the topics in the focus books are modeled around the concepts of developing self-potential, values, relating to others and contributing to society, they are the perfect framework for helping the girls develop assets that will help them lead more productive lives. The girls learn to help themselves and empower themselves to make better life decisions. They make personal connections with the facilitators, who act as mentors, and with other girls.

The Council continues to encourage girls from the juvenile homes to join classic troops upon their release to continue their positive relationships and maintain that element of consistency in their lives. The Council also hopes that those same girls may return to the juvenile homes as peer mentors and leaders.

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Girl Scouts of Glowing Embers Council was established in 1918 and chartered by the national organization in 1920. Today, Glowing Embers serves thousands of girls and adult volunteers each year. With a jurisdiction in Southwest Michigan that extends from parts of Van Buren and Branch counties, throughout all of Allegan, Barry, Calhoun, and Kalamazoo counties, Glowing Embers encompasses both urban and rural areas and creates a membership base that is an intricately woven blend of lifestyles, cultures, and backgrounds.

Glowing Embers provides opportunities for all girls to succeed in a noncompetitive, all-girl learning environment. Our mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. More information is available on our website: www.gsgec.org