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New Trails for Girl Scouts

Changes abound for the Girl Scouts in the midst of national program realignment. The local Birch Trails chapter has recently combined with five other area Wisconsin councils to form one big council, Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes.

The merger is an effort to provide even better programming and leadership opportunities for Scouts of all ages. Combining resources of multiple councils allows for more program diversity. "Girls learn things they can't in school and at home," according to J.J. Schiltz, leader of the local Brownie troop (grades 2-3). "They have so many snippets of things to try."

For example, Girl Scout participants traditionally attend Camp Birch Trails in Irma, WI. Because of the realignment, they now have the option to attend other Girl Scout camps throughout the state.

Local changes include promoting the Girl Scout's nut sale in the fall, while moving the infamous cookie fundraiser to the spring. However, the basic vision for Girl Scouts remains unchanged: to discover, connect, and take action within the community.

Jessica Smith, a 2008 Tomahawk High School graduate and Girl Scout, attended a kickoff ceremony for the Northwestern Great Lakes council June 28, 2008 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, WI. She explained how the kickoff and participating in the opening flag ceremony was a great end to her Girl Scout experience.

As a recipient of the coveted Gold Award, Smith logged over 65 community service hours to the continuation and blacktopping of Tomahawk's Riverwalk path. "We've had some problems with vandalism," she admits when asked about the challenges of such a task. "It's sad, because the community needs to realize that this is their path. I hope people are willing to take care of it."

Upcoming Girl Scout events include the high school chapter's New Zealand adventure in June 2009. Through brat fries and can collection fundraisers, the girls have raised about 65% of the needed money, according to leader Kay Kissinger-Wolf. "We'll be traveling the North and South island for two weeks, but it's the girls' responsibility to come to a group consensus for the itinerary," she emphasized.

Aluminum cans collection will continue over Labor Day, Harley weekend, and deer hunting week. Donations are greatly appreciated to the trailer located in Nelson's parking lot.