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Girl Scouts-Planned Parenthood alliance irks some

By SENA E. ASH, Staff Writer

Many local Girl Scout families are upset and several have withdrawn their daughters because of the partnership between Planned Parenthood of Waco and the Bluebonnet Council of the Girl Scouts of America, centered in Waco.

"The main issue is that the Bluebonnet Council of Girl Scouts, since 1995, has served as a co-sponsor of Nobody's Fool, which is put on by Planned Parenthood" Vivio said recently.

"Many of the parents are not comfortable with the Girl Scouts having a partnership with Planned Parenthood."

Nobody's Fool is a sex education conference for children going into the fifth through ninth grades.

They claim that the purpose of the conference is to provide teens and pre-teens with factual information about growing up, puberty, dating, relationships, sexual issues and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS."

Although the event is pretty tame by Planned Parenthood standards (abstaining from sex is encouraged) the fact that Planned Parenthood is the foremost provider of abortions in the United States does not sit well with parents.

Vivio said the Girl Scouts lo-go, along with many other agencies, such as Campfire Girls, appeared on the promotional flyer for the July 15 event and the parents wanted it off.

The controversy first sparked when the Girl Scouts bestowed their Woman of Distinction award on Pam Smallwood, executive director of Waco Planned Parenthood. Vivio said the honor was given because of Smallwood's contributions to the community and not necessarily her role in Planned Parenthood.

"But, again, there's a connection with Planned Parenthood and some people are not happy with that," Vivio said. "We want to listen to the concerns of the parents and do what's best for the council"

She said Planned Parenthood and the Girl Scouts had become a big, emotional issue because of all the attention being paid to it. The Bluebonnet Council includes 13 and a half counties in Central Texas.

"We don't feel (the conflict) has anything to do with (Girl Scouts) and the good things our girls do in the community," she said.

Parents of nine Girl Scouts in Crawford dropped out because of the Smallwood incident and about four more from the Temple troop have withdrawn because of the Nobody's Fool conflict.

Cynthia Baylor of Troy is pulling her daughter out of the Temple troop. She said she is not advocating that everyone withdraw from Girl Scouts or boycott their cookies.

"I support what the Girl Scouts stands for and I'm glad we have parents staying in," she said. "Each of us have to approach this in a different way."

However, being linked to Planned Parenthood is not an option for Baylor.

She attended the monthly troop meeting in Temple Monday night at which Vivio and three board members addressed parents' concerns.

Baylor said when they were asked to signify by a show of

hands how many wanted to stop associating with Planned Parenthood, 90-percent of the hands went up.

The troop wants action to be taken immediately and doesn't want to wait for the March board meeting.

"We were told they had by-laws to go by," Baylor said. "They must have 10 letters in writing asking for an emergency meeting."

"I didn't think about it at the time, but now I'm wondering why they couldn't call an ad hoc meeting."

One of the parents asked whether Girl Scouts was being supported by Planned Parenthood and Vivio said, "Not directly."

Baylor mused that perhaps Girl Scouts gets some sort of "indirect" support from Planned Parenthood and that's why the board is taking its time cutting the ties.

"I want to know how they are supporting us," Baylor said. "I just want to get to the bottom of it."

Pat Stone of Waco Planned Parenthood said that the organization was not supporting Girl Scouts directly or indirectly. Nor is Girl Scouts supporting Planned Parenthood.

However, it's no secret that Girl Scouts of America has been linked with the feminist movement and Planned Parenthood for many years. Girl Scouts reflects Planned Parenthood's ideas, such as solutions for teen pregnancies, in its resource books.

The Girl Scouts' views on sexuality brought about a rift with Catholic churches stemming from the 1970s.

Each of the 317 Councils are supposed to decide for themselves how to handle controversial issues, but the national trend runs toward the left.

Whether or not one agrees with left wing positions, Girl Scouts activities supporting Earth Day and the antigun movement are undeniably left of center.

Educational videos that come out of Girl Scouts have titles such as "That's a Family," a portrayal of same sex parents and their children.

A collection of essays titled, "On My Honor: Lesbians Reflect on Their Scouting Experience," contains a piece called "All I Really Need to Know About Being a Lesbian I Learned in Girl Scout Camp."

While the right-leaning Boy Scouts have taken a beating in the media for keeping out gays and atheists, Girl Scouts have been spared any such criticism.

This is perhaps because of their "no stance" stand on homosexuality and allowing the word "God" in their pledge to be optional.

Parents, however, are beginning to take notice and the protest being lodged in the Bluebonnet Council may be pandemic across the nation.

Baylor said she talked to a Girl Scout mother in Minnesota who sympathized with her concerns and she has heard of a Girl Scout Council in another state that "just folded under because so many troops withdrew because of Planned Parenthood."

Part of the vision of Girl Scouts is to foster "strong values and a social conscience" in girls.

Central Texas Girl Scout families may be wrestling with those two qualities in regard to this conflict.