

Girl Scout parents discuss ties to group

Director: Council has 'decision to make' on Planned Parenthood support

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TEMPLE — About 40 parents of Girls Scouts discussed their concerns about the group's relationship with Planned Parenthood at a meeting in a recreation center here Monday night.

While some said they felt their children were used as pawns in a political game, others were upset that the Bluebonnet Council's co-sponsorship of a sex-education program was not made widely known.

"As parents of girls in Girl Scout

Scouts, we should have known," said Margo Wyatt, who was representing a Temple troop. "We shouldn't have had to wait for years and years, or however long it's been. That's a shame."

The Bluebonnet Council, which includes 6,000 girls in 14 counties, has come under fire in a spot airing on a local Christian radio station for sponsoring the Nobody's Fool annual conference, which is organized by Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood offers abortion services.

Parents were told Monday that the group had sponsored the Nobody's Fool program for years, though it hadn't been

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Most at meeting against affiliation

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widely publicized. About two dozen other organizations, including the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, also have co-sponsored the sex-education program.

In the radio spot, Baylor professor John Pisciotta urged listeners to abstain from buying Girl Scout cookies. Pisciotta and other anti-abortion activists have objected to the subjects taught at the program, and because the Bluebonnet Council honored Planned Parenthood Executive Director Pam Smallwood as a "Woman of Distinction" last spring.

When asked Monday night why the Bluebonnet Council of Girl Scouts has co-sponsored the event, Beth Vivio, the group's executive director, called the program an important educational event.

But Vivio added that the council's board is aware of members' concerns.

"We now have a decision to make about whether we will continue as a sponsor of Nobody's Fool," Vivio said.

The board will take up the issue at a regularly scheduled meeting March 25, she said. But a special called meeting could

take place earlier, she added.

By an informal show of hands, most of the parents gathered indicated that they were against any affiliation with Planned Parenthood.

But many also were upset by Pisciotta's called boycott of Girl Scout cookies.

Donna McAllister, a troop leader from Temple, said she was upset that the children were being used as "pawns."

"The girls have nothing to do with the politics of whether or not you're for abortion," she said.

'I am not for that'

Cynthia Baylor, who has a daughter in the Brownies division of Girl Scouts, said she won't sell cookies this year.

"Planned Parenthood is for contraception and abortion, and I am not for that and I don't want my daughter to be a part of that," she said.

Denise Schwartz, a troop leader from Temple, said the proceeds from the sales don't

benefit any organization other than Girl Scouts.

"That money does not go to Planned Parenthood, so all that hoopla about not buying cookies is only hurting those girls," Schwartz said.

Baylor and her husband, Jeff, who are Catholic, say they can't support the council if it does not sever ties with Planned Parenthood.

In a Monday e-mail to area Catholic churches, Bishop Gregory Aymond of the Austin Diocese wrote that the church is investigating the issue, but Catholics in the meantime should continue to support the Girl Scouts and their cookie sales.

"It is our understanding that the money from sales is used for local troop camping and other programs and not for Planned Parenthood or programs associated with it," Aymond wrote. "We need more information, and we should not overreact."

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