

Proposed ban on Girl Scout cookies

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-- Merrick Wiedrich, staff reporter February 27, 2004

Controversy over the relationship between the Girl Scouts and Planned Parenthood, a pro-choice organization, has resulted in a proposed boycott of the scout's cookies, a principle fundraising method for the organization

Some community leaders in Waco, Texas have instructed people via local radio stations to boycott Girl Scout cookies

John Pisciotta, director of Pro-life Waco, said the Council of Girl Scouts in Waco supports Planned Parenthood, an international organization that promotes reproductive freedom and provides health care services related to reproduction

John Pisciotta has made radio announcements asking people to join him in "abstaining from Girl Scout Cookies

"Girl Scouts does not provide support to Planned Parenthood, nor do we have any national collaboration or relationship with that organization," reads a national statement from the Girl Scouts of the USA

The GSUSA believes that issues related to human sexuality and reproductive health is best left to families to discuss with their daughters

"As part of an organization whose mission is to help girls grow strong, some local Girl Scout councils may make girls and their families aware of the information and resources that are available to them on such matter," GSUSA stated

Jean Caldwell, public relations spokeswoman for the Tombigbee Girl Scout Council in Tuscaloosa, said their council has conducted workshops for girls titled "Looking In, Reaching Out," a series of STUDIO 2B used to teach girls about growing up female

The University of Alabama Student Nursing Association conducts these conferences, and girls must have a written permission from their parents to attend the events

"Sexuality topics are briefly discussed with Junior Cadets and Senior Girl Scouts from an informative rather than advocacy view," Caldwell said

Caldwell said the Tombigbee Council has not been affected by the Waco news story, which appeared in the Birmingham News on Feb. 22

"I have not had anyone comment on the story at all," Caldwell said

Marjorie Stephan, senior director of development for the Girl Scouts of Cahaba Council, said she believes this incident will "blow over

"I've had seventeen calls, at the most, on this issue," Stephan said

"We are a great organization," Stephan said.
"We have American hometown values

Caldwell said cookie sales are going strong and emphasized how their annual cookie sale teaches girls about much more than just selling cookies

"Each troop learns about their product, develops marketing techniques, establishes a time line, develops money management and team work," Caldwell said

Caldwell said the troop members decide how their cookie-sale proceeds will be spent

"They often choose a worthwhile cause and give generously of their hard earned proceeds," Caldwell said

This incident has left UA students concerned whether or not this is an important reason to boycott children's cookies

John Carter, a UA finance major, believes boycotting Girl Scout cookies because the group tries to inform girls about important issues is "ridiculous

"As a kid everyone should be informed about the truth of sex," Carter said. "If they were, then maybe as a society we would have one less thing to worry about

Anna Vaughn, a former Girl Scout, believes that Girl Scouts teach girls important lessons that will be beneficial to them in the future

"When I was a Girl Scout, I learned how to work with others and become more responsible," Vaughn said. "How could someone want to hurt this great organization by boycotting their cookies

However, not all UA students believe this incident should be taken lightly

UA advertising major Josh Head believes that the Girl Scout organization should not support sex seminars since the organization is designed for children.

"I think Girl Scouts should support other important organizations instead of one that educates about sex," Head said.

But Head does not agree with the boycotting of Girl Scout cookies.

"I don't think boycotting is going to prove anything," Head said. "Plus, people love those cookies."

Erin Wolfe, volunteer for the Tombigbee Girl Scouts, said that only directors were allowed to comment on this incident.

The Girl Scout council in Waco is one of the 13 youth-serving organizations and social service agencies that have served as a co-sponsor of the local Planned Parenthood's "Nobody's Fool" conference.

"While the Girl Scouts [Bluebonnet Council in Waco] has sponsored Planned Parenthood's "Nobody's Fool" teen and pre-teen education event in the past, they will not be doing so this year, nor will they be sponsoring a similar event run by the Waco 3R Coalition," GSUSA said.

"We are a great organization," said local troop Senior Director of Development Marjorie Stephan. "We have American hometown values."

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