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HEADLINE: How the cookie crumbles

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Sometimes being as shrewd as a snake involves a bit of eavesdropping. Credit Genevieve Wood, an executive for the Family Research Council, for her attentive ears. Something that Ms. Wood heard - or overheard - in the green room of NBC's Today show in early March caught her off guard and, she suspects, may surprise parents of Girl Scouts across the country. The alliance between the Girl Scouts and Planned Parenthood uncovered in Central Texas last month extends across the country and even to the top of the organization.

While waiting for her appearance on the program, Ms. Wood said she heard Girl Scouts CEO Kathy Cloninger tell a friend she hoped Planned Parenthood wouldn't be too upset that she didn't more strongly support their relationship with the organization. "She told the man she had wanted to be clear they would have future relationships with [Planned Parenthood]." During the show, Ms. Cloninger admitted that many Girl Scout troops have aligned themselves with Planned Parenthood and that it would continue.

The controversy's crumb trail leads back to Central Texas where a small-scale Girl Scout cookie boycott led to national press coverage. In a move partially inspired by Austin, Texas, pro-life concrete boycotter Chris Danze, Pro-Life Waco director John Pisciotta organized a boycott of Girl Scout cookies to raise awareness of the local Girl Scouts' participation in a Planned Parenthood sex-education clinic. First, the local news picked up the story. Then parents in nearby Crawford, outraged by the Girl Scouts' alliance with Planned Parenthood, pulled their girls out of the program, dissolving one troop and decimating another.

Once Mr. Pisciotta, also a Baylor economics professor, made the talk-show rounds, Planned Parenthood and others tried to brand him as a bully. Some questioned Mr. Pisciotta's tactics, saying the boycott failed because sales of cookies went up. "I'm glad sales are up. That's not what we were looking for. We were trying to publicize the entanglement," he said. In that regard, the cookie boycott succeeded. A few weeks later, the Bluebonnet Council ended its association with Planned Parenthood.

Says FRC's Ms. Wood: "If it's happening in Waco, Texas, it's bound to be happening across the country."

It is. The **Nevada** Girl Scouts' Frontier Council is advertising on its website a March 20 feminist conference featuring Planned Parenthood president Gloria Feldt and a workshop on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered issues. The Girl Scouts of **Connecticut** honored a Planned Parenthood official in 2003 for her outstanding work in promoting "healthy practices" in local troops. The **Amarillo**-area Girl Scouts have in the past sponsored Planned Parenthood's sex-education seminar "Kids in the Know" for 4th- through 8th-graders. Parents who are squeamish about sending their 12-year-old children to their school's sex-ed program might be appalled by the smutty pamphlets they might receive from Planned Parenthood when they're 10. "The Girl Scouts aren't just about selling cookies anymore," said Ms. Wood, who sold Girl Scout cookies as a Brownie in Texarkana, Texas. "They clearly have a social agenda."