

Today Show interviews on Girl Scout cookie boycott. March 5, 2004

Comments by John Pisciotta, Pro-Life Waco

During the Today Show interview, Kathy Cloninger, CEO of Girl Scouts of American, unequivocally stated that the Girl Scout **break of from Planned Parenthood applied only to the Texas Bluebonnet Council**. Other councils in Texas and other states remain **free to continue and form new alliances with their Planned Parenthood affiliates**.

Here are some of the key statements made by Cloninger:

The Girl Scouts in Waco, Texas, really made a decision based on local community context. They decided that in this particular situation that it would be in the best interest of girls and their families to discontinue the relationship with Planned Parenthood.

...we do, across the country, tackle the issues of human sexuality and body image and all of the thing that's girls are facing. And we partner with many organizations. We have relationships with our church communities, with YWCAs, and with Planned Parenthood organizations across the country, to bring information-based sex education programs to girls.

...we will continue to partner with organizations across this nation and local community Girl Scouts will make decisions based on their local community partnerships and the local needs of both the girls and their families.

One final comment. In the second quote Ms. Cloninger calls for "information-based sex education program." This is code for calling for sex education devoid of any moral context—or at least devoid of any Christian moral context.

March 5, 2004 Friday

John Pisciotta of Pro-Life in Waco and
Girl Scout CEO Kathy Cloninger

discuss boycott of Girl Scout cookies

THE TODAY SHOW, LESTER HOLT, co-host:
Skip the Thin Mints and pass on the Caramel Delights. A community leader in Waco, Texas, is trying to spread the word, calling for a cookie boycott because of what he calls the Girl Scouts association with Planned Parenthood. John Pisciotta is co-director of Pro-Life in Waco, and Kathy Cloninger is the CEO of the Girl Scouts of the USA.

And good morning to both of you. Thanks for coming on with us this morning.

Ms. KATHY CLONINGER (CEO, Girl Scouts of the USA):

Good morning, Lester

Mr. JOHN PISCIOTTA (Co-Director of Pro-Life Waco, Texas):

Good morning.

HOLT: John, let me begin with you. You ran ads on a Christian radio station a few weeks ago calling for folks to boycott Girl Scout cookies because of a longstanding relationship between the Girl Scouts and Planned Parenthood. Can you describe that relationship as you understand it and why you went after Girl Scout cookies?

Mr. PISCIOTTA: Yes. First, Lester, I want to applaud Girl Scouts for taking the decision to separate themselves from the controversial organization of Planned Parenthood.

HOLT: Right. That decision's just--just been made.

Mr. PISCIOTTA: Yes, about a week ago. And the longstanding relationship was that the local Girl Scout Council co-sponsored a sex education program by Planned Parenthood which provides abortions here in Waco, and is the industry leader in abortion. And they were co-sponsor of this program. Then this year a couple new things happened. They distributed a--a book to youngsters in grades seven through nine called "It's Perfectly Normal" that is certainly offensive to a lot of people in our community. And they also named the executive director of

Planned Parenthood as a woman of distinction to be a role model for children.

HOLT: Yeah, but you say it is sex education, but did they talk about abortion in any of this literature or programs?

Mr. PISCIOTTA: Well, they gave away this book as part of the program. And in this book, there is a chapter on abortion. And in that chapter, the book mentions nine good reasons that women have abortions. So yes, I would say abortion is part of this.

HOLT: Well, let me bring Kathy into the conversation. You say there is no formal relationship between the Girl Scouts and Planned Parenthood. Can you describe what the relationship is or was?

Ms. CLONINGER: Yes, and first of all I would just like to say that we were very disappointed that a citizen would use something as American icon as the Girl Scout cookie sale to really bully young girls into getting involved in an issue that has absolutely nothing with the mission of Girl Scouting, which is to help girls grow up strong and capable and to aspire to their highest ideals.

HOLT: But you call it bullying. Did it not work? In fact, the Girl Scouts have ended this relationship?

Ms. CLONINGER: The Girl Scouts in Waco, Texas, really made a decision based on local community context, they decided that in this particular situation that it would be in the best interest of girls and their families to discontinue the relationship with Planned Parenthood. Girl Scouts is the largest voice for, and advocate for girls across the country. Know that girls grow up with very complex issues facing them. And so we do, across the country, tackle the issues of human sexuality and body image and all of the thing that's girls are facing. And we partner with many organizations. We have relationships with our church communities, with YWCAs, and with Planned Parenthood organizations across the country, to bring information-based sex education programs to girls.

HOLT: And John, let me go back to my first question, or my first two-part question. Why go after Girl Scout cookies? No matter what the issue is. I understand it may have backfired and that cookie sales have actually increased.

Mr. PISCIOTTA: Well, I don't call it backfire. I'm very pleased that Girl Scout cookie sales have increased. And I think they've increased locally. We used the Girl Scout cookie sales as a way to educate and to let people know about this relationship. And when moms and dads across this 14-county area found out about it, many of them were--were outraged by it. And there was a firestorm of protests to our local council and they reacted to that. With regard to partnering, we have an abstinence program in Waco, called McCAP, and through the years there's been virtually no relationship of Girl Scouts with the McCAP program and a very great entanglement with Planned Parenthood.

HOLT: And Kathy, let me ask you quickly before we run out of time. You've ended this relationship, but will the Girl Scouts still in some way try and deal with issues of sexuality? You talk about the challenge of being a modern girl?

Ms. CLONINGER: Right. As I said, it's--it's really impossible for girls to grow up in today's society without having access to good information. And so we will continue to partner with organizations across this nation and local community Girl Scouts will make decisions based on their local community partnerships and the local needs of both the girls and their families.

HOLT: And John, just about ten seconds left. The boycott is now off?

Mr. PISCIOTTA: It is over, and I encourage everyone to go out and buy Thin Mints.

HOLT: John Pisciotta and Kathy Cloninger. Thanks very much to both of you for coming on. Appreciate it.