

**Statement Regarding Archdiocesan Transition from Girl Scouts to American
Heritage Girls
By Archbishop Joseph F Naumann
May 1, 2017**

After several consultations with the Presbyteral Council and with the recommendation of our Office for Youth Ministry, I have asked the pastors of the Archdiocese to begin the process of transitioning away from the hosting of parish Girl Scout troops and toward the chartering of American Heritage Girls troops.

Pastors were given the choice of making this transition quickly, or to, over the next several years, “graduate” the Scouts currently in the program. Regardless of whether they chose the immediate or phased transition, parishes should be in the process of forming American Heritage Girl troops, at least for their kindergarteners, this fall.

The decision to end our relationship with Girl Scouting was not an easy one. Over a period of many years, our Archdiocesan Youth Ministry staff spent hundreds of hours researching concerns regarding the policies of both the International and the National Girl Scouting organizations. In addition, they have spent hundreds of hours in dialogue with Scouts, parents, pastors, and national Girl Scouting representatives regarding our concerns with disturbing content in materials and resources developed and promulgated by the national organization. I personally have been in conversation with national and local Girl Scout leaders regarding my concerns about the new direction of national Girl Scouting reflected in the content of their program materials.

Eventually it came down to this. Our greatest responsibility as a church is to the children and young people in our care. We have a limited time and number of opportunities to impact the formation of our young people. It is essential that all youth programs at our parishes affirm virtues and values consistent with our Catholic faith.

To follow Jesus and his Gospel will often require us to be counter-cultural. With the promotion by Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA) of programs and materials reflective of many of the troubling trends in our secular culture, they are no longer a compatible partner in helping us form young women with the virtues and values of the Gospel.

The national organization, for example, contributes more than a million dollars each year to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGS), an organization tied to International Planned Parenthood and its advocacy for legislation that includes both contraception and abortion as preventive health care for women.

Margaret Sanger, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem are frequently held up in materials as role models for young Scouts. These as well as many other “role models” in the GSUSA’s new manuals and web content not only do not reflect our Catholic worldview but stand in stark opposition to what we believe.

While I am grateful that offensive and completely age-inappropriate material was recently removed by GSUSA from portions of their Journey series of manuals in response to concerns raised by the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas and others, it is disturbing such an intervention on our part was necessary. We prefer to partner with youth organizations that share our values and vision for youth ministry, not ones that we have to monitor constantly to protect our children from being misled and misinformed.

American Heritage Girls, a program based on Christian values, we believe is a much better fit for our parishes. I encourage you to read more about the American Heritage Girl program by going to its website, www.americanheritagegirls.org. For more information about the history of and issues surrounding our Girl Scouting decision, go to www.archkck.org/scouting-home.

On a final note, I want to express my appreciation for the many extraordinary Girl Scout leaders of the archdiocese who have served so many so well. We look forward to having as many of them as are willing join us in leadership roles as we take this new step into the formation of our girls. I will always be grateful for their exceptional service.