

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release
September 27, 2021

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SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

American Heritage Girls Places High Priority on Mental Health

AHG Demonstrates that Mental Health is Just as Important as Physical Health; No One is Exempt From or Alone in Their Anxiety

CINCINNATI, Ohio — September is Suicide Prevention Month. At a time when many girls experience back-to-school anxiety, especially during these uncertain and unprecedented times, *American Heritage Girls* (**AHG**, www.americanheritagegirls.org), the premier faith-based, scout-type leadership development program for girls ages five to 18, wants people to know that no one is exempt from or alone in their anxiety.

AHG offers not only hands-on badge programs, service projects, and leadership opportunities, but they also place a high priority on mental well-being by placing heavy emphasis on the importance of mental health of their members, staff and volunteers. One of six [AHG Program Emphases](#) is the Social & Emotional Emphases which provides resources and opportunities for girls to anchor their emotions in Christ in a caring and loving environment. Earlier this year, **AHG** released its [Raising Godly Girls Guide to Fear and Anxiety in Uncertain Times](#), giving parents, ministers and educators Scripture-based tools to tackle the concerns and apprehensions experienced by many young girls.

“Fear is debilitating,” Patti Garibay, founder and executive director of American Heritage Girls, wrote in the Raising Godly Girls Guide. “It manifests itself into a variety of unhealthy behaviors,” she said. “One such behavior, worry, is a negative focus on the future.” Often these behaviors can interfere with the person’s ability to lead a normal life, which is compounded by feelings of shame often experienced by those who suffer from mental health issues. ***“We have to remember that mental health is just as important as physical health,” says Garibay, “but there’s still a stigma and unwillingness to be open about it.”***

One person who has made great inroads in changing this stigma is Most Rev. James D. Conley, D.D., S.T.L., of the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska. This well-respected Bishop has been very open about his struggles with mental health issues: in 2019, [his office published a press release](#) stating that he was taking a medical leave of absence to give himself an opportunity to heal from fatigue, anxiety and depression, demonstrating by his actions that people who suffer from mental health issues are not alone. This decision showed the diocese as well as the world that they do not need to hide their diagnosis or issues with mental health, and that girls are not the only ones to suffer this plight. After an 11-month medical leave of absence, Bishop Conley returned to the diocese of Lincoln on November 13, 2020.

Bishop Conley, who has endorsed *American Heritage Girls*, was elected in 2015 as the first Episcopal Moderator for the *American Heritage Girls National Catholic Committee (AHG NCC)*. He provides spiritual guidance while presiding over and representing the *AHG NCC*. The mission of the *AHG National Catholic Committee* is to support *American Heritage Girls, Inc.*, while promoting and providing for the growth and spiritual development of its Catholic members, in fidelity to the magisterium of the Catholic Church, and to act as the liaison between *AHG, Inc.* and the Catholic Church.

As Bishop Conley demonstrates and *Patti Garibay* explains, it is what we *do* with our fear that makes the difference. “*As part of the Body of Christ we are called to [faith over fear](#),*” *Garibay* said. “*We are called to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God will never leave us or forsake us.*”

AHG's mission is to build women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country. It is dedicated to providing authentic, positive, and values-driven character and leadership development opportunities and outdoor adventure for girls across the nation.

American Heritage Girls was founded in 1995 by a group of parents who wanted this faith-based, scout-type character development program for their daughters. At *AHG*, girls ages five to 18 meet together as [a single Troop](#) at the same time and then break out into Units by Levels. This gives *AHG* girls the important social experience of interacting with friends and godly mentors of various ages; members also learn leadership skills within a group setting. *AHG* Troops are located in [local communities](#) across the nation. If none exists in a given area, families can bring the *AHG* Program to their own area. An *American Heritage Girls* Troop Development Coach is available to provide resources to potential Charter Organizations and other families to form [a new Troop](#). To hear more about the purpose, mission and vision of *AHG* from *Founder and Executive Director Patti Garibay*, [click here](#).

Today, there are [Troops](#) in all 50 states and girls being served in 15 countries around the globe. Girls can join a Troop at any time; if a Troop is not available nearby, they can become a [Trailblazer](#) and enjoy the *AHG* program alongside their parent. A variety of Christian denominations are also represented as [Charter Organizations](#) for Troops. Thousands of volunteer members across the country are helping girls grow in their faith, cultivate a heart for service, enjoy the great outdoors, and have more fun than they can imagine.

The “*Raising Godly Girls*” radio feature and [Raising Godly Girls blog](#) shares guidance and biblically based advice on many key topics affecting girls today. It gives parents, educators, and faith community leaders a set of tools, resources, and Scripture-based advice to assist in raising girls after God’s own heart. The “[Raising Godly Girls Minute](#)” with *Patti Garibay* airs on 900+ Christian radio stations across the country.

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To schedule interviews with *Patti Garibay*, founder and executive director of *American Heritage Girls*, contact Media@HamiltonStrategies.com, Beth Harrison, 610.584.1096 ext. 105, or Deborah Hamilton, ext. 102.

To inquire about airing the “[Raising Godly Girls Minute](#)” with *Patti Garibay*, contact [Michael Hamilton](#), 610.584.1096, ext. 101.