

Communication Regarding Council Theft and Frequently Asked Questions

Date: September 1, 2016

Thank you for your ongoing trust and support for our organization and mission. We are sharing this information with you so that you are aware of actions we are taking and to address questions we have received in regard to the council theft.

The philosophy and framework of everything we do is based on the Girl Scout Promise and Law, and the mission of Girl Scouting to develop girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida (GSGCF) is part of a national movement, one of 112 councils throughout the country. As staff and volunteers of Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, we have a duty of loyalty to the organization. We are sisters (and brothers) speaking in one message and one voice for the benefit of all.

THIS IS OUR STORY TO TELL and a leadership moment. The community and girls are watching us. The manner in which we communicate and hold ourselves accountable is critical to our reputation, integrity, the trust of the community and the larger Girl Scout Movement.

Communication procedures for all members of Girl Scouting

- The only approved and authorized spokespersons for GSGCF are Mary Anne Servian, CEO and Patricia Ramthun, Director of Corporate Communications.

Mary Anne Servian, CEO
Officer

941-921-5358 x 302
maservian@gsgcf.org

Patricia Ramthun, Chief Communications and Resource

941-921-5358 x 311
patriciar@gsgcf.org

- If you are contacted by the media, please share,

“I have trust in the Girl Scout organization.”

“I’m sorry, I’m not the appropriate person who can answer that. However, I’m happy to direct you to {Sue Stewart or Patricia Ramthun} who can answer your question regarding this matter.”

- If someone asks you personally, “What happened” or “I heard” – you can say,

“We are all saddened by the news. Our organization is working to get the matter resolved, and now it is in the court’s hands.”

- **Social Media**

Out of respect for our organization, for each other, and the former employee, and since this is a legal court case that is not yet resolved, no one should be commenting or

voicing any personal opinions on the matter---- with girls, current or former volunteers, donors, or the community. This includes online, on social networks, or any public forums.

AT NO TIME SHOULD A GIRL MEMBER SPEAK ON BEHALF OF GSGCF OR COMMENT ABOUT THE FORMER EMPLOYEE.

What happened?

During the week of May 1, 2016, our leadership team was made aware of accounting irregularities within our organization.

We immediately notified the Sarasota County Sheriff's Department, who then launched a formal investigation.

At the same time, we authorized an external accounting firm to conduct a forensic audit. We communicated confidentially with our board, attorney, insurance carrier, and GSUSA.

As a result, a former long-term employee was arrested and charged with scheme to defraud and grand theft on 8/31/16.

We are very saddened by this news and that it involves someone with whom we worked and trusted for more than 10 years.

What is GSGCF doing now to keep funds safe?

We continue to work hard to protect our volunteers, members, and the entire organization.

We had numerous checks and balances in place. The former employee manipulated the processes.

We put strengthened procedures and tighter controls in place for all the Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida accounts.

We have new staff and new reporting relationships in place.

Are my troop funds safe?

Yes. All troop funds are whole. No troops lost money.

If you have not yet received a letter authorizing you to open a new bank account, please contact the GSGCF Customer Care at Customercare@gsgcf.org.

How much money was stolen/embezzled?

Approximately \$85,000.

Who is the "victim" in this case?

Our organization, Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, Inc.

All troop accounts are whole.

Wasn't anyone at the organization checking financials on a regular basis?

We had, and continue to have, appropriate checks and balances in place. We are strengthening all our controls.

The former employee manipulated the process.

If this is from an isolated account, have all the other accounts been checked for discrepancies?

No other discrepancies have been identified.

Does the organization do background checks?

Yes, we conduct background checks on staff and volunteers.

You said former employee, how long ago did she leave?

She resigned voluntarily at the end of April 2016.

How could one person take \$75,000 from one troop account before you noticed a problem?

That is not exactly the case. Over time, the former employee manipulated funds from a series of accounts. At no time was a "lump" sum withdrawn from just one account.

Why didn't volunteers know about the situation ahead of others?

Confidential information was involved, and we were limited in what we could share and when.

We had developed a strong, cohesive, multi-level communication plan, which was to be implemented once we were provided the official arrest information from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office released information to the public and the media before we received it.

While juggling the requests from the media and monitoring social media, we paused and carried out our plan to communicate with staff, key stakeholders, key volunteers (SU Managers, PR/Communication Coordinators, Region Chairs, and specific troop leaders), our board of directors and funders.

What is the expected outcome of the criminal case?

We have and will continue to cooperate fully with law enforcement.

We do not tolerate illegal or unethical behavior and are seeking prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.

We will pursue restitution.

We trust in the courts and legal system to carry out its responsibilities.

We appreciate your commitment to the mission and your ongoing trust in us. We thank the media for their positive representation of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

We remain committed to our mission to protect and develop girls of courage, confidence and character within our community.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mary Anne or Patricia if you have further questions or concerns.

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