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**ANNUAL GIRL SCOUT COOKIE PROGRAM BEGINS:
GIRLS BECOME YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS**

It's a much-anticipated time of year – Girl Scout cookie time. Through mid-March, girls will go door-to-door and set up booths at local merchants to sell eight delicious varieties of Girl Scout cookies to eager customers. All proceeds from Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland's Girl Scout Cookie Program benefit girls in the area; girls earn troop proceeds and Girl Scout Cookie Credit that can be used to pay for Girl Scout camp, leadership programs, uniforms, and more.

Additional proceeds help to fund needs such as financial assistance, volunteer training and support, and program resources.

More long-lasting than monetary proceeds are the leadership skills that girls learn through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls in the United States. By managing their own cookie sales, from initial goal-setting at the beginning to evaluation at the end, girls have a hands-on experience in business. They decide how many boxes of cookies they want to sell, and are then responsible for managing their own resources of time, energy, and family support in order to reach their goals.

The tangible business and life skills that girls learn through the Girl Scout Cookie Program include goal-setting, decision-making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. "As Girl Scouts learn these skills, they are poising themselves for lifelong success," says Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland CEO Jennifer M. Orban. "When they apply for their first jobs, they can say with confidence that they already have customer-service and teamwork experience. When they head off to college, they will have already had experience with keeping a budget and meeting important deadlines."

The Girl Scout Cookie Program also encourages girls to give back to their communities. Many Girl Scout troops participate in a “Cookie Share” program, in which customers may purchase cookies for a local organization of the girls’ choosing. In addition, girls are encouraged to utilize some of their proceeds for community service. Last year, Girl Scouts throughout Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland made a difference through projects such as holiday “adopt-a-family” programs, park beautification, visits to nursing homes, blanket-making for emergency facilities and school recycling programs.

Girl Scout Cookies will be sold through mid-March this year, with eight cookie varieties available: Thin Mints, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Patties, Peanut Butter Sandwich, Shortbread, Thanks-A-Lot, Lemonades and – new this year – Shout Outs. For information about the Girl Scout Leadership Experience or the Girl Scout Cookie Program, please visit www.girlscoutsmoheartland.org or call 877-312-4764.

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