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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 we enter our one hundredth year of Girl Scouting in 2012, the Girl Scout Cookie Program reminds us of the great potential of girls" says Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland interim CEO Anne Soots. "Since 1912, Girl Scouts has taught self-sufficiency, independence, and service. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a fantastic way for girls to learn those skills and more."

New in 2012 is a council-wide Girl Scout Cookie Share program, in which customers may purchase cookies to donate. Many troops throughout Girl Scouts of the Missouri Heartland's 68-county jurisdiction will select a local organization that is special to them, such as a food shelf, family shelter, or military unit. Others will give customers the option to donate cookies to military troops and military family groups, which are this year's council-designated Cookie Share beneficiary.

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 Shout Outs. The shortbread cookies will feature a special-edition 100th anniversary box. Cookies are \$4 per box, with all proceeds benefitting the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. 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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