

Honoring 'Cookie'

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For The Sunday Challenger
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'Cookie' Inspires NKY Girl Scouts to Sell

FLORENCE - Scouts from across the Girl Scout Council of Licking Valley will gather Tuesday at Turfway Park racetrack for their annual Cookie Carnival to kick off the 2005 Cookie Sale and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Samoa cookie.

Some girls will even choose to compete for the Ruth "Cookie" Willaman award for the most cookies sold.

Ruth Willaman received the nickname "Cookie" from her long and active dedication to the Licking Valley Girl Scouts - as well as tremendous cookie sales. She first joined the Girl Scouts while growing up in Bellevue. There she learned the guiding principles of scouting, such as service to God and help to neighbors, that would take her through the rest of her life.

It is a life full of love for the Girl Scouts. She became a Troop Leader when her own daughter became a scout. From there she continued in various volunteer positions until becoming president of the Girl Scout Council of Licking Valley. Tracy Fuchs, product sales event manager for the Licking Valley Council, stated, "She was the type that was here at 6 a.m. and left at 9 (p.m.). She was dedicated to the girls."

It's been 15 years since she officially retired, but Willaman has maintained an active role by speaking, encouraging, and motivating girls who are young enough to be her great-granddaughters.

Lessons Learned

"Cookie" Willaman agreed the cookie sale, and Girl Scouts, teach all the things a young girl in Northern Kentucky needs to know such as "responsibility, goal-setting, self-esteem as well as the practical aspect of handling money," but most importantly, she said, the girls "learn they need support. No matter what you do, you need support. Selling cookies teaches that. You need support from your troop leaders, fellow Girl Scouts, the bakery, and - most importantly - from the customers."

Willaman remembered her first cookie sale, when her troop sold sugar cookies cut from a trefoil cutter, baked in her own kitchen and then wrapped in wax paper. The cookies were sold door-to-door for 50 cents per box and her troop used the proceeds for a 10-day camping excursion through lower Ontario and Northern Ohio, where they visited Niagara Falls and other Girl Scout troops.

As the 2005 Cookie Sale gets closer, troop leaders across NKY are gearing up for this top fundraising event of the year and are also bracing themselves for some changes. All troop leaders were required to attend cookie training in December and early January, during which they received recordkeeping and promotional supplies and learned how to conduct a successful sale. The troop leaders are responsible for teaching the girls the right way to sell cookies, as well as how to remain safe. Each girl is responsible not only for the sale, but the money collection, recordkeeping and inventory management. The most important issue, of course, is the safety of the girls. For this, there is a simple rule - parents must always supervise the girls. Whether at a booth sale or when going door-to-door, each girl's fundraiser turns into a family event.

One of the challenges facing this year's Girl Scouts is a price increase. After 10 years of cookies costing \$2.50 per box, the price will now be \$3 per box. It is particularly difficult for NKY scouts because Cincinnati's Great Rivers Girl Scout Council has held its prices at \$2.50 for this year. While no one likes a price increase, Carolyn Flesch, product sales event manager for the Licking Valley Council, points out, "This allows each troop to raise more funds for their programs."

50 Cents Profit

From each box of cookies sold, a scout makes 50 cents profit for her own troop. The remaining funds are used to pay for the bakery production costs and then to fund the various programs offered by the Council, such as day camps or the Campbell Mountain Girl Scout Camp. At the troop level, Girl Scouts can decide together how to use their share of the funds. While many use the funds to pay for uniforms or camping trips, increasingly troops are making decisions like Daisy Troop #669 of Alexandria, which donated the proceeds from its recent nut sale to the Ronald McDonald House to help sick children and their families.



Courtesy Licking Valley Girl Scout Council

LIFE'S PASSION: Pictured with Ruth "Cookie" Willaman (center) are Mary Lile (left), former Grant County cookie manager, and Wilma Rauckhorst (former Licking Valley Council staff member).

The Girl Scouts will also be celebrating the 30th year of the Caramel Delite - a caramel, chocolate and coconut concoction. Louisville's Little Brownie Bakery, which makes all Girl Scout Cookies sold in NKY, bakes these perennial favorites using more than 120,000 pounds of coconut each week during peak production. Last year, NKY Girl Scouts sold over 77,988 boxes of these cookies. At the bakery's website, www.littlebrownie.com, recipes are given using the cookie, originally called a Samoa, as a main ingredient. These include the Samoas Dream Cake, the Samoas Sweet Rolls, or the audacious Fried Samoa Shrimp.

This year's top cookie seller will again receive the Ruth "Cookie" Willaman award. Last year Kayla Engman of Erlanger's Troop #479 won with 1,868 boxes sold. The award's namesake herself will present this year's winner, as she did with Kayla, with the award. When the council told Willaman that the top sales award would be named after her, she was "flabbergasted," but she isn't by this year's sales goal of 441,000 boxes.

"They can do it, if each girl uses what she has learned," she said.

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