

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Activity Objective: Girls are introduced to the idea of a nonprofit; girls identify what issues are important to them.

Toward Leadership Outcomes:

Through this activity, girls will:

- ✓ Seek challenges in the world—Girls develop positive attitudes toward learning, seek opportunities for expanding their knowledge and skills, set challenging goals for themselves, and take appropriate risks. **(Discover)**

Experience Overview:

10-15 minutes *Introduction (Talking Points)*

30-40 minutes *Hot Issues*

5-10 minutes *Reflection/Discussion*

Supplies Needed:

- ✓ Large pad and marker (or chalkboard)

Prepare Ahead:

- ✓ Make copies of the “Steps to Taking Action!” handout.
- ✓ Make copies of the “Ideas for Taking Action” handout.
- ✓ You may want to bring in articles from community newspapers or announcements of other service projects that have been done by Girl Scouts at your council to provide additional ideas to help start the brainstorming.
- ✓ Read over the entire activity before meeting with girls.

A Take Action project is a chance for girls to learn about getting to the roots of issues, to mobilize others, and to strive toward creating lasting change in their world. Based on the group's time and resources, the specific project they create may be small in scale and scope. However, as they plan the project, they can learn what it takes to create sustainable change. Their insights may lead them to make an effort to take

TAKE ACTION ACTIVITY 1

DISCOVER:

- » Seek challenges in the world

action throughout their lives! Do not worry about the “size” of the project. Focus instead on what girls can learn by exploring how they can make an impact.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

» Introduction (Talking Points) (10-15 minutes)

Get the Ideas Rolling!

- ✓ To start the brainstorming discussion with the girls, say something like this: “Let’s reflect on some of your favorite activities and the things that you have learned. What interested you most? Why? What things surprised you? How do they relate to the rest of your life? How do they relate to things that are happening around you?”
- ✓ Ask girls: “How could you use these new interests and skills to make a difference for others in your community? In other words, how can you create a Take Action project that will benefit others?”
- ✓ Distribute the “Ideas for Taking Action” handout. Here are some ideas the girls can consider as they brainstorm for a Take Action project. These are not the only projects girls could do. Their experience will be richer if they use their ideas to create their own action plan.
- ✓ On the large pad, list all of the ideas that the girls brainstorm for using their new skills to make a difference for others or solve a problem they see in their community.

Service and Taking Action

Discuss the difference between a community service project and a Take Action project.

- ✓ Say something like this: “Let’s take a few minutes to talk about the difference between a community service project and a Take Action project.”
- ✓ Ask girls: “What does it mean to do service, or to do a service project?” (See definition of terms on the next page.) You may need to facilitate this discussion with the girls.

Make a summary of the girls' suggestions. For example: "Service is often the immediate and necessary response to a basic need, such as food, clothing, shelter, and care. Community service projects might be collecting food for a local food pantry, or collecting clothing for a homeless shelter. These are examples of important ways that each of us can help and care for others."

Ask girls:

- ✓ "What kind of service projects do you see in your community, or have you already participated in?"
- ✓ "What do you think is the difference between doing service and taking action?" (See definition of terms in side box.)
- ✓ "What does it mean to be sustainable, or to have lasting impact?" You may need to facilitate this discussion with the girls.

Make a summary of the girls' suggestions. For example: "Service projects have a beginning and an end point. The people you help might still be in need. When you move beyond immediate service to understanding the root causes of a problem, you move toward action. When you team up and mobilize others in your efforts to find ways to solve a particular problem, then you are connecting and taking action toward lasting change."

» Hot Issues (30-40 minutes)

- ✓ Distribute copies of the "Steps to Taking Action!" handout.
- ✓ Make available the list of ideas generated by the group brainstorming. Separate the entire girls into pairs or small groups and tell girls they have about 10 to 15 minutes to think about and discuss the items listed on the large pad. Each pair or small group should come up with at least four issues they can address to make a difference for others or solve a problem they see in their community. Girls should

Define Your Terms: Service vs. Take Action

When girls do service, they help to fulfill an immediate need. When girls take action, they team up with others in an effort to solve a problem and create long-lasting change. Taking action can happen in many ways—from fixing up an animal shelter to creating a center where children who need tutoring can always get it. When girls take action, they:

- ✓ seek to understand the cause of the problem.
- ✓ decide upon the scale and scope of their project—based on a realistic assessment of their resources.
- ✓ enlist others from the community to get involved.

In other words, service makes the world better for some people "right now." Taking action makes the world better for more people for a much longer time. While the world clearly needs both, here we are concentrating on taking action!

begin to think of possible ways they could take action using their new skills. Encourage girls to think about issues related to the Financial Flair or Science and Tech Trek activities that interested them. (For example, girls may have learned about the effects of global warming through one of the Science and Tech Trek activities. They may then decide that a local problem is the lack of recycling at their school. Girls may decide to take action to develop a fuller recycling program—for example, recycling cans and bottles in the cafeteria.)

- ✓ Have each of the pairs or small groups share their ideas and possible solutions with the group. List each of the Take Action project ideas and the possible solutions. **Be sure to keep this “ideas and solutions” list and bring it to the next meeting.**
- ✓ Tell girls: “In our next meeting, we will decide which idea we want to act on and the scale and scope of our own Take Action project.”

» Reflection/Discussion (5-10 minutes)

Ask girls:

- ✓ “Do you think the actions of one person can make a difference? Why or why not?”
- ✓ “Do you think the actions of a group of people can make a difference? Can 1,000 people make a difference? Can 100,000 people make a difference?”

You play an important role as you coach girls to choose and plan a project that:

- ✓ can be completed in the time they have.
- ✓ meets a genuine need that girls have identified in the world around them.
- ✓ enables girls to use or pass on some of the knowledge and skills they have acquired.
- ✓ engages girls to understand the difference between “one shot” service.
- ✓ gives them the opportunity to meet new people and do something exciting, fun, and meaningful.