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Goshen – Girl Scouts Forming Partnership

As part of a national initiative, Girl Scouts across the nation are forming partnerships and merging Girl Scout councils to form more effective and higher capacity organizations that can truly meet the needs of today's girls. Girl Scouts of Indiana Lakeland headquartered in Goshen, is partnering with Girl Scouts of Limberlost Council (headquartered in Fort Wayne), Girl Scouts of Singing Sands Council (headquartered in South Bend) and Girl Scouts of Tribal Trails Council (headquartered in Logansport) to create Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana Council. The new larger council will serve girls and adult volunteers in 20 counties across northern Indiana and 2 counties in southwest Michigan.

Girl Scout service centers will be located throughout the new council jurisdiction. This will ensure membership accessibility and visibility. This access further reinforces the commitment to providing community-based and community-connected programs and services that meet girls' needs. The corporate headquarters will be located in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Anne Reel, Executive Director at Indiana Lakeland stated, "Each of our four councils has done an excellent job of addressing specific issues and needs of girls in the areas we currently serve. Our council has provided a Healthy Me initiative that has focused on childhood obesity which can be replicated throughout this new jurisdiction. The other three councils have their own unique programs which can also be expanded to ensure we are reaching a broader base of girls with top notch programs and activities. Under the new umbrella of Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana, we can draw upon the strengths of each council to become an even stronger force for girls."

The councils are currently working together to prepare for completion of the merger process by October of 2008.

“This is an exciting time for Girl Scouts and we are very proud to be proactive in this process to strengthen the Movement for girls of today and tomorrow,” commented Tribal Trails Board Chair Cheryl Smith. We are very excited about the new opportunities and resources which will be available to all of our girls and volunteers.”

Smith added, “The result of this process will be expanded opportunities for girls, enhanced services for adult volunteers, continued outreach to underserved populations and vibrant partnerships with the greater community to meet our commitment to girls. Every effort will be focused on helping girls develop the leadership skills and self-sufficiency they need to become successful adults.

Sherri Weidman, CEO at Limberlost council agreed and stated, “We’ll be able to offer more opportunities. There will be more resources to be used at the girl level, at the program level.”

Janet Ridenour, CEO of Singing Sands, “The shifting demographics, economic issues and social and welfare issues that impact our girls and families are key priorities in our minds. As a united force, we want to consistently be at the front to lead the way. This expanded team brings wisdom and strength to help us do just that.”

For more information about Girl Scouting and this transformative time, individuals are encouraged to check out the website at www.gsnim.org or call the Indiana Lakeland Girl Scout Council at 574-533-8881 or 866-223-7740.