



Fire Relief Fundraising ~ Q&A

Q: Is there a way for troops to supply Girl Scout uniforms and supplies to the girls who lost their homes in the fires?

A: Troops and families can contribute to GSNorCal's Opportunity Fund, which will provide uniforms, insignias, and up to five earned awards to the girls who lost their homes in the fires. It will also provide insignia pins/tabs, Journey books and Girl's Guides and up to five earned awards to troop leaders. The form can be found on our website: <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/donate-now.html>. When filling out the form, choose "Opportunity Fund" under Designation and then type in "Northern California Fires" in the box provided.

Donors may also donate to the Opportunity Fund in person by visiting any one of our retail stores located in Santa Rosa, Eureka, Redding, Chico, Alameda, or San Jose.

Q: How do girls and troop leaders who lost their homes in the fires apply for funds to help them replace the items mentioned above?

A: Girls and troop leaders can fill out the online form that is now live on our website: <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/our-council/documents-and-publications/financial-aid-form-fire-relief.html>. For those who do not have online access, our retail stores will have a paper version of this form on hand.

Q: In these extenuating circumstances, can troops engage in other fundraising activities, like bake sales or garage sales, etc., during the product sale season?

A: Troops are asked not to conduct fundraising efforts during fall and cookie sales. Troops may contribute proceeds from their troop sales to relief efforts or GSNorCal's Opportunity Fund.

Q: Can troop funds be used to participate in GoFundMe accounts?

A: Troops should follow guidelines outlined in the Volunteer Essentials [Money: Money-Earning Basics] to determine the do's and don'ts of money-earning options. The Volunteer Essentials can be found here: <http://ve.girlscoutsnorcal.org/ve>. Although troops cannot create their own GoFundMe accounts, girls in the troop can vote to contribute troop earnings to specific GoFundMe campaigns, as long as the GoFundMe account has been vetted to determine its legitimacy and that there is no conflict of interest between the troop and the GoFundMe campaign, e.g., a troop parent's business would benefit from the contribution. The troop leader should document these decision-making discussions so that there are no misunderstandings later on. More detail is provided in the Volunteer Essentials [Money: Money-Earning Basics: Projects Benefitting another Organization]

Q: Why can't troops set up their own GoFundMe account?

A: GSNorCal maintains the official 501 (c)(3) status as a non-profit organization. *Troops and service units are not legal entities, and are not non-profit organizations by themselves.* As such, crowd source funding is not allowed. Girl Scout adults who wish to fundraise or apply for grants for GSNorCal (council, service unit, or troop/group) must work with our Fund Development Department staff to ensure that their solicitation is a part of the council's overall fund development plan. Girls may not engage in fundraising activities.

Q: Can troops donate troop funds to a specific relief effort?

A: Girls in the troop can vote to contribute troop earnings to specific relief efforts. Relief efforts should be vetted to ensure that the funds are truly being used to benefit those affected by the fires. The troop leader should document these decision-making discussions so that there are no misunderstandings later on.

Q: What if troops would like to make friendship bracelets and present them to the girls who were affected by the fire? How can that be arranged?

A: Offers of cards, crafts and other tokens of cheer can be directed to Kristen Pierce, North Central Membership Director, kpierce@gsnorcal.org or 530.221.6180 ext. 3025.

Q: Can troops donate gift cards to the affected families?

A: In general, troop and service unit funds cannot be used to purchase gift cards. There are tax implications when cash or gift cards are given to volunteers, no matter how nominal the amount. Federal law dictates that gift card recipients are considered an employee or independent contractor, with all of the requirements that employing an individual requires. This also means that the Federal government views gift cards as taxable income to the recipients.

Q: Troops would like to invite some of the affected troops to a Girl Scout event that they are hosting. How can that be arranged?

A: Check in with Kristen Pierce to see what girls or troops might be interested in participating in other troop or service unit events or gatherings.

Q: Is there a way that troops can help girls attend camp?

A: Yes, anyone can contribute towards GSNorCal's Opportunity Fund that helps girls with membership, GSNorCal camps, programs and events and extended travel and destinations. The form can be found on our website: <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/donate-now.html>. When filling out the form, choose "Opportunity Fund" under Designation and then type in "Northern California Fires" in the box provided.