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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Girl Scouts' P.A.V.E. Program Comes to Anne Arundel County

Nationally tested program empowers teens to prevent violence and resist peer pressure.

Baltimore--With the support of Anne Arundel County Women Giving Together, Girl Scouts of Central Maryland's Project Anti-Violence Education (P.A.V.E.) program will be implemented in Anne Arundel County beginning fall 2009. The Girl Scouts' P.A.V.E. program helps teens avoid the pitfalls of peer pressure by empowering them to prevent violence in their lives, schools and communities. The program, which includes both girls and boys, has been implemented in Baltimore City and Baltimore County for the past eight years.

Working with adult mentors and trainers, like the Maryland Crime Prevention Association, teen girls and boys develop strategies and programs designed to help peers, as well as elementary and middle-school aged youth, identify risky behaviors and how best to avoid them. As part of their strategy, the P.A.V.E. peer counselors developed a one-act play, *The Daily Drama*, which depicts a young girl struggling with pressure from her peers to drink alcohol, smoke, use drugs and join a gang. The play ends by identifying resources—parents, school counselors, teachers and friends—that can help her deal with these vices. In addition, the P.A.V. E. peer counselors develop and host a one-week summer camp program that reinforces these principles. This year's P.A.V.E. camp takes place August 3-7 at Girl Scouts' Camp Ilchester.

Bess Langbein, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County, said the Foundation made the decision to support Girl Scout's P.A.V.E. program because it is "very critical and timely." She added, Anne Arundel County has had some recent instances of bullying and gangs that have caused concern.

According to a report by the Maryland State Department of Education, the majority of bully victims (57.2%) were ages 11 – 14. Frequent victims of bullying and harassment were 12-year-olds, while the highest number of bullying acts was committed by 13-year-olds. In addition, 26% of Anne Arundel County eighth-12th graders have experimented with marijuana and nearly 27% of sixth-12 graders have experimented with drugs other than tobacco and alcohol.

"Girl Scouts is committed to helping every girl reach her full potential," noted Girl Scouts of Central Maryland CEO Traci A. Barnett. "Our P.A.V.E. program," she added, "encourages these girls (and boys) to make good decisions so that they can become great examples of leadership—in their homes, schools and communities."

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Girl Scouts of Central Maryland serves 30,000 members in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard Counties, working to help each girl develop the courage, confidence and character to make the world a better place by providing opportunities for them to Discover who they are, Connect with others who inspire them and equip them to Take Action in their communities.