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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Girl Scouts Locally and Nationally Take a Stance Against Bullying

According to the Office of the Governor’s Maryland Gangs website, there are approximately 45 known criminal street gangs with over 1800 members in Baltimore City. Youth gangs, which are present in the majority of schools in Baltimore with approximately 60 in high schools and 50 in middle schools, have about 1200 members. Statistics from The National Youth Violence Prevention Center show that almost 30% of youth in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both. Girl Scouts, on both the local and national level, has taken action to raise awareness about bullying and provide resources and support for girls dealing with this epidemic.

Locally, Girl Scouts of Central Maryland’s Project Anti-Violence Education (GSCM P.A.V.E.) program has created programs aimed at helping elementary and middle-school-aged youth identify bullying activity and educating them on what they should do if they are bullied. This week, GSCM P.A.V.E. peer counselors –teen-age girls and boys who have been recruited throughout central Maryland and trained to implement anti-violence activities in their neighborhoods and communities—are implementing a week-long summer camp they developed, that focuses on helping younger kids make wise and safe choices about their friends and extracurricular activities. The camp, whose theme is, *Victory Over Violence*, is providing sessions on self-esteem; gangs, led by a representative from the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services; and bullying, led by a representative from the Howard County Police Department.

On the national level, Girl Scout Dominique Napolitano testified at a hearing held on June 24 before the U.S. House of Representatives Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee on the issue of cyberbullying. Napolitano told the panel, “Cyberbullying is not just a phase or behavior in which kids will be kids. Cyber-bullying poses serious consequences to the health and safety of all children.” In New Hampshire a local Girl Scout council was instrumental in gaining passage of an anti-bullying bill ([H.B.1523](#)) that was signed into law by [Governor John Lynch](#) on June 15. The new law extends bullying to incidents of cyber-bullying, which take place through electronic means like cell phones, social networking sites and e-mail. Girl Scouts of Central Maryland and Girl Scouts of the USA are committed to working with local community officials to eradicate this problem.

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Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. Girl Scouts of Central Maryland serves 30,000 girls in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties providing programs and activities that allow them to Discover, Connect and Take Action.

Where Girls Grow StrongSM