

April 13, 2024

Far Eastside Community,

As a proud Far Eastside native, I feel compelled to shed light on a matter close to my soul. The streets of this community hold countless memories of my upbringing—from attending Eastridge Elementary, Creston Junior High, Warren Central High School to being an active member of the Girl Scouts from Kindergarten to my senior year in high school. Coming from a low-income family on the Far Eastside, Girl Scouts gave me numerous opportunities through various funding and scholarship opportunities. I was able to travel to New York and Mexico with Girl Scouts, funded 100 percent by them. Without Girl Scouts, I would not have had these opportunities. I learned to ski for the first time with the Girl Scouts and then became a National Ski Patrol in high school and through graduate school due to this opportunity I wouldn't have had without the Girl Scouts. These opportunities shaped me into the leader I am today. I want to continue to assure all girls, no matter their color or income, are able to participate in Girl Scouts.

Under the current leadership, Girl Scouts is being removed from low-income communities since it doesn't yield any income for them. For 17 years, I had the privilege of working for our local Girl Scout council under the leadership of Deborah Hearn Smith. Debbie's unwavering commitment to diversity and equity transformed our organization, ensuring that all girls, regardless of race or income, had access to the transformative power of scouting. However, with Debbie's retirement came a troubling shift in priorities.

Under current CEO Danielle Shockey, vital programs like the Pearls Program were deemed non-priorities, and opportunities for many neighborhoods in this community and other communities were cut. Despite efforts to advocate for these programs, voices of concerned staff fell on deaf ears. I witnessed distressing practices employed to maintain a facade of diversity. Black and brown girls were exploited for photo shoots, their faces plastered on fundraising materials while genuine efforts to support them dwindled. As a member of the senior leadership team, I voiced my concerns repeatedly, but they were dismissed. The dismantling of diversity initiatives and the disregard for the well-being of staff and girls of color became unbearable. My staff were constantly harassed to contact black troops for mock photo shoots. The once then Hispanic Outreach department was asked to do the same for Latina girls. (this department no longer exists)

If you take a look on GSCI's website and social media pages you will see a pattern of one white girl, one Latina girl, one black girl and sometimes one Asian girl. These girls are not representative of the 90% white membership. These are typically stock photos from the national office or arranged placement photos from the marketing

and branding department under the leadership of executive staff Deana Potterf. My department plead these practices are unethical and disgusting but were forced by Potterf to do so including the invitation of a black troop to camp during the summer of 2020 in active COVID to create a photo shoot. This issue was so alarming it was taken to HR. Not too long after the HR department was shut down and moved to an off-site system. I'm sure all records of diversity, funding harassment and microaggression complaints are gone.

The staff is practically all white and the staff leadership team is all white including the senior and executive leadership staff teams. There is no diversity in the executive or senior leadership staff. These are the day-to-day decision-makers of the organization who are all white with a membership of 16k serving the vast majority of the state.

The majority of the 5,000+ volunteers are all white. Please note I am a white woman who sat uncomfortable in the all-white spaces of decision making for this organization. Watching these practices was beyond sickening! Programs like camp awareness intended to expose black and brown girls to camping were no longer funded but an all-adult alcoholic camp event was created in its place (Camp and Cocktails). Fiesta Camp, a long-standing camp for Hispanic families, was no longer supported at full capacity and participants numbers of 400 died down to less than 50. Both of these programs were created and fostered by the previous CEO but not a priority by Danielle and black and brown girls suffered. These camps were very affordable to create because they took place on the Girl Scouts properties. An outsider looking at the organization's camp marketing materials you would not know the camp program is over 95% white. Camp serves close to 5,000 girls a year with probably less than 300 being black and brown girls.

A contracted DEI expert was brought in to help with diversity issues, volunteer racism, and staff microaggressions but only for the CEO to check a box that DEI work was served. The contracted DEI expert was never allowed to fully implement their curriculum and was asked to alter the curriculum and tone down activities because it was upsetting white staff. Key leadership staff including one who was over all of membership just so happened to have dentist and doctor's appointments the day of these training workshops and was never held accountable by CEO to makeup the trainings with the appointed DEI expert.

The DEI expert asked CEO Shockey to allow access to speak to the board and work with the board to address organization's DEI issues but she wouldn't allow DEI expert to approach the board. Eventually once the expert's contracted workshops were completed a countertop was cleared off in a staff hallway and books on diversity and black authors were set on a counter for staff to read if they wanted. The book placement and playing of the movie Crash was the continued diversity education set in place by CEO Shockey then the box was checked and all else in the DEI space was forgotten.

Not only being raised in the Far Eastside community I am still connected to the community by working in Lawrence Township boundary and residing just east of the

county line. My commitment to our community remains unwavering and I stand with you in holding the Girl Scouts accountable for their actions. The Far Eastside deserves better than token diversity and empty promises.

Most importantly, do not let the Girl Scouts put the obligation of rebuilding troops, programming, and infrastructure on your shoulders. They purposely tore it down and it is up to the Girl Scouts to rebuild. The organization has a very healthy 990 and resources to do so. The community should not be responsible to rebuild what was ripped away from them. This is a man-made problem created by poor leadership and lack of concern for inner-city neighborhoods. The Girl Scouts were thriving in this community years ago and it's sad to see what was dismantled.

In closing, I have never been more proud than I am now to fight with my community that raised me. If change and action cannot be provided you can reach out to the national office Girl Scout office in New York. Thank you for allowing me to share my truth. Together, let's ensure that our community's values of equity and justice are upheld.

Sincerely,

Diana Keely