

SUTLE APPROACH

Creating family traditions

Why should holidays have all the fun? Family traditions are typically centered around yearly events. Birthdays traditionally involve a party, blowing out candles and opening presents. Religious holidays are filled with many beautiful traditions inspiring children to follow their family's faith. Since traditions are recurring routines, why not add some to your everyday life?

What areas of family life need some attention? Are meal times fragmented and stressful? Are the children strangers to their relatives? Is there anything at all pleasant about bedtime? By examining the areas that need help, a family tradition or routine can be set in place for creating more meaningful and enjoyable time together.

Here are five guidelines for creating a new family tradition:

1. It happens at regular time intervals, giving the whole family something to look forward to.
2. It is memorable.
3. It provides a sense of security and structure to family living.
4. It enriches family relationships.
5. It is designed to include fun and togetherness.

Childhood memories are experienced through the senses. Be sure to incorporate sounds, tastes, sights, smells and touch in the traditions you create. Start a routine of playing energetic music during clean up time, or add relaxing music to your children's bedtime routine. Sing lullabies or read stories out loud at the same time each evening. Start Monday mornings with a joke. The delightful sound of laughter lingers long in the hearts of loved ones.

For the sense of smell, get into a routine of adding fragrant scents, like lavender, to the bath water. Consider adding scented candles or flowers to special dinners. Little kids touch everything. Help them link touch to the family traditions. Talk about the sticky feeling of caramel apples during annual cider mill trips, or the silky feel of a satin pillow case used on nights the tooth fairy visits (satin makes it easier for the tooth fairy to slide a special surprise under a sleeping child's head). Add special tastes to each tradition. Just as movies and popcorn go together, turkey on Thanksgiving, cake for birthdays, associating favorite tastes with special occasions sets them apart from other days. It's the small touches that help define your family.

Children have a lot of creative ideas. Encourage their enthusiasm by letting them participate in planning family traditions. Kids can help, but it's a parent's job to decide what traditions fit with the family's values and budget. I overheard two youngsters suggest to dad, "Since there's a Mother's day and a Father's day, why don't we celebrate Kid's day?" Dad responded, "Every day is Kid's day."

Make a tradition of planning regular outings. Not sure where to go? Try museums, planetariums, historical sites, libraries, sports centers, concerts, parks, beaches, theaters, farms, or community centers. Make a list of enjoyable places to visit. By allowing each family member a turn to choose the location, the family gets to explore each other's interests.

A touching way to connect with each of your children is to take turns having a "special day." A special day includes one parent with one child. One on one time together, regardless of what you do, is a self-esteem builder and you will look forward to it as much as your children do.

Use photo albums and scrapbooks to record your family's traditions. Take a picture of your baby each month in an outfit that won't fit him until he's a year old. Plant a tree and take a yearly picture of your family next to it each spring. Trace the shape of your children's hands on a scrapbook page every year. Leave the albums out for the family to enjoy.

Have everyone in attendance at a celebration, write his or her signature or message on a piece of memorabilia,

It's Girl Scout cookie time!



Cookie time: Westland Girl Scouts Troop 162 members, (left to right), Ashley Gatesy, 11, Amanda Mirabitor, 11, and Beth Tolliver, 11, sixth graders at John Marshall Middle School hold three boxes of scout cookies.

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Pour yourself a glass of milk and get ready to dunk! Girl Scout cookies are well underway. Girl Scouts are out in force through Jan. 20, going door-to-door taking orders for cookie favorites, like Thin Mints and Caramel deLites.

"They're all good," said Brittany Modreski, 10, of the eight cookie varieties the Girl Scouts sell each year. Modreski is a member of Troop 2123 in Farmington Hills.

The origin of Girl Scout cookies is unclear, but legend has it that the first cookie was a homemade "biscuit" baked and sold by troops of Girl Guides in England in the first part of the 1900s. Shortly after Juliet Gordon Low founded the Girl Scouts in the United States in 1912, good old American entrepreneurship kicked in and selling cookies became a way to finance troop activities. According to the Girl Scouts Web site, the first cookie sale took place in December 1917 when the Mistletoe Troop in Muskogee, Okla., baked cookies and sold them in its high school cafeteria as a service project.

Through the 1920s and early 1930s, Girl Scouts in different parts of the country baked their own simple sugar cookies with their mothers and sold them door-to-door for approximately 25 cents a dozen. Since the mid-1960s, the cookies have been commercially baked, and today a box sells for \$3.

It is estimated that more than 2 million Girl Scouts participate in cookie sales. They represent 160,000 troops in 321 Girl Scout councils across the United States.

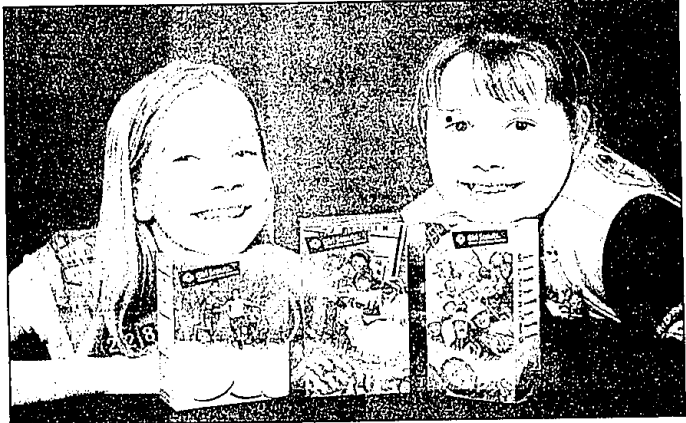
Beth Tolliver, 11, of Troop 162 in Westland enjoys selling the cookies. "It's just for the fun and being out there with people, just getting some fresh air," she said.

Marketing
Sometimes, when it comes to door-to-door sales, a Girl Scout faces a bit of competition, said Catherine Solits, 10, of Farmington Hills Troop 2123. "The hard part for me is there's another Girl Scout who lives across the street."

Fortunately, through the decades, relatives and friends remain a Girl Scout's biggest market.

"On New Year's Eve, people who aren't even my relatives get to buy from me," said Modreski. "One person buys 60 boxes, 30 of Tagalongs and 30 Thin Mints."

"My aunt buys pretty much 15-20 boxes. She sends



STAFF PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY

Won't you, please?: Plymouth Girl Scout Troop 1228 members Meg Grippman, 10 (left) and Alyssa Spooner, 10 (right), fifth graders at Bird Elementary will sell different types of girl scout cookies.

them out to relatives and her boyfriend, who lives in Arizona," said Beth Tolliver, 11, of Troop 162 in Westland.

However, Girl Scouts agree selling cookies takes more skill than luck and generous relatives. The industrious Catherine Solits, 10, of Troop 2123 in Farmington Hills, understands the value of marketing. "I say on my answering machine that I'm selling Girl Scout cookies and if you want any to call me. I also send out a flier," she said.

Amanda Mirabitor of Westland Troop 162 learned about commitment and setting limits. "Both skill and luck are important," she said. "I learned last year, don't do what you can't handle. I stood in the cold one

day from 3-9 p.m. selling cookies. I wanted this special shirt. I had to sell 400 boxes."

Successful selling also requires good manners. "If you just say, 'Hey, you want to buy some cookies?' they won't say anything. But if you say, 'Hi, I'm from Troop whatever, they'll buy. And if you wear your vest or sash, that helps,'" said Meg Grippman of Troop 1228 in Plymouth.

And what do you do if a non-cooking loving person answers the door? "If I go to a grumpy house, I just say thank-you and go to another house," said Grippman.

Good cause
Cookie sales are important to Scouting because more than two-thirds of proceeds benefit projects for financial aid, leadership and citizenship training, math, science and technology training, career awareness and job preparation, and facility and property maintenance.

Just 83 cents per \$3 box goes to the baker for cookies, delivery and cost of operating the sale. Forty-two cents is kept by the individual troops.

"We sell about \$10,000 worth of cookies, and we keep about \$1,600. It's our biggest fundraiser," said Janis Mirabitor of Westland, a Troop 162 leader.

"We raise money to go on field trips, and most everybody gets to go because we raise so much money," said Alyssa Spooner, 10, of Troop 1228 in Plymouth.

Field trips include adventures like staying overnight at the Toledo Zoo, where Girl Scouts were treated to a nocturnal tour earlier this year. They also include lots of "Dads and Me" outings and camping trips, where scouts learn to relish "Walking Taco"—a mixture of ground beef, lettuce and cheese poured into a bag of Fritos and shaken.

Favorite cookie
The new Friendship Circles cookie—chocolate filling sandwiched between two vanilla cookies and embossed with the word "friend" in 18 languages—is a favorite among the Farmington Hills, Westland and Plymouth troops. So is the Peanut Butter Patties, the gooey Caramel deLites and the Thin Mints, one of the top-sellers in Michigan.

They recommend drinking chocolate milk with the Friendship cookie, plain white milk with the Caramels and "a nice tea" with the Thin Mints.

But Ashley Gatesy, 11, of Troop 162 in Westland doesn't want to influence anybody's cookie choice. She just wants to sell lots of cookies. "We'd like you to tell people it's Girl Scout cookies time again," she said.



Salesmanship: Farmington Hills troop 2123 members Ashley Cohagen, 10 (left to right), Catherine Solits, 10, and Brittany Modreski, 10 of Highmeadow Common Campus in Farmington Hills are among many selling girl scout cookies.