

Girl Scout of Northern Illinois (GSNI) 2026 Cookie Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

We're so grateful for every Girl Scout, family member, and volunteer who participates in the Girl Scout Cookie Program! Each person's support means that generations of Girl Scouts are building vital life skills that will equip them for success and build thriving, local communities. Changes made to the 2026 Girl Scout Cookie Program are based on Girl Scout, volunteer, and parent feedback and will be reviewed, reassessed, and adjusted accordingly each year. Our goal is simple—keep growing with our Girl Scout families and make each year even better than the last!

If you have any questions regarding these FAQs or other questions about the 2026 Girl Scout Cookie Program, please contact GSNI's Product Program Team at cookies4you@girlscoutsni.org. We will continue to update these FAQs throughout the season as more valuable questions are asked!

Update 1/25/2026

Q: Is there a Cookie Shirt for adults similar to the Girl Scout Initial Order Reward Girl Scout Life t-shirt?

A: By request, [Adult Cookie Shirts](#) are now available for pre-order.

Updated 1/20/2026

Q: Why was peanut flour included in Exploremores cookies?

A: Our bakers recommended peanut flour to improve texture and enhance the nutty flavor, complementing the rocky road-inspired profile (answer provided by GSUSA).

Q: Do Exploremores contain Almonds?

A: The almond flavor comes from natural and artificial flavoring, which is noted on the Nutritional Labeling panel and the front of the pack (answer provided by GSUSA).

Updated 1/15/2026

Q: How do I find out more about the cookie program related badges and pins and how do I get them?

A: To find out more about how to earn the Cookie Business, Financial Literacy, and Entrepreneurship Badges as well as the Cookie Entrepreneur Family Pin, [click here](#). These can all be purchased from any GSNI Resource Center store or [online store](#). These are available year-round for purchasing.

Q: What is the deadline for troops to meet the minimum members so the troop can earn troop proceeds?

A: Troops can still participate in the cookie program, but must meet the minimum requirements of members to earn troop proceeds. Daisy, Brownie, Junior troops must have 5 members and Cadette, Senior, Ambassador troops must have 3 members. The published deadline to meet this minimum is Monday, January 26. However, we have flexibility for troops to meet the minimum by the end of the program on Sunday, March 22.

Q: Is the requirement to earn the Initial Order Girl Scout Life t-shirt reward 150+ packages or \$150+?

A: We apologize for the error on the troop training where it showed a "\$" in front of the 150+ packages description. This has been updated and the Girl Scout's order card is correct. All cookie program rewards

are based on packages. To earn the Initial Order Girl Scout Life t-shirt, a Girl Scout must sell 150+ packages during initial order ending Monday, January 26. Digital Cookie girl delivery (placed and parent approved) and shipped orders as well as paper order card orders count towards a Girl Scouts initial order total.

Updated 1/13/2026

Q: Can you provide more details on the new rewards?

A: Some answers are in the questions and answers below, but use these [Reward Descriptions](#) for more information.

Q: What is not allowed to be posted on social media?

A: A Girl Scout's Digital Cookie link or information about selling Girl Scout Cookies may not be posted on any **national** social media site. This includes, but is not limited to, eBay, Craigslist, Amazon, Facebook Marketplace, YouTube, Shopify, etc. Additionally, no paid advertising of any kind on social or general media is allowed. See the full [GSNI Product Program Social and General Media Policies](#) for more details.

Updated 12/19/2025

Q: Is there a new reward for the Top 25 Girl Scout Entrepreneurs?

A: By request, GSNI will be offering a Cookie Hustle Club hoodie (pictured here) for the Top 25 Entrepreneurs. Girl Scouts earning will be contacted after the end of the program. Girl Scout whose troop opt-outs of rewards will still be eligible for this reward.



Q: Can the Creation Station reward also be available for Girl Scouts at both Rockford and South Elgin Resource Centers?

A: GSNI listened to concerns regarding the Create Your Own Hoodie and Hat Creation Station reward (a choice at the 600-package level) and Girl Scouts having to travel to South Elgin. Dates have been added for Girl Scouts to complete the reward, if earned and chosen, at both Rockford and South Elgin Resource Centers. Times will be scheduled after the program ends when we know how many Girl Scouts have earned and chosen the reward.

- South Elgin—April 11 & 12 and 18 & 19
- Rockford—May 9 & 10 and 16 & 17

Q: What is included with the Cookie All-Stars reward event at Main Event earned at the 600 packages level?

A: Girl Scouts earning and choosing the Cookie All-Stars reward event at [Main Event in Hoffman Estates](#) will be invited with a chaperone to attend. The Girl Scout will receive a pass for 4 hours (10 a.m.-2 p.m.) of unlimited activities including Bowling, Laser Tag, Gravity Ropes Course with Zipline, Billiards, and Shuffleboard, plus, a \$10 Arcade Card (with prizing). Additionally, GSNI will have a private room serving pizza and drinks and activities, such as 2027 Reward Voting, that both the Girl Scout and chaperone can access.

If the chaperone would like to participate in any activities or additional family members would like to attend, the current package pricing starts at \$19.99. This pricing is subject to change and/or specials may be available for June 2026. We will share updated pricing when reward invitations are sent. Additional family members are not able to attend the private room.

The GSNI Mobile Store will also be available in the parking lot outside the facility.

Q: Are there restrictions on the distance from an “inappropriate location” that a cookie booth can be held?

A: As a reminder troops may not hold a cookie booth at an inappropriate location. An inappropriate location is defined as a location Girl Scouts themselves cannot legally patronize. These include but are not limited to liquor stores, gambling facilities, dispensaries, tattoo parlors, bars, etc.

The question has been asked if there is a restriction on the distance a troop can hold a cookie booth from an inappropriate location. GSUSA does not provide any guidance on a distance required to hold a cookie booth from an inappropriate location. GSNI will not require any restrictions either as it would be very difficult to measure, monitor, and control. That being said, we expect “On Your Honor” that troops consider the wellness and safety of the Girl Scouts when choosing any cookie booth location.

Updated 11/24/2025

Q: Will GSNI's Lake Zurich Resource Center still be accepting Cookie Cravers?

A: With our Lake Zurich Resource Center transitioning to a pre-order pick-up model only, this location will not be available for Cookie Cravers, damaged package exchanges, etc. However, to provide a Cookie Craver opportunity in the northwest part of GSNI, the volunteer McHenry East Cupboard will accept Cookie Cravers for credit/debit card payments only. The volunteer Dixon Cupboard will also accept Cookie Cravers for credit card payments only. More details of the cupboard hours, location details, and contact information for these volunteer cupboards will be posted closer to the start of Cookie Cravers.

Additionally, GSNI will be launching a new Cookies on the Go opportunity where we will be traveling with the GSNI van throughout the council for Cookie Cravers and potentially small cupboard orders. Watch for more details and scheduled locations to start in February.

Q: Why are volunteer cupboards closing early on Monday, March 16?

A: To assist the Product Program Team in managing and centralizing cookie inventory across GSNI, we will be closing and moving inventory from volunteer cupboards to council cupboards for the last week of the program. If we see a need at a specific volunteer cupboard, then the Product Program Team will evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether to keep a volunteer cupboard open beyond this date.

Q: Regarding the Troop Membership reward, what if a Girl Scout in the troop is a graduating high school senior?

A: If a Girl Scout graduating from high school is part of a troop earning the Troop Membership reward, the \$40 can be applied towards a Lifetime Membership.

Q: Can troops collect money through a donation jar at their cookie booth?

A: If a troop chooses to have a donation jar at their booth, any signage must clearly state that the money collected will be used to purchase cookie packages for donation to military organizations or another organization decided by the troop. Whether a customer says “keep the change” from their cookie order or offers a monetary amount to the troop without purchasing cookies, any money donated must be applied towards the troop’s Gift of Caring/donation packages of cookies. A tip jar is not allowed.

Q: Is there a change to the Bling Your Booth theme weeks?

A: After Troop Cookie Training was already completed, GSNI learned we had identified the wrong weekend as National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend. All digital materials have been updated, but some people may have seen the first theme week listed as National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend. Below are the updated theme weeks. If a troop mistakenly places an entry for the wrong week due to this change, they will not be disqualified from the drawing.

- February 13–19—Winter Wonderland
- February 20–26—National Girl Scout Cookie Weekend
- February 27–March 5—Power your Brain with Girl Scout Cookies
- March 6–12—ExploreMORE, Go Explore!
- March 13–19—YeeHaw for Cookies!
- March 20–22—Brave. Fierce. Fun!

Q: Is the packaging for Adventurefuls changing?

A: Adventurefuls will be transitioning to soft packaging like Lemon-Ups. However, Little Brownie Bakers will be using their remaining inventory of cardboard packaging first. We may or may not see the soft

packaging in our initial order and cupboard inventory. Customers receiving shipped Digital Cookie orders may see either type of packaging.

Q: Will there be limited amounts of Exploremores or any other varieties of cookies in the cupboards?

A: Like in the past, Toffee-tastics will be limited within the cupboards and may not be available for Cookie Cravers. This is the only “specialty” cookie now that S’mores have been retired. GSNI is not limited in our ability to order additional of all the other varieties of cookies, including Exploremores.

Q: Are there changes to the Digital Cookie Mobile App?

A: Yes, there are very exciting changes to the Digital Cookie mobile app! Some of these include:

- Push notifications to parents/caregivers for Digital Cookie girl delivery orders that need to be approved.
 - New Cookie Order—When a new Digital Cookie girl delivery order has been placed.
 - Action Required—When one or more Digital Cookie girl delivery order is waiting to be approved/denied.
 - Order Expiring—When one or more Digital Cookie girl delivery orders is expiring the next day.
 - Venmo and PayPal accepted for all order types
 - Cookie Booth transactions streamlined to two steps
 - Ability to manage all cookie booth transactions on the mobile app, including cash transactions
- Review these Digital Cookie tip sheets and videos for additional details.

- Parents/Girl Scouts
 - [Digital Cookie Mobile App for Girl Scouts \(video\)](#)
 - [Digital Cookie Mobile App for a Cookie Booth \(video\)](#)
- Troops/Volunteers
 - [Digital Cookie Mobile App for Troops \(video\)](#)

Q: When will the Initial Order t-shirt reward be distributed to troops/Girl Scouts?

A: Girl Scouts who earn the Initial Order Girl Scout Life t-shirt will not have to wait until the end of the program to receive this reward. We want Girl Scouts to have their shirt during cookie booths or other activities throughout the remaining cookie season. Troop Cookie Chairs will be contacted to pick up t-shirts earned by Girl Scouts in the troop from the nearest GSNI Resource Center or to make other arrangements.

Q: What Great Wolf Lodge location can Girl Scouts book if they earn and choose this reward?

A: We anticipate that most Girl Scouts who earn and choose the reward will want to attend at the closest locations in Gurnee, Illinois, or Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin. However, any location within the United States is an option. Keep in mind, transportation is not included with the reward.

Q: What is the correct start date for Cookie Cravers?

A: We apologize for the confusion. The date of Thursday, February 12, (as shown on the Troop Training slides) is the first day cupboards are open and first day Cookie Cravers start. The voiceover stated February 6, and was incorrect.

Update 11/3/2025

Q: What do troops do if they have not sold all the cookies received at the end of the program.

A: Ideally, a troop has managed their inventory appropriately, so they do not have cookies remaining. As the end of the program approaches, if a troop finds themselves with more cookies than they think they can sell before the end of the program, it is important for them to let their Service Unit Cookie Coordinator and the Product Program Team know. We can offer options to assist.

If a troop has cookies remaining, the troop must contact the Product Program Team for guidelines and deadlines regarding selling cookies after the official program ends. Troops may choose to donate extra cookies through the council’s Gift of Caring program.

The troop is financially responsible for all cookies received, and unsold cookies cannot be returned to the council, so troops are encouraged to plan carefully when placing orders.

Update 9/17/2025

Q: How can stories about Girl Scout and troop achievements be shared?

A: Sharing positive Girl Scout stories is always encouraged! Email your Girl Scout Cookie Program photos, videos, and experiences to stories@girlscoutsni.org to be featured on our website or in our social media channels and publications!

The Blue Ribbon MVP program is a new addition for the 2026 cookie program as GSNI staff and board members will be visiting cookie booths. This is a great time for Girl Scouts to share their favorite cookie stories! Staff and board members visiting the booths will distribute a Blue Ribbon MVP patch to Girl Scouts present at the cookie booth.

Updated 9/12/2025

Q: Are there allergy concerns for Exploremores™, the new Girl Scout Cookie?

A: Exploremores™ contain almond flavoring, as well as peanut flour, wheat, soy, and milk and are manufactured in a shared facility with tree nuts and eggs. Please review the [Cookie Ingredients and Food Allergen Guide](#) (English) or in [Spanish](#) as well as the [2026 Girl Scout Cookie flyer](#) (English) or in [Spanish](#) for cookie descriptions and nutritional information provided by Little Brownie Bakers®.

Q: Will the new Girl Scout Cookie, Exploremores™, be included on the order card?

A: Yes, like the other eight varieties of cookies, Exploremores™ will be listed on the order card, available for both Girl Scout delivery and shipped Digital Cookie orders. Exploremores™ will also be available in cookie cupboards for troops to sell at cookie booths!

Q: Will Girl Scouts be able to taste the new Girl Scout Cookie, Exploremores™, before the 2026 cookie program starts?

A: Yes! Samples will be available to taste at the Explore Cookies & S'more events on Saturday, December 6, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at all GSNI Resource Centers. Exploremores™ will also be the cookie package troops receive with their troop materials!

Q: Why does the cookie program happen during the coldest months of the year?

A: Selling in colder months can be challenging. Our Girl Scout Cookie Program continues to run during this time due to:

- National Promotions: The national Girl Scout Cookie Program, led by Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), kicks off in January. Aligning with this national timeline allows us to take advantage of coordinated promotions and media coverage, helping to boost visibility and sales locally.
- Digital Cookie Advantage: While in-person booth sales may be affected by the cold, Digital Cookie provides a convenient, flexible way to sell without braving the weather.
- Program Year Planning: Starting the cookie program later—such as in March or April—would significantly shorten the timeline for distributing rewards and planning reward events before the Girl Scout year ends.
- Warm Weather Trade-Offs: While warmer months are more comfortable, they also come with scheduling conflicts like spring breaks, standardized testing, family vacations, and overlapping extracurriculars, all of which can limit participation and availability.

Q: Can volunteers receive the Initial Order t-shirt?

A: The Initial Order reward t-shirt is just for Girl Scouts. The focus on rewards for 2026 was based on Girl Scout requests. The Product Program team will continue to review volunteer recognition items.

Q: How does the Build Your Own Camping Kit reward work?

A: GSNI will be using a new opportunity offered as a partnership between GSUSA and Amazon®. GSNI will create a large list of camping items, and Girl Scouts will receive a shopping code for a set dollar

amount and be able to “shop” for the camping items they want or need. The process is very similar to making any purchase on Amazon®, and items will be shipped directly to the Girl Scout.

Q: Why did the troop experience reward change to a troop membership reward?

A: Families and volunteers told us membership costs were a concern. This change is designed to help reduce the financial burden on families, allowing many to only pay the original \$25 membership fee to continue their Girl Scout journey. This is our way of giving back and supporting our Girl Scout families by making it easier to stay involved and engaged.

Q: Troop proceeds remain at \$0.95 per cookie package. Why haven't they increased?

A: The base proceeds were increased from \$0.85 to \$0.95 for the 2025 program year. GSNI also introduced additional ways for troops to earn more. These proceeds were updated in opportunities for 2026:

- Troops can earn an additional \$.05 per package in proceeds by participating and meeting requirements in both Fall Product and Girl Scout Cookie Programs.
- If, as a council, we meet a stretch goal of 1.125 million packages, troops can earn \$.05 more per package.

GSNI will continue to review and evaluate the possibility of an increase to troop proceeds for future programs as we balance rewards, proceeds, and program sustainability.

Q: Why was the Super Seller-bration reward event reformatted?

A: Based on feedback from our youth member survey, the reward at the 600+ package level was re-named to Cookie All-Stars and updated as an experience. Many Girl Scouts expressed they were ready for something different than the traditional camp reward, and we listened! GSNI is committed to continuing to listen to what Girl Scouts want and evolving the program accordingly.

Q: Why aren't Girl Scouts who opt out of rewards invited to attend Cookie All-Star?

A: Girl Scouts who choose higher troop proceeds instead of rewards are making a different, but equally valuable, choice. Because the Cookie All-Star is a reward, Girl Scouts who opt out are not eligible to attend.

Q: What happened to the Disney® trip reward?

A: Girl Scouts asked for something new! This year, the top reward level offers two exciting adventure choices (each including a trip, Crocs™, and a Stanley® cup). While Disney® has been a popular reward for many years, feedback from our Girl Scouts showed they were ready for different experiences. These fresh options provide just as much fun while keeping the experience new.

Q: I thought BFF-themed custom Crocs™ were included at the 3,500-package level?

A: GSNI recently learned Crocs™ will be discontinuing the option to customize. Girl Scouts who achieve this package level will still get to choose a pair of Classic Clog Crocs™ along with their trip experience.

Q: Why is Cookie Dough only offered at one level this year?

A: This decision was based on the use of Cookie Dough over the past several years. At the same time, our youth member survey revealed many Girl Scouts were interested in different types of rewards, including more experiences, events, and wearables. This change to Cookie Dough ensures rewards are exciting, meaningful, and actually used.

Q: How will troops know the balance due to GSNI for the final bank sweep?

A: GSNI listened to troop frustrations regarding calculating what amount will be swept from troop bank accounts. For this year, only one sweep will occur at the end of the program on Tuesday, April 7. The amount due will now be displayed on the troop dashboard in eBudde. This amount will match the Sales Report tab with a full breakdown of calculations.

Q: Sometimes our Girl Scouts get asked questions at cookie booths regarding palm oil. Does GSNI have resources for this?

A: Yes! You have access to a [Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit](#) developed by GSUSA. This is posted on the website and Rallyhood for volunteers to learn how to guide Girl Scouts to understand what it means to be a global citizen who supports the use of sustainable palm oil. This is a long document but filled with valuable information.

If you were unable to join us for the early glimpse of What's New in 2026 Cookie Program presentations, please join the [Cookie Program Rallyhood](#) to view the recordings.