

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ

SUBJECT: MS. CHÁVEZ WILL BE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL TO CELEBRATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF GIRL SCOUTING.

MODERATOR: THERESA WERNER, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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THERESA WERNER: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Theresa Werner, and I am the 105th president of the National Press Club. We are the world's leading professional organization for journalists, committed to our profession's future through our programming with events such as these, while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at www.press.org. To donate to our programs offered to the public through our National Press Club Journalism Institute, please visit www.press.org/institute.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. And, if you hear applause from our audience, please note that members of the general public are attending. So it isn't necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity.

I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN audience and our Public Radio audiences. Our luncheons are also featured on our member-produced weekly Podcast from the National Press Club, available on iTunes. You can also follow the action on Twitter using hashtag #NPCLunch. After our guest speech concludes, we'll have a question and answer segment. And I will ask as many questions as time permits.

Now I would like to introduce our head table guests. And I would ask each of you to stand up briefly as your name is announced. From the right, Peggy Orchowksi, Girl Scout and a Congressional correspondent for Hispanic Outlook. Maureen Groppe, Girl Scout, *Indianapolis Star*, Washington correspondent. Diane Booth, Girl Scout and Girl Scout leader, author and freelance writer. Lisa Gable, National Board member, guest of our speaker today. Kay Shaw Nelson, Girl Scout, author. Sheila Johnson, managing partner, Monumental Sports and Entertainment, owner of the Washington Misfits, and a guest of our speaker today. Angela Greiling Keene, Bloomberg News and Vice-President of the National Press Club, a 12-year Girl Scout, and current troop coleader.

I'm going to skip our speaker for a moment. Deborah Silimeo, Executive Vice-President, Hager Sharp, and Speaker Committee member who organized today's event. Deborah participates in Girl Scout Camp CEO, which connects Scouts with women business leaders. Lidia Soto Harmon, Chief Executive Office, Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital. Lidia is hosting the largest gathering of Girl Scouts at the Washington Monument, Girl Scouts Rock the Mall on June the 9th. And she is a guest of our speaker today. Valerie Jackson, Junior and Cadet Girl Scout, editor, PLAX(?). Suzanne Struglinski, Girl Scout, press secretary for Legislative Affairs, National Resource Defense Council, and National Press Club Board member. Joan Michaelson, Girl Scout, Executive Producer and host of Green Connections Radio.

And also joining us today in spirit and wax, Girl Scout founder Juliette Gordon Low, who recently made her debut at Madame Tussauds' Wax Museum here in Washington, D.C.

[applause]

When many people hear Girl Scouts, they immediately think "cookies!" Thin Mints, Tagalongs, and my personal favorite, Samoas, as they were a debut cookie when I was a Brownie. But, for our speaker, Anna Maria Chavez, Girl Scout cookies mean goal-setting, money management, and people skills, training that helps young girls think about business.

When she was growing up in Eloy, Arizona, she joined the Girl Scouts and went away to camp at age 10. That was a moment of revelation for the young Latina, from a not very wealthy small town. As she tells the story, it was the first opportunity she had to go away, by herself, without her family. She was with girls her own age, from all over the state, from many different backgrounds. That camping experience gave her the sense that it was cool to be a girl. And that there was a bigger world out there than she ever thought about.

That is exactly what Juliette Gordon Low had in mind when she established the Girl Scouts. That was 100 years ago, before women had the right to vote, were expected to go to college, or to participate in the business world. Low, who was the product of a turn-of-the-century southern upbringing, found her true calling in bringing girls of all backgrounds together, to learn about self-reliance, diversity, and actively participating in

civic life. In fact, the first Girl Scout Handbook was called *How Girls Can Help Their Country*.

Low would be pleased to know that two-thirds of the female members of Congress have been Girl Scouts. And all three female Secretaries of State, Condoleezza Rice, Madeline Albright, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, as well as Sandra Day O'Connor, Venus Williams, Lucille Ball, and the list goes on, including future leaders right here in our audience. Ellie Beale from Troop 1327, from Woodbridge, Virginia, Becky Townsend and members of Troop 4006, from Oakton, Virginia.

Yesterday the President honored Low with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. And today, Anna Maria Chavez, her journey brought her here. She had a full scholarship to Yale, then a career in public service, counseling then-Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, on urban relations, Latino matters, and community services. She spent some time here in D.C. as well, in senior roles as the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Small Business Administration, and the Federal Highway Administration.

She became the CEO of Girl Scouts USA a year and a half ago. And she quickly found out leading a national organization means dealing with politics. So, even as Chavez leads the 100th anniversary celebration, she is dealing with political fire from some who say scouting promotes sexuality and even abortions. And the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops says it is investigating the organization. It also means taking the organization into the digital age, with virtual troops that meet online, and a new badge that girls can earn for netiquette, understanding online safety and preventing cyber bullying.

Chavez hopes to make her mark in a very big way. she has launched an ambitious program that will close the leadership gap between men and women within one generation. We look forward to hearing all about it. Please welcome Anna Maria Chavez.

[applause]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Thank you. Thank you, Theresa, for that wonderful introduction. My mother appreciates the fact that you use the official bio. [laughter] She does take credit. I want to thank the head table. Deborah, thank you so much for making this happen. To Lidia, who is my colleague. I am really grateful to lead a national organization, but in partnership with 112 Girl Scout Councils across the country. And Lidia leads the nation's capital here and is a great partner. So thank you for being here.

To our National Board, represented by Lisa Gable, to Connie Lindsay, our National Board President, I bring her good wishes as well. And to those of you in the audience today that are here to support us, and also Girl Scouts, who, by the way, we work for every day. And we're so proud of you.

You know, I wanted to start my remarks talking about a girl, a girl-- a very special girl, a girl that grew up in China. And a little about this girl, if you imagine your hands,

okay. In her hand, however, she didn't have fingers, just a palm and a thumb. But there was a family that traveled to China to adopt her in an orphanage. And they brought her to Georgia, where they loved her and cared for her. But even the daily task of tying the shoe, or picking up a toy was difficult for this young girl, who they named Danielle.

And Danielle had lots of aspirations. But the parents wanted to figure out what they could do for her in her life. So, as anybody does these days, right, they Googled a solution. And they found a whole community out there of people who wanted to support this young lady. But they found a group in particular, a group of leaders who wanted to investigate a process to help this little girl named Danielle.

So this group, they went out and, for six months, investigated different options. They visited manufacturing plants. They went to craft stores. Now, after six months and about 180 hours of research and work, they developed a prosthetic hand made out of molding sort of, you know, things that they could figure out how to use in the craft store, and Velcro. And they put it on her hand, and it worked. And, for the first time, Danielle was able to write her name.

Well these amazing individuals are called the Flying Monkeys. The Flying Monkeys. Really, truly. That's what their names are. It's a Girl Scout troop from Ames, Iowa. Yes. And they're amazing, so amazing that these members went on to win a global competition beating out almost 200 other teams, and claiming a \$20,000 dollar prize to patent their device they call Bob 1.

Now it's a great story. And I tell it because it not only inspires me, but it inspires other girls. You know, think about this. Six intrepid middle school girls, sitting there, figuring out, "Hmm, how do we create a hand for a little girl?" you know. And so thinking about these girls, I really get sort of bullish about America's future, given the fact that we have girls out there that have incredible ingenuity, creativity, and not only that, they're thinking about other people and how they can help.

So, as the Chief Executive Officer for the Girl Scouts of the USA, I had the privilege and the honor of seeing these girls across the country. You know, this story has a good ending. But unfortunately, there's another side to this, which I will be very honest, distresses me. It distresses me because there are, I know, remarkable girls trying to do great things. But, will enough of them grow up to realize their full potential? Because unfortunately, don't see enough women in leadership positions across the country at this time.

You know, if you look at Congress, only 16 percent of our elected officials are women. Across corporate America, women occupy only 15 percent of seats on board rooms, and just two percent hold a top job at a fortune 500 company. Women manage only three percent of all hedge funds and 10 percent of mutual funds. Yet women-owned funds significantly outperform funds in general, even during tough times such as these. Women hold just 16 percent of the top positions at movie studios, and own fewer than six

percent of TV stations in the United States. And currently, women make up only 6.5 percent of the Science Advisory Board members at U.S. high tech firms.

So let me give you another image. Imagine this. Imagine a classroom in an elementary school with 50 kids, evenly divided between boys and girls. And then ask every single girl to leave the room except one. And ask the group of 25 boys and one girl to take on and solve a challenging problem. Well that's the situation we have here in the United States.

And unfortunately, you know, we are making progress in some areas. Yes, young women are going on to college. You know, they're earning a degree. Nearly half of all law students are girls, are women. But, as I've noted in too many cases, we're not getting girls from aspiration to action, especially when it comes to critical fields like science, technology, engineering, and science and math. So it's a vicious cycle. And, as the saying goes, you can't buy something you can't see. And, if there aren't enough successful women in technology and in engineering, girls can't sit back and go, "I can do that. I see myself there."

So again, I work with a lot of girls. I travel the country. One of the best jobs in the world is the job I'm sitting in today. I get to talk to girls, ages five to 17. And they tell me their dreams. But they also say, "Eagle 1"-- by the way, that's what the Girl Scouts call me, Eagle 1-- they say, "Eagle 1, help us. Because this is what the reality is for us. You know, I go to school. And I'm really psyched about math and science." And around fourth grade, people are like, "Well girls don't do math and science." So then they opt out.

Then they go on and they go to high school. And they're thinking about student government. And then they get up, and they do things. And unfortunately, some of the remarks are, "Well girls-- that's being too bossy. You know, why are you doing that?" And then they go on into their careers. And again, sometimes they don't see the female role models in the firms, the companies they want to work at.

So, what they say to me, the girls honestly say, "Anna, help us. Help us change the messages that girls are getting in today's society." Because unfortunately, at Girl Scouts, we have a research institute that brings out some, unfortunately, negative data around life. Right now, our research says that nearly 90 percent of girls say that the fashion industry in the media places a lot of pressure on them to be thin. And the fact is, that 42 percent of girls in this country are growing up economically disadvantaged. And those rates are higher for Hispanic and African American girls in this country.

And, while eight out of ten girls are interested in interacting with successful women, a majority of them-- 60 percent say they haven't been offered a chance to visit the workplaces of successful women in their community during the last school year. Now, is it any wonder why 61 percent of girls say that leadership is neither important to them, or say that they don't want to be leaders?

So I know that you're probably taking a pause with me. Because, again, we've got to get beyond this data. Now, looking at girls, specifically around STEM, we found out a great statistic recently. On February 14th, on Valentine's Day, we published a report that said, "Girls love STEM." And it's true. If you ask most girls, the majority of them, over 74 percent of them will say, "I love math and science." What they want is a hand up. They want somebody to say, and come by them, and mentor them around these issues. And, talking to girls, we want to let them know it's a career option. Because, again, we can't have girls opting up, because they can change the world.

You know what? And it's not just about Girl Scouts. It's about all girls. You know, there's one girl in particular, her name is Angela Zang(?). Amazing girl. She, at the ripe age of 17, invented a nano particle. Not just any nano particle, mind you, but one that kills cancer cells. And, surprising-- not surprising-- she won a \$100,000 dollar grand prize recently at a math and science competition.

And then, coming up right next to her is Marian, Marian Victell,(?) who is also 17. And she has done some research on buried land mines around the world. So she just didn't sit back, she wanted to do something. So she went out, and she created, actually, an alternative, a device that actually goes out there and identifies where these mines are buried. She won a \$25,000 scholarship. And her invention is a great thing, because people can produce it at a cheap cost in other countries.

So the point is this. That, when you inspire girls, when you give them opportunities, when you support them, when you mentor them, they're going to get on their journeys, because they truly know the path. Sometimes adults, we kind of put barriers in the way. We put, you know, stereotypes. We put negative images. But if you're truly sitting there with a girl, and you start taking those barriers out of the way, they're going to jump to where they need to get to.

You know, I'm very fortunate. I had a lot of people in my life that mentored me, from a very young age in Eloy, Arizona, where apparently I was poor-- I didn't know it, because we were rich in love-- But I remember thinking the only thing I wanted to be was a Girl Scout. And, when I had the opportunity to become a member of this movement, I moved to San Antonio, Texas-- dragged my husband and my son-- and we moved, sight unseen, to work for the girls in Southwest Texas.

And I remember sitting there and thinking about girls. And, you know, it's very simple. They see our organization, it's iconic. And one day we were doing this recruitment event. Because in Girl Scouting, we still work in partnership with school districts across the country to recruit girls. And we do the brochures. We take it to the schools to announce recruitment event. We hope that it gets into the teachers' boxes. And we hope the teachers take that form and put it in the girls' backpacks. And we hope that it gets home and a parent finds that form.

Well that worked one day in San Antonio, Texas. And this little girl, she was eight years old, and she had the form in her backpack. And she showed up at one of our

recruitment events, our elementary school one night. After everything was done, my staff and the volunteers looked, and there was one person left. And it was the eight year old girl. Beautiful little girl. They're like, "Honey, where's your parents?" She said, "Oh no, I came by myself. There's my bicycle." [laughter] And they're like, "Well honey, it's late. It's like 8:30." She's like, "I know, and I forgot my way. Can you take me home?"

What we found out is this. This little young lady was living with her father, a single parent, who was working two jobs because he had been laid off. And they scraped and scraped, because it's only \$12 dollars to be a Girl Scout-- that's all it costs one year to be a Girl Scout, \$12 dollars. But for them, that was a heavy lift. So they looked under sofa cushions. They looked under the refrigerator. And she found \$12 dollars in change. She brought that change in a bottle. And she put it in front of my recruiter and said, "You know, we may be poor, we may be alone today. But I want to be a Girl Scout because I know I'm going to be able to change the world."

I got to tell you, she changed my life. Because I knew, at that time, it wasn't about just Girl Scouts, it was about girls, changing their lives but changing the world. You know, and they ready. It's up to adults, it's up to adults to step up and say, "You know what? Let me pay that \$12 dollars. Let me buy you that sash. Let me give you the opportunity to integrate with amazing women and men who want to support your journey." Come one, now, go ask the Flying Monkeys. Go ask Angela or Miriam.

You know, for us, we sit here in the nation's capital, where innovation and creativity and governance happens. Can you imagine if we doubled the number of girls in that pipeline of leadership here in the nation's capital? Because right now, look at our roster of Girl Scout alumni. Theresa read the list, and it goes on and on. And imagine if, right now, we only serve eight percent of girls in this country, imagine if we doubled that percentage.

You know, in our study recently, we found that if you compared Girl Scout alumni to non-alumni, they outperformed in almost every single measure. They were making more money per year. They had a higher educational attainment than non-alums. They were happier. And they were contributing to their community. They were volunteering, and they were voting. And they were voting often.

And what we also discovered is that currently, we have 59 million living alumni in this country. Approximately one in two women has spent time in our organization during her lifetime. And what I love about it, is that it is going to give us the opportunity to connect with that alumni, to bring them back in, to mentor other girls.

Because our system is simple. It's worked for 100 years. It's called "Discover, Connect, and Take Action." Allow a girl to discover the issues around her, in her local community or around the globe. Connect her to other people who are interested in that project. And then allow her, with her imagination, to take action to make a difference.

So it works. 100 years. Juliette Gordon Low would tell you, if she stood here today, that it works. Because again, we're not only in every zip code in this country, but we're in 92 countries in the world, making a difference, not only for girls, but again, for their communities.

But I need your help, because we can't do it alone. So we're going to create an opportunity for you. And it's called "To Get Her There." It is the largest, boldest advocacy campaign for girls leadership in the nation's history. What we are trying to do, with your help, is to create balanced leadership in this country in one generation, so that every single girl has the opportunity to step into that leadership role. Because we're going to need her smart ideas. We're going to need her to sit next to boys in the classroom and contribute.

And, you know, it's not about boys against girls or men against women. I'm a mother of a 10 year old beautiful boy. But what it's about is this great country. And it's about this Girl Scout movement that needs to continue, because we need to help more girls.

Now, the issue for us is scale. We can't do it by ourselves. It's going to take every non-profit that serves youth. It's going to take every government leader, every business leader, every state leader, every parent, every entrepreneur to invest in girls. Because unfortunately, today, only seven percent of the philanthropic dollars go to girl causes in this country. It's not enough. We've got to invest in girls. Because I am convinced that, somewhere out there, across this beautiful country, there is a girl sitting there with a cure for Alzheimer's. There is a girl figuring out, how do I make other lives better? Like Danielle.

But the question is, will we get her there? Will we? Do we have enough passion around these issues? Will we dedicate the time to sponsor a girl, to mentor her? And, will we be strong enough in our moral fiber to stand up and say, "Today, not on my watch," will you make a girl feel less best? And yes, when people start casting aspersions against an iconic organization, will you stand up and say, "That is not true"?

You know, I'm going to end, just with a simple story. The fact of the matter is, I stand before you as a product of this great organization. But for Girl Scouts, I probably, perhaps, would have been on a different path. I was on all the indicator lists, right. Latina. I was in an agricultural rural community. My parents hadn't gone to college. But, you know what? Somebody, an adult, in a rural community reached out her hand and said, "You matter. Today, on my watch, you matter."

And along the way, my path was filled with adults who understood the potential of a girl. What I ask you today and the country watching is that you invest in one girl. It could be your neighbor. It could be your daughter. It could be your niece. It could be a daughter of somebody in foster care or in child protective services. Take the time, because there is a girl sitting in Memphis, Tennessee, Ames, Iowa, or Birmingham,

Alabama who needs us. And I am convinced that, when a girl succeeds, the country succeeds. Thank you.

[applause]

THERESA WERNER: You talked about reaching out to just one girl. If you could speak to younger girls and convince them to stay in the Girl Scouts, what would you say? And what does being a Girl Scout mean to you?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Wow. There's a lot I'd love to show with girls. And again, I have this great opportunity. What I would tell them, honestly, is to be a girl. You know, I had the great opportunity to work for two great governors in Arizona. One of them gave me the opportunity to work in the Child Protective Services, so where girls, unfortunately, had issues that had impacted their lives.

And I met this young lady who was 15 years old. And she had lost her youth. And I said to her, "If you could talk to other girls, what would it be?" And what she said was, "Tell girls to be girls. Stop being in such a hurry to be an adult. Enjoy life. You know, go out. Create friends. Create positive environments. Don't let the social pressures bring you down. Because you're going to have a mortgage one day. Don't worry about that. [laughter] It's okay. You know, just be a girl and enjoy life, because that's what's really going to make you happy."

THERESA WERNER: What do you think are the two or three biggest barriers to girls becoming Girl Scouts? Is it different in urban versus rural areas?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: You know, surprisingly, what a lot of people don't realize, the barrier is financial. And even though I will put this out there, you know, it's only \$12 dollars a year to be a Girl Scout. You know, that's two lattes. [laughter] But, where I came from in San Antonio, Texas, we had about 20,000 Girl Scouts. Half of them were on scholarships. That meant that I fundraised every year to pay for half of their-- you know, the girls in Girl Scouts. So again, that can be a barrier. But adults can obviously step in to help them.

I think between rural and urban, I think it's just a different experience. You know, I grew up in a rural community with one Girl Scout troop. So we were very tight, you know. We did everything together. In an urban community, they may have more opportunities to do, you know, field trips around different things.

But, what I think what's great about Girl Scouts, it's like a leveling field. Once you enter, whether, again, you're in San Antonio, Texas or Eloy, Arizona, or here in the nation's capital, you are entering a national movement. So your experience will be the same, because it's the same Girl Scout leadership experience, with 15 outcomes.

THERESA WERNER: Can people contribute directly to pay a girl's \$12 dollars dues? And how do they do that?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Absolutely. [laughter] Absolutely. We can start today. You know, our website is GirlScouts.org. You can also go to our Cause Campaign site called Togetherthere.org. You can contribute. There is a button. We would love for you to invest in the future of this country, but not only that, invest in the promise of a girl. They're going to do great things.

THERESA WERNER: The Girl Scout Gold Award is comparable to the Eagle Scout rank. Yet no one knows what it is. Will that ever change? [applause]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Absolutely. A little history. So, in 2016, actually the Gold Award will turn 100 years old. But what I think the issue is, is a branding issue. We've changed the name of the Gold Award. The Gold Award is the highest award a girl can achieve and earn in Girl Scouting. And so it used to be called, you know, the Golden Eaglet, First Class Scout. And so, over the decades, there are women out there that earned the highest award, but it was named a different thing.

So you're going to see, in the next few months, a ramp up around the campaign around the Gold Award, because we are going to show the country all the amazing women who've earned the highest award in Girl Scouts. And we're going to honor them and show them. Again, what I would love to see, right, as with the Eagle Scout Award, that girls walk in with their resume, and it says "Gold Award Recipient," and they're hired on the spot, you know. Wouldn't that be great?

But it's an educational process. So we can tell people, again, that if a girl receives this award, she only represents five percent of girls in all of Girl Scouting. So it is the pinnacle of their Girl Scout career. And we should support them.

THERESA WERNER: How do you think participating in Girl Scouts will help women achieve leadership positions in all sectors and levels of society?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: For girls in Girl Scouting, it's an opportunity to learn different things, whether it's about educational issues, whether it's about some of the vital issues in their community, around homelessness issues, domestic violence, and through, again, community service, they're constantly giving back. They're constantly raising funds through their cookie program, to fund other non-profits, actually to solve community issues.

So I think, again, with Girl Scouts and being involved, it can really expand sort of their horizons and, again, help other people.

THERESA WERNER: Speaking of the cookie program, how does that fit into today's modern Girl Scouts?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, you've got to meet some of our amazing cookie sellers. You know, they are hardcore. They go out there and they've got a goal.

But, what I love about the cookie program, first of all, a lot of people don't know, it is the largest entrepreneurial program for girls in the country. I meet women in the highest positions of corporate life, of government. And the first thing they'll tell me is, "I learned my business skills making the pitch, selling my Girl Scout cookies, setting goals, tracking inventory. Oh, and by the way, I volunteered my mom, you know, to be the cookie mom. So then I dragged her into Girl Scouts. And then my dad had to help. And then, all of a sudden, all the family was involved."

But, what the cookie program does, essentially for girls, is it allows them to set a goal as early as five years old. Our littlest leaders are called Daisies. They're five. And they're out there. And what they do is, they sell the cookies. And they get a percentage of the revenue. They get to decide what they're going to do with that. A lot of them travel internationally to visit with other girls. Again, a lot of them fund either their Bronze, Silver or Gold Award project, again to help other people.

And then ultimately, it gives them the self-confidence. I mean how many of you have done a cold call on business? And how hard is it to knock on a door, you know? But, what the girls have also told us, is "Come on, Eagle 1. Bring it up. You know, we want a technology side to the cookie business." Because they're online, right. They have a technology background.

So they want us to integrate our traditional cookie program, which is iconic, with the future of business. And the future of business has an e-commerce platform. And so, just a preview. You may see something in the future around some of these technology advances, that girls are going to help design around their cookie program.

THERESA WERNER: What percentage of Girl Scout cookie sales does a Girl Scout troop retain after deducting expenses?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Again, it depends on the sort of where you live. A little trivia question here. Actually, there are two companies that make Girl Scout cookies in this country. So, depending on where you live, you may buy from a particular company. Thin Mints are iconic. They are sold by both companies. In some states, a Samoa is called a Samoa. In some states it's called a Caramel Delight.

But, long story short, again, the money-- so it could be \$3.50 per box-- 80 cents goes directly to the cookie baker, right, to pay for the product. And then a girl gets a percentage. And then the other piece goes to either the troop, or it goes, again, to the local council, to fund their camps, their programming during the year, after school. And it really provides a support network.

What's most important, and what I want to say to you today is, thank you. Thank you for supporting the girls and the cookie program, because it's funding their leadership development program. And all the money that they raise stays local. It does not come to headquarters. It is actually invested back into your local communities. So thank you for supporting them.

THERESA WERNER: I was a top cookie seller with a mother that was a cookie mom and dad that hauled them around. So my family appreciates that. On the other hand, with the level of childhood obesity, does the Girl Scouts have any concern that the best identified Girl Scout program is cookies? [laughter]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, what I always say is, everything in moderation. [laughter] Yes. You know, but I have to admit, our cookies, because they're only sold once a year, you know, people get very excited. So, you know, I also like to tell the story-- and I'll get to your piece about healthy living, very important. But again, the cookie program-- You know, the first Girl Scout troop started making Girl Scout cookies in 1917 in Oklahoma. And that's how it started.

And, over the years, actually, a lot of the cookie revenue is donated to the troops, meaning-- So a person can walk up to a cookie booth site and say, "You know, I'm not going to buy cookies today. But I will donate those cookies back." And our girls will ship these cookies overseas.

And so, one of the amazing pieces that I get in the mail are letters and emails from men and women serving overseas, who are hunkered down in a bunker, in the middle of battle. And then the mail comes after two months of waiting. And what they get is a care package. And, in that care package are Girl Scout cookies. And, all of a sudden, they are transported back to being 12, sitting in their grandma's kitchen, eating Girl Scout cookies and milk. And for them, it's just a respite. It's a piece and a time where they are connected back to this great country, to say, "We're there to support you."

So our girls, again, they're doing that. They're supporting military families. And then we think about healthy living. And all our girls know that it's all about moderation. Because again, we're about the holistic view of girls. We want them to ensure that, again, they are living, they're physically active, or very involved in creating programming around exercise. So that is a critical part of our work with girls.

THERESA WERNER: One Girl Scout here today said that what she has enjoyed most about being a Girl Scout is the many opportunities and experiences that she has gained from that, and is wondering if Girl Scouts from around the world are getting those same opportunities.

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Yes. We are very honored, actually, to have Girl Scouts in 92 countries. Because again, the girls are living with their families. And their family may be in the military, serving overseas, stationed overseas. Or, they may be living abroad, working for an American company.

So the girls are, you know, Girl Scouts. They're part of our Girl Scout family. And they're learning the same journey books. They're working on the same badges. What we're doing, out of our national headquarter office, and ensuring that we're able to

connect the girls living here domestically in the United States with their Girl Scout counterparts.

And we recently were in Houston for our national convention last fall. And we saw Girl Scouts from all over the world coming together. And it's a great sight. Because, again, they're Girl Scouts. They're part of the same family. And they're having fun together.

THERESA WERNER: What is the organization doing to recruit leaders who are actually willing to go camping, even if it rains, hails or snows? [laughter]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, you know, a lot of people ask me, "You know, Anna-- Come on, Eagle 1. I want to help. But, you know, I'm not a camper." And so I get that. But here is the thing. we have tons of volunteer opportunities. Just talk to a girl. Talk to the table of girls here today. I bet, if you asked them, every single one of them has a different air of expertise. One of them may be a musician. One of them may be a budding scientist. One of them may be into drama.

So we need adults to volunteer to support those paths, right. So, if you're not a camper, we can-- you know, based on your expertise, maybe if you're a judge-- and I recently recruited a judge, actually in Southwest Texas, who said, "Come on, now, Anna. You know, how can I be a Girl Scout?" And I said, "Sir," I said, "This is how you're going to help me. First of all-- first of all, you have the juvenile justice bench, don't you Judge?" "Yes I do." And he goes, "But how can I help?" And I said, "Well, if you will volunteer with me, and you sign up more Girl Scouts, we're going to divert girls from your bench. Did you ever have a Girl Scout before your juvenile justice bench?" He's like, "No, you're right, Eagle 1. I've never had a Girl Scout in front of my juvenile justice bench."

And so, you know what he did? How he volunteered, he said, "Okay. Here." He wrote a check to become a member that day. We pinned him. Since then, he has sponsored a series, a legal series, where he is working with local lawyers-- and there's a rural community-- and they are literally teaching girls about the law, the professions in the law, from sort of being a prosecutor, to a defense attorney, to being a judge, and really showing them that process.

So again, if you're over the age of 18, male or female, and you want to volunteer to support these girls, we will find a way, even if you're not a camper. [laughter]

THERESA WERNER: As children become increasingly more connected to their devices like tablets and smart phones, and their attention span decreases accordingly, how does an organization like the Girl Scouts adjust to not only keep pace, but to attract new members and interest girls on those interactive team and personality-building activities that makes scouting the valuable developmental tool that it is?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Long question. Well, again, speaking from a mother's perspective of a 10 year old, who has every device manageable, I understand that connection. But I also realize, interestingly enough, that I think this is the first generation that is spending most of their time growing up inside, right. When I was a Girl Scout in Eloy, my mother, she would say, "Okay, go play." And we would go off. And we'd be playing in the cotton fields. And we'd be running around. And so it is this balance, right, of making sure they're technically and logically savvy, that they're interested in all those things that come online and through computers, so they can, again, compete in school and in their careers.

But also, understanding about the environment. I think, again, one of the benefits of being a Girl Scout is, it is about the environment for us. You know, for us, green was cool way before it was cool for the rest of the country, you know. We own green. Ask Juliette. We own green, you know. And so girls have always, in their Girl Scout experience, have been connected back to the environment. They're out there. We're taking them camping, horseback riding.

We have camps where they can go and sort of understand, you know, about earth, and sort of where that stands in other stars and galaxies. And so we're constantly bringing them out into the nature, but connecting it back to science and math and technology, so that again, in context of their lives, Girl Scouting makes sense for them.

THERESA WERNER: With your new project To Get Her There, how do you plan on not only getting younger girls inspired to work towards their futures, but making sure they stay on the right path to get there as they get older?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: For us, it's very, very clear. And I will tell you, a lot of people are like, "Well, Anna, you know, that's an audacious goal. You know, changing the leadership landscape of this country in one generation of girls." But I said, "You know, it's time. How can we wait for another generation to pass by without getting those opportunities?" You know, when my mother was growing up, her opportunities were limited compared to mine. But she did everything in her power to kick down those doors and those barriers.

So I think it's our obligation as adults, again, to engage more girls, and to make other people aware. So I'm hoping that all of you here, and now that you know about To Get Her There, you're going to go and educate your colleagues at work. You're going to sit them down and say, "Have you heard about this campaign? It's powered by Girl Scouts. But actually, everybody is involved. And did you know that, you know, we need to invest more in girls? And did you know girls need mentors around science, math and technology?"

So again, our goal is just to engage adults, one, becoming aware, right, advocating on behalf of girls, saying, "This is what girls need," and then donating to the cause. Again, to a Girl Scout organization, or to an organization that empowers girls. Because,

as I said, again, it's not just about Girl Scouts. It's about every single community organization coming together to support their leadership path.

THERESA WERNER: The Girl Scouts have a long history of being inclusive to gays, lesbians, and people who don't believe in God. The Boy Scouts, of course, are a very different organization in both those respects. How has that inclusiveness shaped what the Girl Scout organization is today?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: You know, our organization, Girl Scouts, is a very implicit organization, has always been. You know, I was very fortunate. I recently was able to go to Savannah, Georgia. March 12, 2012, we turned 100 years old as a movement. And so I was there, actually, in Juliette Gordon Low's house.

And I was sitting there reflecting. And, as I was reading her diaries, you know, very personal diaries around the challenges of creating an organization around girls. Imagine, this was before women had the right to vote. This is-- She created a scandal throughout Savannah because she had the girls marching through the streets in bloomers because they were going to play basketball in her backyard, okay.

So, for her, it was, again, how do we engage all girls? And, during my visit there, I actually got to meet with the leaders and a rabbi at the local synagogue, Mikveh Israel. And they showed me, in their historical archives, presents and letters from Juliette Gordon Low, thanking them for the support of the synagogue. Because some of the girls from that synagogue actually were some of the members of the first troops of Girl Scouts.

And so, again, you look across the country, from the very beginnings of Girl Scouting, our troops were diverse. All girls of all faiths, of all racial backgrounds, of all geographic locations. And so I believe that is our true strength. Because, again, we are creating opportunities for girls to know that we all matter.

THERESA WERNER: The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops recently filed an official inquiry to investigate concerns that the Girl Scouts have problematic relationships with groups like Planned Parenthood. What is the Girl Scouts' relationship with Planned Parenthood?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, thank you for this opportunity, actually, to set the record straight. I think, you know, with social media and opportunities just to post things, there are certain myths and misconceptions about our organization. Again, I think because we're an inclusive organization, we stand in a place where, again, we serve a broad demographic of girls in this country. Imagine, we have girls in every zip code in this country, from all backgrounds, all faiths.

And so, you know, we're looking for-- we're working with the Conference of Bishops to answer some questions they have, that they have received from some of their members. And so we look forward to, you know, answering some of those questions, obviously bringing the facts. But we've been very clear, you know. Again, we do not take

positions on some of these issues that we are being alleged to take positions on, because those issues are clearly within the family decision-making.

You know, again, we are a leadership development program. That's what we've been founded to do. That's our mission, to create girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. And so we're looking forward to working with the Conference of Bishops, to clarify any questions they may have. And again, at the end of the day, to clarify any myths and misconceptions about our organization, to set the record straight.

THERESA WERNER: So, do the Girl Scouts have a relationship with Planned Parenthood?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: As we've said before, Girl Scouts USA does not have a relationship. We, again, are focused on what's important to girls. And that's what we've been doing for almost-- over 100 years.

THERESA WERNER: There are many media representatives here today. What role should the media play in promoting empowerment for girls and women? And what is your view of how girls and women are portrayed in the media today?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, you know, we have a lot of studies that have come out through our research institutes, that talk about the issues impacting girls. You know, we have actually hosted media panels throughout the country. And I was stunned recently to talk to some ladies, actually, of the media who were Girl Scouts. And they came up to me and said, "Anna, we want to help, some way, some how, to show the girls that it's okay to be themselves. And you don't have to do computer generation to change the way you look."

And so one particular female newscaster actually did something live on television with no makeup. And it created havoc. Can you imagine? [laughter] But it was her way of telling the girls, "It's okay. We don't need all of this to be the professional person standing up, telling what we need to do. This is our job."

And so, again, we've had some amazing media partners. And I want to specifically thank all of our media partners here today, and the media partners across the country, who have been working with us, actually, during our 100th anniversary, to spread the good message of Girl Scouting. And they have.

We have gotten over 70 million media impressions in the last six months. And it's because, again, our media partners understand, at the end of the day, we're one community. And they can help. They have a powerful voice. They get to the girls through TV, through magazines, through radio. And they can help us spread some really great messages and encourage the girls to stay on their path.

THERESA WERNER: The Boy Scouts have been talking publicly about struggling with membership numbers. How is the Girl Scout enrollment doing? And what are you doing to keep it up and boost it?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well I'm very pleased to say that the first time in 10 years, we are actually up in membership. We're very proud of that. You know, I think - and I've spoken, actually, to other CEOs of major national non-profits that work with youth. And I think we've all been struggling because of the economy. You know, when a family sits back and says, "Wow. We've just got to make rent," or, you know, a parent loses a job, and so they come back to the basics, "What do we really need?"

And so, a lot of us did lose that membership. And I will tell you, part of it, too, is, you know, Girl Scouts, we are, I think, the best kept secret in the United States, right. If you talk to any woman, for the most part, they were touched by our organization. They had a positive opportunity. But we don't tell our story. And part of that is, again, telling the story so more girls will join. They can't buy something they can't see.

And so, again, that's why we're out there. And you will see, and I think you've probably seen in the last six months, more stories about Girl Scouts than ever, talking about the great work they're doing, changing lives. And so, for us, it's about going external, sharing that external story, so that people will invest in girls, people will advocate for them, and people will sponsor girls.

THERESA WERNER: How realistic is it to expect that you can achieve gender equality in leadership in just one generation, when it has taken centuries for women to get where they are today?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, I think it's an economic imperative. It is, you know. I used to work for the SBA, great organization. And I learned, there, that one in four people are employed by a small business. And so, you know, I always think about economy and sort of really where the jaws are being generated. And they're going to need employees. They're going to need skilled, trained employees.

And so, from a business perspective, you've got to invest in girls to get them on that path. And so, if we sit back and say, "Well, let's do two generation of girls, or maybe three," we're going to pass a whole opportunity that these girls are going to give back to their communities and to this country. And so it makes sense for business to step up and help and say, "Absolutely, we want to support girls."

It makes sense for government to invest in programming around leadership development for girls. And I also think that, again, with 59 million living alumni of Girl Scouts, by spreading the message, they're going to come back, and they're going to say, "How can I help? I can't camp. But, you know, I'm a business owner, you know." Or, "I can camp. And I'm going to take the girls repelling," you know. So I think everybody is going to get involved.

THERESA WERNER: How do the Girl Scouts work to build girls up on their own terms, in their own rights, rather than simply get them to the same benchmarks as their male counterparts?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: You know, I think you're right. And it's always a discussion, you know, again, that men are in these roles. You know, we recently looked across the top 10 job sectors across the country, to the military, to non-profit, to academia. And we found that only 17 percent of those leadership positions were held by women.

So why is that? I think it completely goes back to-- and this is just my personal opinion, being the leader of the national organization, that again, it's about what you see in front of you. You know, from my mother, she was so wise, because she wouldn't tell me what to do. She would kind of just lay out the issue. And she'd kind of like walk me through, "Well, Anna Maria, what are you going to do about that? Well, Anna Maria, how can you make a difference?" And, in my own mind, even as a 10 year old, I figured out how to get there.

I think girls need the same opportunity. They need sort of adults to stand up and say, "Well, so you found out that there's no recycling program in your school. So what are you going to do about that?" Let the girls dream about that. So I think, as we engage more girls in this opportunity, as we engage more adults in the opportunity, I think we'll start seeing it.

But again, sort of the balance of leadership was created over many decades. So we can't do it today. Can't do it tomorrow. But, in one year, we can create awareness around these issues. And we can get on our way to make a difference for girls.

THERESA WERNER: To Get Her There appears to address getting younger girls involved in scouting. Does it expand to include graduating girls in an attempt to help get her a job or connections? [laughter]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Sure. Well we serve girls all the way to the age of 17, actually. So a lot of girls think they can't join because they're in high school. Actually, the girls I've spoken to love being in Girl Scouts, even as they grow older, because they then see the connection between what they want to do as an adult.

And so, for girls working toward their Silver and then, of course, their Gold Award, they are being involved in issues impacting their community. And they figure out, "Oh wow. Okay. So maybe that's what I want to go to school to study, you know. Maybe I want to be a lawyer. Or I want to be an engineer." And then, they get into the career field, and then they figure out, "Wow, there's a lot of Girl Scout alum working in this company. Maybe I can sit down with them and they'll help me."

So I think the older girls are very sophisticated around issues impacting them and what they want to work on. And what I've learned, Theresa, honestly, is I ask them questions. You know, as a national CEO, I sit down with a lot of them. And, when I was a local CEO in San Antonio, I had a teen kitchen cabinet of girls. And I literally-- I mean the adults would sort of say, "Anna, you got to do this. You got to do that. You got to do this, because that's the way we've always done it." And I'd, "Thank you very much. I agreed with that."

And then I'd go sit down with the girls. And I'd say, "Okay, girls." You know, there were 10 of them, all teenagers. And they'd say, "Okay, what do you want to know, Anna?" And I said, "Well, girls, you know, how are recruiting? You know, is that working for you?" And they'd notice the door was shut, and we were alone. And they were like-- [laughter]-- "Okay, wait. Eagle 1, it's not working. First of all, if you think you can go into high school, put out a little table with the little green, you know, little thing on it, with a box of cookies, that's not going to work for me." [laughter] "Tell me how this is going to help me. Tell me how I can give back to my community."

And so sitting with them, literally, we created a program called Gamma Sigma Girls. Because I was told that older girls would not join Girl Scouting, just told that. Girls are not interested in becoming a Girl Scout when they get older. Well, I don't know. I know a whole group of Girl Scouts that they like being a Girl Scout. So we did.

And we thought we'd get one high school in San Antonio. And so we sent out a message, 25 girls at one high school, literally, almost overnight, we got every single high school in San Antonio Independent School District, to become Girl Scouts. So ten schools, 25 girls in each school, became Girl Scouts. We actually blew the cap in one school, had to let extra girls in.

And, do you know what happened? It was amazing. They started getting involved. And what turned out is that then they ran for student government. And I met a girl, recently, actually through that experience of Gamma Sigma Girl, Girl Scout in San Antonio. And she told me that Girl Scouts had changed her life. Because, again, a lot of people told her-- she got older. "Well, you know, you shouldn't be involved in this. Or Girl Scouts is not that." She joined. And, all of a sudden, she had Girl Scout friends and sisters. And they started doing community service projects. And they started joining student government.

And what I found out was, this young girl named Irene had been homeless all her life. She had been in, like, 10 schools. And she immediately was grounded in Girl Scouting and with her sisters in Girl Scouting. She went on, actually, to speak nationally on the issues impacting teens and homelessness. And she's now gone on to college on a full ride. And she speaks eloquently about how, just in one year, as a junior in high school, Girl Scouting completely changed her opportunities.

So it is never too late, girls. It is never too late, parents, to join Girl Scouts.

THERESA WERNER: When do you think we will see a female President? And will she be a Girl Scout?

[laughter]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Well, Theresa, the odds are she's going to be a Girl Scout. You know, the odds are there. I mean even in the-- You look at the current Cabinet of President Obama, you know, again, Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, a Girl Scout. Katherine Sebelius, a Girl Scout. The Supreme Court. So they are in these leadership positions already.

For us, you know, as a community, of course we would love an opportunity for a woman to serve. She will serve as a leader. She will serve as somebody who wants to make a difference. The fact she's a woman is added bonus, you know. [laughter] But again, a lot of people say, you know, "Well, how can you do that?" And it's, we are making our way. We're in schools. We're making the grades. We're doing the internships. We're taking the hard jobs. We're taking the hard assignments. We're making the sacrifices. So give them a chance to fill that critical need in this world, and in the White House.

THERESA WERNER: Before I get to the last questions here, I have a couple of announcements to make. First of all, I'd like to remind all of you about our upcoming luncheon speakers. On June the 4th we have the Gerald R. Ford Journalism Awards with guest speaker Chris Matthews, host of MSNBC's Hardball with Chris Matthews. On June the 9th, which I believe is an important day for the Girl Scouts, before you head down to the Mall, we have our 15th annual Beat the Deadline 5K Race that benefits the National Press Club Journalism Institute. And Tony Horton, founder of P90X will be here. So you can come and run a 5K, eat pancakes, and head to the Mall. [laughter]

Second, I'd like to present our guest with our traditional NPC coffee mug.

[applause]

And a couple of last questions here. Have you learned the flash mob dance for the Rock the Mall?

[laughter]

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: I'm a little stressed about that. [laughter] But, you know, I've been told, you know, I have a beat. So I'm going to pick it up, you know. Lidia is a little scared. I may break out on stage. But I'm ready for the challenge.

THERESA WERNER: Do you want to try any of it?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: I hear you're a good dancer.

[laughter]

THERESA WERNER: What is your favorite cookie?

ANNA MARIA CHAVEZ: Oh, man. Whew. Wow, you saved the toughest question to the end. [laughter] All right. Well, I will tell you what my answer used to be. But, after I gave the answer-- okay, come on, it was a little political. I said, "Well, as the national CEO, I love all cookies." [laughter] And that day, my husband Rob happened to be listening to the radio interview.

And I get home, and he says, "Anna, stop it." [laughter] "You got a cookie. Say the cookie." So yes, in front of everybody, my favorite cookie is the Samoa. I embrace it. [applause] I embrace it. But here is the thing. Girls get to choose their favorite cookie. [laughter] And we actually have an iPhone app that will tell you that, based on your cookie, we can tell a little bit about your personality. [laughter]

[applause]

THERESA WERNER: How about a round of applause for our speaker today. Thank you for coming.

[applause]

END