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Girl Scout 'friends' aim to buy camp

Group hopes Adirondack site can still be used for girls' activities

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ALBANY -- Incensed by the Girl Scouts' decision to sell a Washington County camp, a group of former scouts have gathered in a bid to purchase the camp.

Caity Creitz, president of Friends of Camp Little Notch -- an organization that formed shortly after Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York decided to put Camp Little Notch up for sale -- announced on Wednesday the organization is launching a capital campaign to buy the property.

Located in the Adirondack Park, Camp Little Notch is situated on 2,300 acres and has its own 80-acre lake, a ropes course and hiking trails. It's located on the site of a former iron smelting furnace and artifacts from that enterprise remain on the property.

"We were saddened when GSNENY decided to sell the property," Creitz said. "But we are eager to move forward with the Girl Scout Council to ensure that Camp Little Notch remains a place where girls grow strong."

The Girl Scout chapter came to the decision to sell the property on Nov. 14, after determining that the property would be too costly to maintain and invest in while keeping with the type of programming girls are interested in, spokeswoman Valerie Trudeau said.

Because of the primitive nature of the camp, something Friends of Camp Little Notch deem a strong point, Trudeau said the camp is not easily accessible for infrastructure improvements that would attract more girls.

"The wilderness experience is present at all of our camps," Trudeau said last month, pointing to the lack of flushing toilets and running water at Little Notch. "But the transition of experience is easier for them. If a girl can come and be comfortable at night, but go out hiking and do other outdoor activities during the day, they are more likely to come

back and be active."

Trudeau said now that inquiries have been made about purchasing the camp, the Girl Scout chapter is moving forward with plans to develop a Program and Learning Center at one of its other camps.

Camps the Girl Scouts aren't selling -- Camp Hidden Lake and Camp Clear Lake -- offer more modern structures.

Along with Little Notch, the Girl Scout chapter decided to sell Camp Little in Fulton County, a recreational area, and Camp Sha Te Mac in Columbia County, which had several overnight sleeping areas.

Friends of Camp Little Notch said under their direction, Little Notch would offer all the outdoors programming it had offered in the past including hiking, biking, rock climbing and boating.

However other programs that would bring in children with special needs and mothers with their daughters would be added.

In 2007, a similar group, Friends of Camp El-O-Win came together to buy a camp that a Girl Scouts Council near Fresno, Calif., decided to sell. According to the Fresno Bee, the group raised \$800,000 in donations over six months to buy the 58-acre plot of land.

Creitz would not say how much her organization expects to have to raise to buy Little Notch, or what kind of timeline they would have to raise the money.

The Girl Scouts' Trudeau said any sale would have to meet or exceed the camp's recent appraised value, which she would not reveal. Washington County records show the total assessment value for Little Notch in 2009 was just more than \$2.6 million.

The Friends have been informed of the property's appraised value and, according to Trudeau, have been given a Feb. 1 deadline to make a formal offer.

Trudeau said the Girl Scouts chapter has not determined its guidelines for selling the camp, but these might include a consideration of a discounted sale price for a nonprofit buyer like the Friends.

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