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News

Girl Scout Council to sell Camp Little Notch

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ALBANY — The Girls Scouts are changing and evolving with the times in an attempt to increase membership and improve programming but not everyone likes the results.

The Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York's recent decision to sell Camp Little Notch, has many former campers up in arms to save the camp and protect it for future generations.

Caity Creitz of Cambridge remembers her first summer at the Camp Little Notch when she was 10 years old. She spent nine summers at the camp, located near Lake George.

"It's one of the oldest and largest Girl Scout camps. It's an amazing asset for girls," said Creitz, who is now an American Sign Language translator and president of the Friends of Camp Little Notch which is fund-raising to purchase the 2,400 acre property. "There is an energy there. In the risk of sounding cliché, there's magic there. It's unparalleled."

Located in the Adirondack Park, the camp was not used this past season as the council deliberated on its future and debated whether to make maintenance repairs to the site — especially since there is a similar Girl Scout-owned site, Hidden Lake Camp, just 15 miles down the road with facilities that can be used year-round as opposed to the summer-only amenities at Little Notch, said Valerie Trudeau, chief development and brand officer with the local council.

"While the board did decide on the sale of Camp Little Notch, they also made a deliberate statement that in the sale of this property we would balance our fiduciary responsibility with the core principles of the Girl Scout Movement," she said about the national changes being made to the Girl Scouts of America. "They have a choice as a board to select the best buyer of this property."

The nationwide proactive transformation of the female scouting organization, founded in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low, decided in 2005 that it wanted to be known

for more than just cookies. It had suffered a decline in membership, like other non-profits, and needed a facelift which would still focus on girls' programming and philanthropy.

In the Capital District, four Girl Scout councils merged in 2007 into one entity — the GSNENY — as part of the transition. It was one of the first in the country to realign, said Trudeau.

"We knew at the beginning of the transformation that properties would be the most emotional to deal with, so it was determined that no decision would be made on a property for two years," she said.

During that time, the council distributed surveys to scout members, their parents, and neutral parties to determine what girls want in a camp and what was financially feasible.

Reasons given by the council and board for selling the site included needed maintenance and the decline in participating campers, though some former campers attributed that to the termination of a bus departing from urban areas that went to the camp a couple of seasons ago.

Overall, numbers of campers are down at most of the facilities. The GSNENY serves about 12,900 girls, of these about 1,737 used the camps last summer, said Trudeau.

Along with Camp Little Notch, two other properties, Littell in Fulton County and Sha Te Mac in Columbia County, are being listed on the market. After the properties are assessed, the council plans to send letters to interested buyers, which include the Friends of Camp Little Notch.

"We are not straying from teaching values about the outdoors. We will do so at other locations and in other ways," said Trudeau, noting that the council planned to make improvements to Hidden Lake Camp in Warren County.

Both Hidden Lake and Little Notch were acquired by the Girl Scouts in the 1930s.

"We've received many heartfelt responses to the decision since it is one of our older camps," said Trudeau about Little Notch.

When or if a buyer is eventually found, an alumna ceremony or Camporee will likely be organized at Little Notch.

Though this might not be necessary if the Friends of Camp Little Notch are able to acquire the property, said Creitz. Donations to that cause may be made at **friendsofcln.org**.

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