

## **Girl Scouts adapt to make it work**

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Most Girl Scout troops meet after school, or perhaps on the weekend. It's been the tenet of Girl Scouting for years.

Organizers in Hills, however, were faced with the challenge of a rural lifestyle and the ability of girls to get to troop meetings. It proved difficult for girls who often lived far from school to get to troop meetings, not to mention the financial and transportation difficulty on families to get their girls to troop meetings.

Hills Girl Scout Troop 5060 has been a part of the community for quite a few years, organized by a teacher who saw a benefit in having girls meet during the school day.

Mindy Williams of Hills is the troop's leader now and it includes girls of all ages. She continues to meet with girls at the school over the lunch hour so that a quality Girl Scout program is offered in Hills.

Because Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa & Western Illinois believes all girls should have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouts and that the right adult volunteers help make the program what it is, it offers financial assistance to those who need it in being a member of Girl Scouts. As members, Williams and her daughter receive assistance with membership dues from the organization.

Today, Williams has up to 30 girls in the Hills troop. The troop meets once or twice a week for the 20-minute recess period after lunch, and the weather dictates how many girls join in the activities.

"On very nice days when it's sunny out, I don't have many girls," Williams said. She added: "If there's food involved, I get a lot of kids."

Girls don't have to be a member of Girl Scouts to check out the activities during the lunch-time troop meetings. The girls are split up by grade level with third- and fourth-graders starting out at the meetings, first- and second-graders coming next and fifth- and sixth-graders rounding out the noon-time activities. In addition, Cinda Tanner of Iowa City assists with running a noon-time Girl Scout Daisy troop for kindergartners at the same time.

Because of the daytime meetings, there is little parent involvement in troop activities, Williams said. Older girls might take a project home to finish when there isn't enough time in the 20-minute troop meetings, and often they do complete the work, she said.

Time is the biggest constraint for the Hills troop, as well as the ability to have activities outside of school, however, the in-school meetings, thanks to leaders such as Williams, uses creativity to solve a solution and remove a barrier to Girl Scouts in the Hills community.