

It's Girl Scout cookie time

■ Scouts are getting ready to take orders for Thin Mints and other confections.

By PHYLLIS MOORE
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It's Girl Scout cookie time.

The pre-sale campaign officially kicked off Saturday, with troops across the county taking orders for the baked goods.

Not all the Girl Scouts will be knocking on doors. This year, they will be able to also sell online — sending e-mails to friends and family, who can order cookies by replying to the e-mail message.

Eight different cookie flavors will be available at \$3.50 a box — in addition to the familiar thin mints, peanut butter patties, peanut butter sandwiches and the caramel delites and shortbread, the three newest options include a shortbread cookie with lemon icing, shortbread cookie dipped in fudge and crispy cinnamon cookies in healthy 100-calorie packs.

It'll be awhile before tables are set up with a plentiful supply at locations like Sam's Club, Wal-Mart and Food Lion, so the public is encouraged to take advantage of the early cookie sale.

Several incentives and promotions are also planned this year, said Grazia Mostella, membership executive for the Goldsboro Girl Scout office.

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Back by popular demand is the "Buy 5" contest. Customers who purchase at least five boxes of cookies at one time can have their name entered in a drawing to win a year's supply of free Girl Scout cookies. Six winners will be selected and announced in May.

Super Bowl weekend is also a big deal among the entrepreneur cookie sellers. It is the first weekend cookies will be available before the regular cookie sale, Feb. 13 through March 14. To find out where booths will be set

up, access the locator at www.nccoastalpines.com.

For anyone interested in contributing to a purchase for others, Ms. Mostella said, there is another option, which will benefit the troops overseas.

It is the sixth year Girl Scouts are participating in Operation Cookie Drop. From Jan. 9 through March 14, cookies can be purchased to ship overseas to military personnel from Seymour Johnson AFB, Camp Lejeune, Fort Bragg and the N.C. branch of Give2The Troops based in Greenville.

The annual fundraiser helps individual troops, as 70 percent of the money supports the local Scouts.

When the Girl Scout organization first introduced the cookie program nearly 100 years ago, it was not solely for a money-maker.

"It was a way to help girls learn how to do business — deal with money, deal with customers, sell something," said Betsy Wharton, volunteer services director.

From 5-year-old Daisies up to 17-year-old Seniors and Ambassadors, the activity also teaches goal-setting, the value of teamwork, building communication skills and customer service, skills that can be later listed on job and school applications and resumes.

"It's a lot of fun for them," Ms. Mostella said. "Not only do they get to learn about selling and what they do with the money they earn, it's a fun activity."

Terrica Hay, program director, rose in the ranks through Girl Scouting and attained the Gold Award, and is now making a career out of it. She said the fundraiser builds on the Girl Scout program so that they develop a more hands-on approach to the business end.



"The girls get the opportunity to set up personal goals, troop goals," she said. "They could maybe do a project with it, make their own business out of it. They have been given a foundation, now what can you do to make it your own?"

The return on the cookie sale — 70 percent of money raised by the troop — can also go toward helping troop members go to camp or other events sponsored by the council, or for future projects.

One misconception is that the cookie sale brings in the bulk of the Girl Scout budget, Ms. Wharton said.

"It's not," she said. "It's a byproduct."

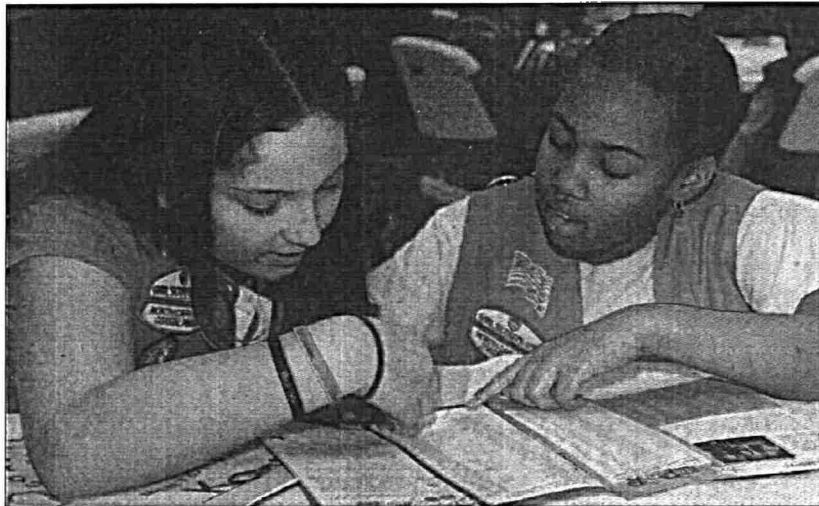
Girl Scouts' funding sources include United Way, corporate giving, grants and

individuals — just like any other non-profit, she said.

The kickoff cookie rally, for troops to pick up materials, learn about safety and sales techniques and participate in activities as they "pump them up" for the upcoming sale, was held Friday evening, Ms. Mostella said.

Now it's just up to the public to respond by buying a box of cookies, or several, she added.

For anyone interested in making a purchase, especially those who might not know a Girl Scout or has been contacted, visit the Web site www.nccoastalpines.org or call the local office, 432-6121 or 432-6120. Cookies will also be available at the Girl Scout office on Lockhaven Drive from Feb. 13 until March 14.



News-Argus/MITCH LOEBER

Kamryn Mendes, 10, left, and Destiny Craig, 10, look at their Girl Scout cookie ordering sheets at the Scouts' cookie rally Friday. Saturday marked the first day of the Girl Scouts' cookie sale.