



**Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois**

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## News Release

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### Villie M. Appoo selected as new Chief Executive Officer for *Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois*

**Glen Carbon, IL --** Villie M. Appoo has been ratified to be the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois by the GSSI Board of Directors. The GSSI began operations on Oct. 1 following a year-long process of merging the Girl Scouts of River Bluffs Council and the Girl Scouts of Shagbark Council into one high-performing council serving approximately 16,000 girls and 4,800 adult volunteers in 40½ counties throughout southern Illinois.

“I feel privileged to have this exciting opportunity to be a part of the transformation of two excellent Girl Scout Councils into the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois,” said Appoo. “I want the GSSI to become the premier leadership experience for our girls – an organization of choice that is dynamic, vibrant and relevant and meets the needs of our girls. The leadership opportunities and challenges for growth we provide our girls today will have a profound impact on the women they will be tomorrow – and their subsequent influence on their families, their community, their nation and the world,” she added.

“As we progress through this transformational phase, it is important that we continue to build on the Girl Scout movements’ core, fundamental values, while, at the same time, embracing change that will catapult us to

becoming an extraordinary council,” Appoo said. “We want people in our communities to see the Girl Scouts as the premier leadership organization that builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.”

Appoo believes that community support, both through dedicated volunteers, as well as philanthropic gifts, will continue to be crucial for the growth of the organization. “I am committed to developing and mobilizing a strong volunteer system that is diverse, engaged in programs and services and active in fund raising,” she said.

Villie is not new to the Girl Scout movement. She was a member of the Girl Guide movement from first grade through high school when she was living in India. “We met every Friday evening after school and spent many weekends as volunteers for numerous causes and charities.”

One of her most memorable experiences was the Girl Guides’ work with the “Society for the Education of the Crippled” which ran a school for physically challenged children. “We took them camping one year – which was a fantastic experience for both them and for us. Many of these children had never been away from home, and had never gone out of town on a train and taking care of them 24/7 was a great responsibility as well as a very enriching experience.”

Appoo said her experiences with the Girl Guides were instrumental in her decision to pursue a career in social work. She has also visited the Sangam, one of the World Centers, located in Pune, India.

She has two children Brian and Katie. Her extended family still lives in Mumbai, India, where she grew up and she has a brother and his family who live in Sydney, Australia. In her spare time, Appoo loves to travel and learn about different cultures and societies. She also loves animals, but had to “settle” for two cats adopted from the Humane Society...since her long work hours don’t seem to bother them as much.

She was previously employed by Grace Hill Neighborhood Health Centers in St. Louis as Executive Vice President/ COO Planning and Development. Recently, she had been a consultant to federally funded community health centers that served ‘special populations’ – the homeless and residents of public housing.

“I realize that change, any change, creates anxiety and uncertainty for most people and is one of the most significant stressors in our lives. I want Girl Scout staff and volunteers to feel the same pride and ownership of the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois as they did for their previous councils. My door is always open and I look forward to working with everyone to serve our girls and our communities...together, we can make the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois truly extraordinary!”

This restructuring is part of a national Girl Scouts of the USA initiative to create councils that are well equipped to provide compelling, contemporary and relevant experiences that meet the needs of girls in today’s fast-changing world. While the jurisdictional area of the new council expanded, the mission to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place, remains unwavering.

Girl Scouting has inspired more than 50 million girls and women since its founding in 1912. As we approach the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Girl Scouting, councils nationwide are joining in a historic organizational transformation

centered around the best leadership development experience for girls in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while ensuring the traditions and values that have been core to Girl Scouting since its beginning remain strong and relevant.

The Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is a Proud Partner of the United Way and is partially supported by various United Ways throughout the region. For more information, please call Jay Strobel, Director of Communications and Marketing at 618.692.0692. Also check out the new Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois website at

[www.gsofsi.org](http://www.gsofsi.org).

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