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## Parents pull girls from Crawford scout troop over affiliation with Planned Parenthood

By DAN GENZ Tribune-Herald staff writer

CRAWFORD — The parents of nine Girl Scouts here announced late Monday that their daughters will leave the organization due to its relationship with Planned Parenthood of Waco.

Brownie Troop 7087 leader Donna Coody organized the meeting amid an anti-abortion boycott of the Girl Scouts' famous cookie fundraiser, which is scheduled to begin booth sales on Friday.

Coody said her daughters did not belong in an organization that sponsored a sexual education event where children received literature saying homosexuality and abortion are acceptable.

The Bluebonnet Council of the Girl Scouts, an organization including 6,000 girls in 14 counties, is under fire in a spot airing on a Christian radio station for sponsoring the Nobody's Fool annual meeting at Planned Parenthood and recognizing its chief executive, Pam Smallwood, as a Woman of Distinction.

"That's not who I want as a role model for my daughter," said fellow Crawford-area mom, Lisa Aguilar, who said her 10-year-old, Caelie, broke down into tears when her parents explained Planned Parenthood's role in abortions.

The "public service announcement" on the Christian station KBDE-FM urges listeners to refrain from buying Girl Scout cookies to protest its affiliation with Planned Parenthood.

Bluebonnet Council Executive Director Beth Vivio, who was not invited to the meeting, said she was disappointed by the boycott and the planned withdrawal of the Crawford troop members.

"It is difficult when we represent nearly 6,000 different families who all have very different opinions on these matters to make decisions that every single one of them will agree with. That is the difficult part of the situation," she said in a phone interview.

She said the council's board will consider sponsoring the event again at its meeting March 25, but until that event there was nothing the group could do other than listen to parents' problems.

Vivio says much of the input has been positive. "Actually, we've been pleasantly surprised," she said. "We've had a lot of additional supporters, people trying to make sure the cookies are still being sold."

But pro-life activist John Pisciotta, who's organizing the boycott and attended the meeting in Crawford, said the association's affiliation with the clinic where abortions are performed is appalling.

Sarah Collins, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Waco, said in a phone interview, it's "really sad they're being singled out. They're being punished for promoting education that's going to help these girls and boys. We do the same thing."

The McLennan County Youth Collaboration also had its seal on a flier for the event, said Cindy Michaelis, director of public relations and

development. "There were a lot of groups involved in it," she said, "and I find it really unfortunate and I don't quite understand it."

While Pisciotta says he's discussed with other organizations their endorsement of the event, which includes a booklet "It's Perfectly Normal" for seventh-through ninth-graders, he is publicly targeting the Girl Scouts because they crossed the line when they presented an award to Smallwood.

"(The radio spot is) Letting people know that, gosh, this is what the Bluebonnet Council regards as a role model, (and asking) 'Do you?' and many of them do not," he said.

With the cookie sale season under way, he said this is the Girl Scouts' most visible time.

While Vivio learned of Pisciotta's problems with recognizing Smallwood last April, the Crawford residents learned of the link to Planned Parenthood after Jennifer Smith's troop had sold more than 40 cases of the cookies. But now that Smith and others are leaving, it's unclear what will happen to the cookies and whether the people who had pledged to buy them will refuse because of the boycott.

Coody said she demands an apology from the council for its involvement in Nobody's Fool and ending its sponsorship of the event before she'll consider rejoining.

The girls from her four-child troop and five girls who will leave another troop may form a new group or join an existing one.

Thomas Aguilar, Lisa's husband, said, "We have to make a stand."

Smallwood says the Crawford experience does not correspond with the feedback she's heard on the boycott.

"I've not had one negative phone call," she said. "I also talked to Girl Scouts and both the office and Planned Parenthood have had people walking in with checks today saying I don't want to buy any cookies, but I want you to know I support what you do."

After more than 90 minutes at the meeting, three mothers who also are troop leaders, said they were leaving with an open mind, saying they would wait to hear the other side's view before leaving Girl Scouts for good.

But Shannon Donaldson said she won't consider going back. "I have to make a stand or there's no telling what else would happen," she said.

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