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Waco Tribune-Herald



Scouts cut Parenthood ties

Area Girl Scout council votes to drop sponsorship of sex-education events

By **BRIAN GAAR**
Tribune-Herald staff writer

The Bluebonnet Council of Girl Scouts will no longer co-sponsor two sex education events organized by Planned Parenthood, with the council head saying that the affiliation was not meant to be interpreted as a stance on abortion.

The move comes after 2½ weeks of

controversy sparked by a Baylor University professor's call for a boycott of the group's cookie sales. Some took issue with the council's affiliation with Planned Parenthood which, among other things, provides abortion services.

The board approved a motion to remove the sponsorship in a special called meeting Sunday. The vote came after considerable discussion, said Beth Vivio, the council's executive director. She declined to comment on how the board members voted.

"Our policies basically state that we do not take a position on issues like abortion," Vivio

said. "We feel these are private matters that need to be discussed or determined by each family."

Vivio said some members took issue with the Girl Scouts logo being a part of brochures for Nobody's Fool and the 3R Coalition, which are sex education programs.

"As part of an organization whose mission is to help girls grow strong, some local Girl Scout councils may make girls and their families aware of the information and resources that are available to them on such matters," a statement from the board said. "In all instances, these topics are discussed

from an informative rather than advocacy point of view."

Vivio said it is possible that Girl Scouts will still make information about such conferences like Nobody's Fool available. Girl Scouts had sponsored the program for years, though it hadn't been widely publicized.

About two other dozen organizations, including the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, also have co-sponsored the sex-education program.

John Pisciotta, the Baylor professor who called for the boycott, said the move is a step

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SCOUTS Council breaks with programs

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in the right direction, but a complete break from Planned Parenthood is needed.

"I hope they will do this and this whole thing can end," he said.

Pisciotta and other anti-abortion activists have objected to the subjects taught at programs like Nobody's Fool.

Pam Smallwood, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Central Texas, said she was shocked at the decision.

"I'm sick to think that an organization as illustrious as the Girl Scouts would make a decision based on one person's political agenda," Smallwood said.

Misinformation alleged

She accused Pisciotta of handing out misinformation about Nobody's Fool, including copies of portions from sex education books that were taken out of context.

The Bluebonnet Council includes 6,000 girls in 14 counties.

Donna Coody, a former Girl Scout troop leader in Crawford, is starting her own girls' organization after breaking with the council over the issue.

The recent decision won't change her mind, but Coody said she was happy with the change.

"We have been heard. That's fantastic," she said.

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Executive Director Beth Vivio said the Girl Scout council wants to avoid advocacy on issues such as abortion.