

## **STOPP wants to know Girl Scouts, Planned Parenthood ties**

*Dallas Morning News.com*

Monday, April 12, 2004

**Associated Press**

FORT WORTH -- Nearly 80 percent of the nation's Girl Scout councils will not say whether they have affiliations with Planned Parenthood, a pro-life group announced Monday.

A survey by American Life League's STOPP International stemmed from controversy in Waco, where the Bluebonnet Council of Girl Scouts severed its ties with Planned Parenthood in February after Pro-Life Waco waged a Girl Scout cookie boycott. Some parents in nearby Crawford, upset over the affiliation, also had taken their daughters out of troops.

STOPP International said it asked 315 Girl Scout councils whether they had a relationship with Planned Parenthood, which provides various education and health services, including abortions.

While 249 of the councils did not answer the question, 17 reported having ties and 49 said they do not, according to STOPP International. Some "relationships" include a troop inviting a Planned Parenthood official to speak, girls earning a badge for attending a Planned Parenthood event and the two organizations co-sponsoring events. The survey results were announced Monday in Waco, about 90 miles south of Fort Worth.

The Bluebonnet Council, which oversees troops in the Waco area and 13 other counties, had allowed its logo to be used on materials for two sex-education seminars sponsored by Planned Parenthood. The council also gave the Planned Parenthood of Central Texas executive director, Pam Smallwood, a "woman of distinction" award last year.

Smallwood said STOPP's efforts were intimidation tactics but that Waco's Planned Parenthood will keep hosting the "excellent, medically accurate" seminar for fifth- through ninth-graders. The program addresses puberty and does not mention abortion, she said. "It's very sad that people try to spend their time preventing women, men and adolescents from obtaining accurate medical information," she said Monday.

Smallwood said the Girl Scouts organization obviously was not intimidated either, evident by the large number of councils that did not respond to STOPP's survey.

Jim Sedlak, executive director of Stafford, Va.-based STOPP International, said his group is not at war with Girl Scouts but is trying to protect youngsters from the "evils" of Planned Parenthood. STOPP International is a Christian-based organization trying to put Planned Parenthood out of business, according to its Web site.

Officials with New York-based Girl Scouts did not immediately return calls seeking comment Monday.

About 2.9 million girls nationwide are in Girl Scouts of the USA, which was founded in 1912 and chartered by Congress in 1950