

## a mother's view

# Scouting out good values



**Erin Harrel**  
of Cape Coral is  
the mother of  
three children.

**T**his year, my 7-year-old daughter, Riley, decided to join Girl Scouts. You might find this odd, but I have to say I was resistant.

I worried about losing our weekends to nonstop Scouting events. And with 35 girls in the troop — the largest in her school — I wasn't sure how Riley would learn or benefit.

Boy, was I wrong!

The two troop leaders, Judith Pultro and Mora Miner, are more efficient than an entire White House staff. Their meetings seem chaotic ➤➤



Brownie Troop 178

Photo special to Parent & Child

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at times, yet they are very controlled. They accomplish more in one meeting than most of us do in a week.

The girls move through the crafts or assigned tasks in small groups rotating on a simple hand command. It's amazing! They have a system for everything from handing out papers to collecting all 35 field trip forms (even from those of us that can't keep track of the ONE form we are supposed to turn in for our child).

The most incredible part of being with this wonderful group of Girl Scouts is that the kids are learning positive social skills, kindness and the art of generosity.

Each year the troop picks a charitable cause to help by collecting or creating goods. Once everything is collected, it's hauled off and distributed by the adults. This past year, the girls were able to see the outcome of all

their hard work.

The entire troop of 35 gathered and donated goods to the Lee County Animal Shelter. In total, the girls collected more than 50 pounds of dog food, 25 pounds of cat food, countless paper towels, bath towels and animal toys. While at the animal shelter, the girls went on a tour and played with several of the friendly kittens and puppies up for adoption.

Riley is allergic to cats, or we would have had to take a few of the furry little friends home.

Joining Scouts this year has been a wonderful experience for both Riley and me. When I get to be one of the helper moms, I thoroughly enjoy listening to the girls chitchat. Their discussions are absolutely hilarious and heartwarming.

For example, at one of the meetings I asked a few of the girls what their fa-

vorite gifts were (I'm always searching for new and innovative ideas for the endless birthday parties we attend) and their responses were adorable. Webkinz, those cute little critters at Webkinz.com, were at the top of the list.

But a few of the girls had very unusual responses: One of the girls said, "My most favorite gift was from my mom. It was my baby brother." Another said her pony was her favorite, and although she couldn't ride it, it really looked cute on her bed. Another said her princess wallpaper was the best gift ever. You just never know with kids! Who would have thought wallpaper could make a kid so happy?

Turns out that Scouting is a great way to teach kids social skills, appreciation and respect for others and lessons in responsibility and giving. 