





Blackhawk Area Council, Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts, Rock River Council Collaborate for a Successful Campaign



Collaboration is great, but teamwork takes time. When the Boy Scouts of America Blackhawk Area Council and the Rock River Girl Scouts Council of Rockford, Illinois recognized how much they shared in common—similar program needs, while reaching out to many of the same families in their community—the spark of an idea warmed into a campfire of collaboration: “What if we work together to acquire a new Scout service center that neither council could obtain on its own?”

Not only did it sound great to both councils, but the idea was particularly intriguing for potential donors.

Said Don Kinney, Scout Executive for the Blackhawk Area Council, “We felt strongly we could capitalize on our shared experiences and commonalities. The Girl Scouts brought great energy and momentum to the effort and still do.” It was an exciting and innovative plan whose time had come.

Hartsook President and CEO, Matt Beem was enlisted to help assess the groups’ ability to raise money for the combined service center.

Beem’s lifetime of personal experience with Scouting, as well as his decades of tenure providing professional fundraising counsel for Boy Scouts of America councils around the country brought a high level of expertise to this bold venture.

Said Beem, “The campaign for a new joint service center, one of the only ones in the country serving both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, provided an opportunity to attract support from constituents of both councils, but it also brought with it a unique set of challenges. Among them was the councils’ desire to include significant numbers of volunteers from each of their ranks. At the campaign’s beginning, the combined cabinet included 92... that’s right...92 volunteers!”

Matt facilitated meetings to transition this very large and enthusiastic group of volunteers into 10 to 12 smaller, subgroups focused on targeted projects. The hard work and dedication of these “affinity groups” helped keep everyone on the same page while moving together toward the shared goal.

Within the first year, Hartsook recommended to the councils' staff leadership that they establish an Executive Leadership Campaign Cabinet. As a result, the larger cabinet moved its meeting frequency from once a month to once a quarter and the campaign Executive Leadership Cabinet continued meeting on a monthly basis. This organizational structure streamlined the campaign's leadership, while keeping the very large number of volunteers actively engaged in the process.

Hartsook conducted a pre-campaign assessment and set a campaign goal of \$3.5 million to establish the new service center and to build an endowment. The original plan—to purchase land and construct a building—evolved when they located an existing facility that could be acquired and renovated for less than the cost of new construction.

As the fundraising process began, Beem provided practical direction and insights. Said Kinney, "I can't imagine doing a campaign without Hartsook. I felt confident about asking for large gifts, but I realized I was less confident about the specific dollar amount we should solicit from various donors. Matt was especially helpful in this regard. He was able to lend his expertise and give us a realistic target. This brought great peace of mind and greater confidence to all of us."

At one point, Kinney remembers a potential donor being told, "We are about to ask you for a gift that is going to make you

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Don Kinney, Scout Executive for the Blackhawk Area Council

gulp." The \$250,000 solicitation was large, but due to Hartsook's professional identification of donors, it was also right on target. Not only did the donor give the full amount, but when approached later in the campaign, the family gave an additional \$250,000, qualifying them for a naming opportunity: The Tumilowicz Center for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

There were many memorable gifts extended all along the way, including a \$600,000 in-kind gift of land and a \$100,000 gift toward endowment for the ongoing maintenance of the building. One woman was so moved by the uniqueness of the project that she gave multiple gifts over the course of the campaign totaling \$200,000.

Going from an out-of-the-box innovation to a success campaign was not easy, but it was life-changing; and it will continue to have positive ripple effects for both councils and for the many thousands of individuals and families served.

"Both councils cover 12 counties or more, from suburban Chicago area to the Mississippi River. This new service center allows our members to save a lot of commuting time," said Kinney. Collaboration has been extremely beneficial in many ways. The new location is not only centrally located to both councils' service areas, but by sharing some administrative functions, volunteer efforts, and the cost of utilities, the service center allows both organizations to save time and money.





Now over 40,000 youth and 12,000 adults are able to make use of the new building. For families with children in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, having one location is a tremendous convenience.

“I can’t imagine doing a campaign without Hartsook,” said Kinney after the campaign was completed.

“Don did a great job leading the campaign for his staff volunteers and the many youth that the Blackhawk Area Council serves,” said Beem. “He was a great student, learning more each month and reflecting with counsel on the successes and challenges of major gift fundraising. By the campaign’s conclusion, Don could hold his own with any seasoned major gift fundraiser.”

Council President Bill Reilly of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Council President Lisa Normoyle, as well as former Girl Scouts CEO Ruth Little, and volunteer Chair John Crone, along with Vice Chairs Jodi Deerey and Joe Licari all provided excellent support for the campaign.

Although both groups are very distinct, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts understood they shared a common history and important objectives; this is what kept them moving forward for a future of success. A shared Scout Shop, meeting rooms, offices and more now means much greater capacity for both councils to serve boys and girls in their area.

Both groups are quick to acknowledge that collaboration is not effortless, but it is worth it. What made success possible was not simply focusing on the need for a building, but in recognizing how beneficial a shared vision could be for those they served.

For decades, the two organizations had sought to demonstrate the value of honor, character, confidence, courage, respect, self-reliance and responsibility among youth. Now, for Blackhawk and Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois youth, the Tumilowicz Center for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts is a tangible example of what it means to value character and work toward a common goal.



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