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NEWS RELEASE

Girl Scouts of Orange County Leads the Way in Serving Neurodivergent Girl Scouts

IRVINE, CA (May 20, 2024) – Girl Scouts of Orange County (GSOC) is the 1st Girl Scout council in the United States to receive the Sensory Inclusive Certification from KultureCity®, the nation’s leading nonprofit on sensory accessibility and acceptance for those with invisible disabilities. With an estimated 1 out of every 4 people exhibiting neurodivergence, this certification helps further GSOC’s unwavering commitment to serving all Girl Scouts—from every social, cultural, socio-economic, intellectual, and developmental sphere, including those with visible and invisible challenges or limitations. With a membership of nearly 15,000 girls, that means approximately 3,750 Girl Scouts will directly benefit from GSOC’s certification.

As part of the certification, Girl Scouts of Orange County staff received training from leading medical and neurodivergent professionals on recognizing girls with sensory needs and accommodating their sensory sensitivities through KultureCity’s Sensory Inclusive™ program. Neurodivergent refers to people whose brains develop or work differently. Several common conditions fall under the neurodivergence umbrella including ADHD, autism, and dyslexia.

In addition to the staff training, GSOC now also offers Sensory Bags that can help promote calm and relaxation for neurodivergent Girl Scouts who find themselves overstimulated, anxious, or feeling overwhelmed by crowds, lights, sounds, smells, or other external stimuli. Sensory Bags are available for girls and their families to borrow at GSOC programs or activities. The Sensory Bags are equipped with the following items:

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Strobe-reduction eyeglasses
- Verbal Cue Cards- a self-regulation resource
- Weighted lap pad
- Fidget tools

“We are incredibly proud to be the first Girl Scout council to receive this critically important certification from KultureCity because we recognize that some Girl Scouts need extra support. We are breaking down the barriers that prevent our girls with

sensory sensitivities from fully enjoying the enriching program Girl Scouts offers,” Dr. Vikki Shepp, Ed.D., Girl Scouts of Orange County’s CEO, said. “GSOC’s certification and partnership with KultureCity allows us to ensure all our programs and events are sensory-inclusive so no girl feels left out.”

Sensory Bags will also be made available at GSOC’s Camp Scherman. The KultureCity Sensory Inclusive Certification is the latest effort by Girl Scouts of Orange County to provide valuable resources to support its 15,000 girl members. Last year, we expanded our team by hiring an Inclusion Specialist to collaborate with caregivers, troops, and staff, increasing our ability to serve those with disabilities. Girl Scouts, parents, and troop leaders can also request disability and language accommodations directly through our website.

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About Girl Scouts of Orange County

We are 25,000 strong – nearly 15,000 girls and 10,000 volunteers and adult members who bring girls’ dreams to life and work together to build a better world. Through programs reaching girls in every zip code in Orange County, Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges—whether they climb to the top of a tree or the top of their class, lace up their boots for a hike or advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends. Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors, and thousands of alums, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and take action to affect the issues most important to them. To join, volunteer, or support Girl Scouts of Orange County, visit www.girlscoutsoc.org.

About KultureCity

KultureCity®, established in 2014, is a dynamic non-profit organization at the forefront of the inclusivity movement that continues to make waves in creating a more accessible and accepting world for individuals with sensory needs and invisible disabilities (found in 1 in 4 of us). In a short 10 years, a few highlights of KultureCity’s impact include making over 1,800 venues sensory-inclusive certified, handing out almost a million sensory bags to individuals in need, making over 150 live events sensory-inclusive, and saving 48 lives through the KultureCity® First Responder Training. KultureCity’s commitment to inclusivity extends beyond physical spaces. The organization actively collaborates with influential figures, businesses, and communities to promote awareness and understanding of invisible disabilities. KultureCity® partners with event industry leaders like NFL, NBA, MLB, and FIFA to make their flagship events sensory-inclusive. With ongoing initiatives, partnerships, and a passionate community of supporters, KultureCity® is set to leave an enduring impact on the landscape of inclusivity.