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NEWS

News

Girl Scouts reflect on sweet success in difficult cookie season



Hailey Heren stands beside her cookie-selling booth, complete with a homemade shield she built with her father. (Courtesy of Glenn Heren)

By [CAMRYN PAK](#) | cpak@scng.com |

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As she eagerly watched car after car pour into the Angel Stadium parking lot, 14-year-old Hailey Heren prepared to take cookie orders, hundreds of boxes at her side.

Heading into her 10th year as a Girl Scout, the Anaheim native was facing the most challenging cookie season yet – social distancing requirements altering how she had to conduct her sales.



Sisters Alyvia and Mariah Williams hold up a sign thanking buyers for coming to their storefront booth sale. (Courtesy of Elaine Murphy)

But with the help of innovative drive-thru events, contactless deliveries and lots of hand sanitizer, Heren sold 13,093 boxes of Girl Scout cookies – crowning her Orange County's top seller for 2021.

Heren usually averages 4,000 to 5,000 boxes a year, she said. This year, she sold 1,000 in a day at the Angel Stadium “mega” drive-thru, which was held in March by five local troops to safely sell cookies during the pandemic.

Heren credits her new record to her troop’s booth coordinators, who worked hard to secure storefront spots, and also how the events of the past year caused more people to take interest in supporting the community, leading to more sales. She also sold cookies online.

“I sold out completely,” she said.

Heren’s success is a highlight in a pandemic-troubled selling season as Girl Scouts nationwide report millions of unsold boxes because of COVID-19, leaving them scrambling to find last-minute sellers and food banks to donate to, the Associated Press recently reported.

The Girl Scouts of Orange County sold a little more than 1.7 million boxes, according to Communications Director Caron Berkley. The previous five-year average was 2.3 million to 2.5 million boxes sold annually.

Orange County’s 228,000 remaining packages of cookies have been donated to food banks, first responders, the military and other local community organizations.

“We are turning what has been a challenging year and a challenging situation with these excess cookies into a positive,” Berkley said of the message of giving the girls are learning from the donations.

Alyssa Brown, 13, and her Irvine-based troop were among the lucky few selected to deliver hundreds of boxes to local police officers and firefighters.

“I was very happy about being able to deliver to the fire department and police station because they do deserve the thanks for everything they do for us,” Brown said.

Berkley said so many of the scouts rose to the occasion finding creative ways to safely sell amid the challenging pandemic.

The girls of Troop 1082, based at the Orange County Rescue Mission’s Village of Hope shelter in Tustin, saw an unexpectedly high number of sales this year, raising enough money to send seven scouts to Camp Scherman in the San Jacinto Mountains this year.

The girls would not be looking forward to summer camp without the generosity of buyers, said Troop Leader Elaine Murphy. A few scouts who had cookie money from last year will also attend.

Troop 1082 ended the season with 4,782 boxes sold, an increase of more than 2,000 from last year’s sales. Although some girls were able to hold last-minute booth sales,

Murphy said that most of the purchases happened virtually. She also received emails from strangers wanting to buy online, who then shared the link to purchase cookies with their friends and family.

“People are looking for a cookie connection in order to buy cookies. Especially during the pandemic, people are wondering how they can help,” Murphy said.

Alyvia Williams was one of the Troop 1082 scouts able to conduct both in-person and online sales. At her last storefront booth sale, she and her younger sister sold every single box they brought with them. The sisters will both be attending Camp Scherman this summer, Williams as a returner, and her sister, Mariah, as a first-time attendee.

“My last experience at camp was amazing because, well, the food was great,” Williams, 10, laughed.

In addition to the food, she looks forward to reuniting with her fellow troop members – who she hasn’t seen in a year because of COVID – and meeting new scouts from around Orange County.