Girlguiding Essex South East Annual Report March 2020 – February 2021

This year has certainly been a very different and challenging one for the members of Girlguiding Essex South East with most of the year spent in lockdown meaning face-to-face guiding meetings could not take place.

Many leaders rose to the challenge and found different ways of keeping their units active. Some used their daily exercise time to walk round their girls’ houses to deliver activity packs through letterboxes, others posted or emailed out activities while some met on Zoom or other digital platforms. Some leaders needed to take a step back from guiding to deal with increased workloads, working from home, home-schooling etc. Where possible, local commissioners and other leaders supported these units to allow Guiding to continue and we are very grateful to anyone who took on extra guiding during this time.

When restrictions eased in the Autumn of 2020, some leaders went back to face-to-face meetings outdoors completing the necessary risk assessments and following strict safety guidelines but this was short lived as tighter restrictions were re-imposed.

Our County Training Day due to take place in April had to be cancelled but the County Training Team continued to run trainings throughout the year focussing on First Response and Safe Space trainings although these all had to be done on Zoom. The training team trained a large number of leaders during this time and arranged Covid safe face-to-face First Aid trainings when allowed, to enable leaders to complete their qualification.

Opportunities for our young members to take part in larger events was sadly curtailed. Basildon Gang Show was due to take place in April 2020 and Essex International Jamboree in August 2020 but both sadly had to be cancelled as did many other events camps, holidays and outings.

The Outdoor team organised a virtual sleepover which took place in November. All the activities and a challenge pack were shared online and the girls were encouraged to sleep somewhere other than their own bed. Many of our young members took part finding some interesting places to sleep.

Our annual celebration of Thinking Day, when we think about Guiding around the world also had to be a virtual celebration. Again, activities were published on-line and girls and leaders were invited to renew their Promise virtually.

Our Annual Subscriptions payments were due to be paid to Girlguiding at the end of February 2021. Most units had either not met at all or had only met virtually since March 2020 which meant that many leaders were reluctant to ask parents to pay their usual ‘subs’. To help support units who might be facing financial difficulties making the annual subscriptions payments, the county made the decision to make a grant to each unit that applied, of 20% of their Annual Subscriptions bill.

As we reach the end of this financial year, we are still living under quite tight restrictions and units are still not able to meet in person. This has not stopped some girls from achieving the highest awards available to them – the Bronze, Silver and Gold Section Awards.

Thanks must go to all the leaders who have worked hard to keep their units active and provided girls with much needed activities during the last 12 months and we hope that the leaders who have needed to take a break during this time will be able to reopen their units when we are allowed to meet in person again.

Alison Tompkinson – County Commissioner for Girlguiding Essex South East