

Centenary Message from the WAGGGS World Board Chairman, Margaret Treloar - March 2009

Dear Friends in Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting,

On the 10th of April 2010, Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world will begin their centenary celebrations. It will be the 100th day of the 100th year since the start of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. I am delighted to send this message to all our members across the world to mark the launch of their celebrations.

It is a great honour to be Chairman of such a dynamic organization at this exciting period of its history. For 100 years, approximately 250 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts have been changing lives and building a better world. In 1909 several girls demanded a place for girls at the Crystal Palace Boy Scout Rally. These girls were, in fact, the very first advocates for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts - speaking out and challenging the norms and gender conventions of the time.

Since then, Girl Guides and Girl Scouts have continued to change the lives of those around them through community action, peer education and service to others. Creating Peace Worldwide, Building World Citizenship, Our Rights Our Responsibilities - these are just a few examples of how our members have helped to improve the lives of millions of others. Our members have often been at the forefront of helping people in conflict situations and in natural disasters. This is a tradition that we have upheld throughout our history; through two World Wars, civil unrest, conflicts, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes.

As we celebrate our achievements and reflect on the lives we have positively changed, we also look ahead to the next century and how we can influence the things we care about. In many parts of the world, the situation for girls and young women has improved enormously since 1909. However there is still a lot to be done to ensure that girls and young women enjoy a world free from poverty, hunger, disease, violence against girls and women, lack of education, inequality and injustice.

This is why, in 2009, WAGGGS launched its global action theme - Girls worldwide say 'together we can change our world.' The theme encourages all our members, of all ages, to make a personal commitment to change the world around them. We

are adding our efforts to help the world to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals which focus on ending extreme poverty and its root causes.

Starting in 2010 we bring together the past and the future. A Celebration Day will take place on the 10th of April each year from 2010 to 2012. Each year will have a theme: plant (2010), grow (2011) and share (2012). These celebrations will have four elements - of course it will be a party, it will be about "100", there will be good deeds involved, and there will be an international flavour - and we anticipate they will be happening all over the world!

We will also be running a series of Young Women's World Forums: in the UK, at our World Centres and in the USA. This is a truly exciting initiative that reflects WAGGGS' commitment to being the voice of girls and young women as well as enabling them to speak out for themselves and influence issues they care about. Our regions and World Centres will also be organizing other events and activities to celebrate the centenary.

Every single one of you has contributed to making this organization what it is. We are all part of the past, the present and the future of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to the Movement.

Let's celebrate the spirit of volunteering which led women to set up Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting organizations in our member countries so many years ago - and which continues to drive our leaders today. So many women that I meet talk about their leaders as role models who helped them develop into the individuals that they are today and made them believe that they could bring about change - that their actions mattered!

We have a lot to celebrate, both about the past and for the future. Please join in the Centenary Celebration Days, participate in the events going on around the world, take up a Global Action Theme project, share the news about your events and projects on our centenary web site and help to change more lives for the better.

Together WE CAN change our world.

