

1st June is the United Nations Global Day of Parents, an opportunity to consider all different kinds of parents everywhere and the amazing things they do!

To help celebrate this I have put together a list of just a few of the things that parents do to support Guiding. In doing so I have realised just how much I have been under-appreciating them! As I'm sure you'll agree with me by the end of this piece, Guiding just couldn't happen without the support of parents.

Parents as helpers

When asked what involvement parents have with guiding, this is probably the first thing that springs to most leaders' minds - parents can help at unit meetings. Whether it's the parents that are happy to be on a rota of helpers long term, or the life-savers you know will say yes when you phone them 10 minutes before a meeting to say a leader's car has broken down and you need another adult at the meeting, I'm sure most of us have experienced parents stepping up to help out with whatever crafts, games, or adventures you have planned for the evening (If you get extra lucky they even start tidying up while the girls are being dismissed!).

Equally helpful are those that arrive hours early at big events or camps. I have memories of teams of parents loading and unloading vans, trekking equipment across fields, battling to put up unwilling wet weather tents in blustery conditions and 'just nipping back' on a two hour round trip to pick up that one essential item that was left in the store cupboard.

Parents are fountains of knowledge

As much as I like to think I know everything, there are some things I'm just not very good at, and this is where turning to parents can help. For anyone that's ever panicked as Brownies have asked to learn to knit, or not known where to start teaching Rangers to gut a fish, parents can be life-savers. Coming into the unit to share their skills or even just having a quiet chat with you, parent's knowledge can really enhance meetings and even give you ideas of new things to do with your units.

In the past I have experienced parents teaching Brownies British sign language, helping Rainbows learn to sew, and leading science and first aid activities. Next half term my unit will be working on the Communicate stage 1 skills builder. I'm really excited to make this more relatable and take it further than the leadership team could alone by inviting any parents that speak a language other than English to come and teach a few words to the Rainbows.

By asking around it can be a surprise what different things parents of your unit have expertise in and it can lead to some wonderful experiences for the girls.

Parents as carers

I'm sure at some time or other most leaders have found themselves guilty of thinking 'if only Flossie could do one more activity at home she could earn X badge'. Particularly with Rainbows or members less able to work independently, it is easy to think that parents are not doing enough to help, but this is seriously underestimating the amount they are already doing to support Guiding.

Parents are Guiding's biggest supporters. Without them, we wouldn't have any members. They initially sign girls up on Go, pay the subs that allow units to run and provide amazing

opportunities. Regardless of other responsibilities and inconveniences (brother's karate lesson starting at the same time fifteen minutes away, baby should be in bed at pick up time, organising dinner with daughters in three different sections) parents bring their children to unit meeting week in and week out, giving them the opportunity to participate and get the most out of guiding. I consider the clean uniform and badge book that most manage to remember an added bonus! If parents did not consider Guiding a worthwhile endeavor for their children and they did not take the time, money and care needed to put and keep their daughters in Guiding then we would have no young members and would not exist.

Parents as transport

Another way parents support members of Guiding is by providing transport. Whether this is bringing the girls to meetings every week or longer journeys to camps or trips, parents often do a lot of driving to make sure their children are in the right places at the right times. Not forgetting of course that they have to make the journey in both directions.

Some parents are generous enough to give lifts to other children and arrive at events with a car-load of children (and probably breathe a sigh of relief when leaders take them off their hands). On one occasion I even had to rely on the kindness of a parent to drive me home from a Brownie pack holiday when my lift home had unexpectedly had to leave early.

Parents as leaders and volunteers

Lastly, and certainly not least, let us consider the leaders, commissioners and other Guiding volunteers that are also parents. Every week unit meetings, training, planning and admin are juggled around family time by a huge number of unit leaders and other volunteers who work hard to make guiding an amazing experience for everyone involved.

So, overall, I want to say a huge thank you to all parents who are involved in Guiding in any way. We really couldn't do it without you!