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# For *the* Girls

Kim E. Fraites-Dow knows that being CEO of Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania is about more than managing an organization—it's about finding the most meaningful and effective ways to raise strong women, responsible citizens, and courageous leaders.

**IN EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA ALONE**, there are close to 30,000 Girl Scouts. You may hear about them solving problems in the community, being strong leaders and good friends, and, of course, selling their famous Girl Scout Cookies year after year.

But behind the troops of young change-makers and cookie sellers is a fearless leader, caretaker, mother and role model. She is a woman who dedicates all her working hours to helping young women find their voice, connect with others and take action in their communities.

That woman is Kim E. Fraites-Dow, CEO of Girl Scouts of Eastern

Pennsylvania and this year's Trailblazer Award recipient.

Fraites-Dow has been CEO of Girl Scouts of Eastern PA since 2016, before which she was the organization's Chief Development and Marketing Officer, COO, and Acting CEO. Prior to her time at Girl Scouts, she worked more than four years at The Philadelphia Orchestra as Director of Corporate Affairs and nearly three years at The Franklin Institute as Director of Institutional Giving and Government Relations.

In her role at The Franklin Institute, she learned how to fundraise and practice



**Girl Power:** Kim Fraites-Dow, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania, is this year's recipient of *Philadelphia* magazine's Trailblazer Award, which honors women who have made an extraordinary impact on their field and community.



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thought leadership on a very large scale (she helped bring Galileo’s telescope out of Italy for the first time in 400 years), which prepared her for her current role, another large non-profit. But she knew she wanted more responsibility. “I wanted to be able to steer the organization,” Fraites-Dow says.

Although ‘steer’ is an understatement, that’s what she does now with Girl Scouts of Eastern PA, and she says it comes naturally to her. “I have never not wanted to go to work,” she says. “And I think it’s because I’ve had these jobs at not-for-profits, where the mission drives your work—and so the ‘why’ is always present.”

Fraites-Dow’s ‘why’ is to support the girls. She says that mission is best carried out by the Girl Scouts method because it’s a girl-only, girl-led community. “There are very few places anymore where you’re just with girls, and it’s really important for girls to feel comfortable taking risks,” Fraites-Dow says. “Taking risks is one of the ways you start to learn who you are.”

Through Girl Scouts, she says, a girl will feel comfortable taking those risks . “What are you good at? What do you want to be good at? What do you need to work on?” Fraites-Dow says. “All those types of things are things she can try in Girl Scouting.”

One of the biggest ways a girl can do that is through the STEM programs, which Fraites-Dow is focused on now. Many girls, she says, opt out of STEM fields because they believe they’re less qualified. In a regular co-ed classroom setting, they may not feel as comfortable raising their hand or offering an answer to a question.

But Fraites-Dow says the development of the STEM programs are helping to progress and change the pipeline for women and girls in STEM. “A girl may become more and more interested in a career in STEM knowing that she has the skills,” Fraites-Dow says. “It’s very empowering for a girl to know that.”

Like the STEM programs, the Outdoors programs help girls who aren’t as comfortable in nature, including girls who live in the city. This year, Fraites-Dow is overseeing an urban outdoor initiative that includes neighborhood day camps in Philly. “We want to provide

Girl Scouting opportunities in her neighborhood,” she says.

The hope is that the urban outdoor campers will be interested in coming to one of the more rural Girl Scout properties. “Then she may be interested in spending the night, maybe in a lodge first, then she may be interested in a platform tent, and then in pitching her own tent,” Fraites-Dow says. “So it’s a progression of outdoor experiences.”

Entrepreneurship is another pillar that Fraites-Dow says drives her work. The most well-known entrepreneurship program is the cookie program. “That’s where they learn goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics,” Fraites-Dow says.

She has seen the power of the cookie program first-hand as a troop leader. “In Kindergarten, my daughter made up what she wanted to say, she rehearsed, she asked me for advice, took some edits, and then she went up to the neighbor’s door, knocked on it, and said her script,” she says. “For a child who is pretty shy, to see her doing that was mind blowing.”

Besides the in-field aspect of the program, Fraites-Dow says that girls can learn to become financially independent and even break out of cycles of socioeconomic difficulty. “If you or your family doesn’t have expendable income, it may seem like it’s never going to be possible,” she says. “But we give her the tools to figure out how to do that, and to see that financial success is possible.”

The common theme throughout the Girl Scout programming is honing the ability to identify a change you want to see, and to make a plan to execute it. To improve skills in a certain area, to help a friend feel included, to save enough money to travel the world and break out of financial insecurity, even to make Philadelphia better.

“Every girl in every neighborhood of Philadelphia has something that she wants to change,” Fraites-Dow says. “Whether it’s the cleanliness of the streets, the lights at night, adding a stop sign somewhere, whatever it is. In Girl Scouts, she will learn to articulate it, plan for it, and make it happen.”

And with 5,000 Girl Scouts in Philadelphia, they’re starting to implement hundreds of Take Action Projects. “These are all points of light, if you will, in the neighborhoods, that are already making a difference,” Fraites-Dow says. “So while it’s really important for them to become leaders in the future, they’re already leaders now, making Philadelphia a better place.

“I’m not the trailblazer,” she adds. “They are.”



# City Roots

Christa Barfield had never touched soil before 2018. Today, she stewards 128 acres of land in and around Philly as CEO and Founder of FarmerJawn and Viva Leaf Tea Co., and leads community programs to spread the seeds of her agricultural and entrepreneurial spirit.

**FIVE YEARS AGO, CHRISTA BARFIELD** found herself looking for change. She didn’t have a plan, but she did have strong instincts—and a plane ticket to Martinique.

She resigned from her job and left for five days, sensing she was close to a turning point. As it turns out, Barfield reached that turning point in Martinique. One of her Airbnb hosts was a chef growing herbs, and the other was a family of farmers growing herbs, vegetables, and fruit. She was intrigued by their businesses, quickly gathering knowledge by working alongside them during her short stays.

“A sense of tranquility came over me that I wanted to hold on to,” she says. Plus, Barfield saw a lack of hyper-fresh, local food in Philly. So, she made her decision: She was going to become a farmer.

Barfield worked morning and night to develop her business. First came Viva Leaf Tea Co., which she began by learning how to grow herbs out of egg cartons. Barfield wanted her tea to be as fresh as possible, like the pour-over blends straight from the garden in Martinique. The herbs for an average tea blend are usually picked a few years prior to packaging, so Viva Leaf Tea’s quality would be a marked improvement.

Today, you can find Viva Leaf tea in all Di Bruno Bros. stores, with the (very recent) harvest dates displayed on the packaging.

Barfield then began growing for the FarmerJawn Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) concept. She began with 1,500 square feet of growing space in Roxborough. Now, she has 128 acres of land. The business now includes the brick-and-mortar FarmerJawn Greenery as well as the upcoming CornerJawn stores strategically placed in Kensington and Germantown, the lowest health-outcome neighborhoods in Philly.

FarmerJawn also provides school programs in soil science, as well as the Urban Agripreneur Cohort to teach entrepreneurship and agriculture. FarmerJawn also recently started a custom growing program for special produce requests.

Barfield’s operation has clearly grown exponentially since 2018, and it’s no wonder: “FarmerJawn is a regenerative organic farm, and our practices do not include any herbicide or pesticide at any time,” she says. FarmerJawn will soon be one of the largest Black-owned regenerative organic farms in the whole nation—but still less than 1% of rural land in the country is Black-owned, according to the USDA.

“We’re still working,” Barfield says. “We’re making a name for the industry so that Black people can know that they belong here. We want to move in triumph. So that’s what FarmerJawn is laying the bricks for.”

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