

**NORTHWEST**

# MacKenzie Scott donates \$85 million to Girl Scouts

By THALIA BEATY  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott donated \$84.5 million to Girl Scouts of the USA and 29 of its local branches, the 110-year-old organization said Tuesday, calling it a vote of confidence.

“Her support of our organization means honestly just as much as the donation,” Sofia Chang, CEO of GSUSA, said in an interview.

It’s the largest donation the Girl Scouts have received from an individual since their founding in 1912, she said. The funds will help the organization recover from the impact of the pandemic, which drove down membership. The Girl Scouts plan to support volunteers and staff, make camp properties more resistant to the impacts of climate change, improve science and technology education for youth members, and develop diversity and inclusion programming to make their troops more accessible.

The Girl Scouts council in Southern Arizona decided to use the \$1.4 million it received from Scott to elevate the work they are already doing rather than to start a new program or initiative, said its CEO Kristen Garcia-Hernandez.

“We are a small council and we’re certainly not in a major metropolitan hub. So for us, gifts of this magnitude don’t come around very often,” Garcia-Hernandez said.

The gift accelerates their plan to hire more staff to reach most places in the seven counties they serve in under an hour and provide programming year-round. The council will also outfit a van as a mobile science and technology classroom, a project it has tried to fund for a year and a half. Many local funders seem to think that the Girl Scouts’ cookie sales cover their expenses, she said.



The headquarters of Girl Scouts of New Mexico Trails in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott has donated \$84.5 million to Girl Scouts of the USA and 29 of its local branches.

“While the cookie program sustains us certainly, and it’s wonderful and the girls are part of that process, which makes it even more beautiful, we certainly need more from the community,” Garcia-Hernandez said.

Though Scott’s philanthropy has extended throughout Washington state, the Girl Scouts of Western Washington confirmed Tuesday that it is not one of the 29 councils that benefitted from her latest donation.

Nonetheless, its CEO Andrea Andersson said “we are overjoyed that our movement has been recognized by MacKenzie Scott’s foundation as viable, life-changing and impactful to the young people of our world.”

According to Anderson, the regional council current-

ly includes more than 16,000 youth members across 18 counties spanning from the U.S.-Canada border down to the Cascades in Oregon. She is currently working with staff and about 5,000 volunteers to rebuild and recruit to pre-pandemic levels of more than 20,000 youth after many left during virtual programming.

“We’re finding girls who are now ready to meet with friends and peers and start changing the world, in person,” she said Tuesday.

The Western Washington Girl Scouts offers career development, outdoor education, STEM and other experiential learning opportunities as well as the Gold Award program, the highest honor in Girl Scouts, similar to the Eagle Scout program

of the Boy Scouts of America.

Philanthropic giving to organizations that specifically serve women and girls represents less than 2% of all donations, according to a research project of the Women’s Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University’s Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. The institute found that proportion has not changed significantly between 2012 and 2019, the years the study tracked.

Tessa Skidmore, research associate at the institute, said major gifts from women like philanthropists Melinda French Gates, Sheryl Sandberg and Scott could inspire other donors.

“Those are the types of things that have the potential to change that number,” she said.

The institute partnered with Pivotal Ventures, the investment firm founded by French Gates, and others to promote giving to women and girls on the International Day of the Girl, marked on Oct. 11 each year. It also shares its giving data in the hopes that donors or researchers will use it as one way to evaluate gender equity in donations.

Scott communicates infrequently about her giving, which has totaled around \$12 billion since 2019. She has donated large, unrestricted grants to many different kinds of organizations, though her gifts have had a special focus on racial equity. Scott also made a blockbuster \$275 million gift to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and its affil-



MacKenzie Scott

ates this year.

In September, Scott filed for divorce from her second husband, Dan Jewett, whose profile was also

removed from website of The Giving Pledge, a group that asks billionaires to give more than half their wealth away in their lifetimes. The former couple had jointly written on the site last year about their intention to give away Scott’s fortune, which largely comes from her divorce from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

Youth membership of the Girl Scouts fell dramatically during the pandemic, dropping nearly 30% from about 1.4 million in 2019-20 to just over 1 million in 2021-22.

Chang acknowledged the drop but made the case that the organization’s programs consistently help girls build confidence and tackle problems in their communities.

“Our traditional way of supporting girls was really upended during the pandemic as troops couldn’t really meet in person,” Chang said.

“So to build back stronger than we ever had before, we’re really listening to our Girl Scouts, listening to their families and to our volunteers to really ensure that what comes next for us is truly impactful in this moment.”

Seattle Times staff reporter Jenn Smith contributed to this report.

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**< Mailer**

FROM A7

course comply with his request to take him out of our ads going forward,” Bennett wrote in an email. “It’s important to note, however, that we got the photo and the quote from the Congresswoman’s website, so we were using things that were in the public domain.”

Three rounds of the mailers already have been sent, with several thousand in each round, according to Bennett.

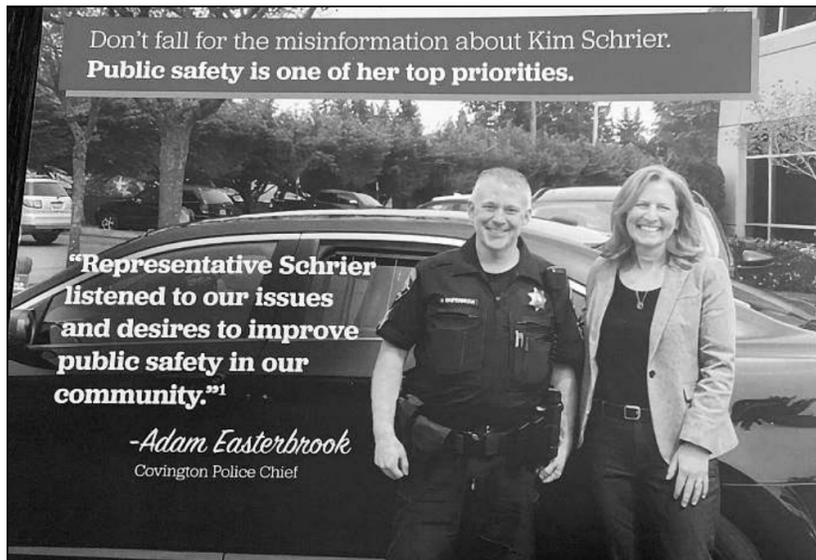
Bennett also noted that as an independent political committee, it was not allowed to coordinate with Schrier’s campaign. He added “we have never claimed that the Chief (or anyone else on the force) had endorsed

the Congresswoman in her campaign.”

Schrier, a pediatrician elected to Congress in 2018, has been working to combat Republican attacks accusing her of failing to support police and attempting to link her to disorder in Seattle. Her opponent, Larkin, a businessman and attorney, is making concerns over public safety a central theme, adopting the campaign slogan “Make Crime Illegal Again.”

In a statement, Courtney Parella, a spokesperson for the National Republican Congressional Committee, called Schrier “another anti-police Democrat whose allies have to lie to voters to try and get them to believe otherwise.”

Schrier spokesperson Hana Tadesse said in a state-



Covington Police Chief Adam Easterbrook is objecting to this mailer paid for by a Democratic Political Action Committee suggesting he has endorsed U.S. Rep. Kim Schrier.

ment the ad had come from an outside group acting without the campaign’s knowledge.

“Congresswoman Schrier has enjoyed working with and supporting local law enforcement officers throughout her time in Congress, including helping to secure record funding for law enforcement and public safety measures in Washington state,” Tadesse said.

Ballots for the general election will be mailed this week and must be post-marked by Nov. 8 or returned to drop boxes by 8 p.m. that day.

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**< Westneat**

FROM A7

on the 3-year-old Highway 99 tunnel.

It’s a pickle because as they jack up the tolls to wring more money out of each driver to cover the shortfall, then more cars will divert onto Seattle’s waterfront — where they are building an eight-lane monstrosity of a road to handle the traffic.

But I would like to submit that less traffic is not bad. It’s good! That there are now fewer commuters warring, Hunger Games-style, over the same scraps of pavement at rush hour is one of the few great things to come out of the pandemic.

It’s changed the calculus of one of Seattle’s biggest challenges of the past three or four decades. How much the traffic math has changed, and in precisely what ways, nobody is yet certain. But here’s what state

officials just said about the old Alaskan Way Viaduct transportation corridor, which we spent 20 years arguing about because it was seen to be so overloaded with traffic:

“There’s been a permanent shift in the projected use of this corridor.”

It isn’t a shift up, which would be bad. It’s a shift down, which is ... a godsend for the city.

It means we don’t need to put that eight-lane road (plus a parking lane) on the south part of the waterfront to handle spill-over traffic. This stretch of Alaskan Way will be so wide in parts — 111 feet — that they’re building a median as an oasis for pedestrians who can’t make it across in one light change. It’s plopping the equivalent of Mercer Street at I-5 on the very waterfront the whole project was designed to save.

The city has a dubious plan to shrink this roadway in 10 years when light rail to

RECLAIMING WATERFRONT

**The number of automobiles using the Highway 99 tunnel is less than forecast. But less traffic isn’t a crisis unless you’re a toll collector.**

West Seattle is scheduled to open, on the theory that rail will eliminate the need so many lanes. Road lanes are disposable? Anyway the good news is that work from home is already cutting rush-hour traffic. There’s no need to wait 10 years — the waterfront roadway should be shrunk now.

The other thing we don’t need are the tolls through the tunnel. Just get rid of them.

The reason these tolls even exist is political spite. Lawmakers from around the state were hacked off at Seattle and were convinced

this tunnel would be a cost-overrun boondoggle. So in exchange for their votes for the Highway 99 tunnel project, they insisted on tolling to stick a share of the cost on city residents.

They did this even though state transportation officials had warned them for years that tolling wouldn’t work well on Highway 99.

“Tolls on a Viaduct replacement would generate little revenue,” the state transportation secretary wrote in a memo way back in 2003. “Primarily because it would be too easy for drivers to avoid them by taking other routes.”

As promised, tolling this tunnel has turned out to be so inefficient that, in the most recent period, 54% of the money collected there went just to paying the costs of collecting the tolls. A normal tolling operation costs 10 to 20%.

Canceling the tolls would lure those drivers not working from home back where

we want them — which is underground, not clogging up the waterfront. This was the main purpose for the tunnel.

It’s true that to make the tolls go away, the state would need to come up with about \$200 million in tunnel debt. But there’s good news there, too: The Bertha tunnel did not turn out to be a financial boondoggle, as so many predicted.

Last week the courts not only let taxpayers off the hook for cost overruns, but forced the contractors to pay the state \$77 million in late penalties. Incredibly this means the final price tag for the tunnel will likely be within 5% of the original price promised way back in 2009.

Talk about a plot twist. After all that drama, taxpayers will pay less of a cost overrun than you get on your typical kitchen remodel.

State lawmakers just found \$130 million to lower

tolls on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. A similar move here and bam — debt would be paid, make-work tolls could be gone, Seattle waterfront saved.

Killing the tolls would also be a kind gesture to West Seattleites. I think we can all agree they’ve suffered enough.

Seriously, though, less traffic isn’t a crisis unless you’re a toll collector. For Seattle, it’s an opportunity. It grants a last-ditch opening to return to what the original vision of this civic campaign was more than 20 long years ago: to reclaim the waterfront from the automobile.

In the Seattle story that may never end, it still isn’t too late for a proper ending.

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