

Girls

FROM PAGE 1A

culture," Olsen said. "And people struggle with it."

The national Boys Scouts organization announced in October 2017 that it would allow girls into its membership, starting with Cub Scouts first and then continuing with Boy Scouts.

The first girls were introduced into Lake Geneva's Pack 239 when the new school year began this fall.

Pack leaders say they had to go through a formal process of approving the change, but they said the girls were welcomed enthusiastically.

The official decision came from Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lake Geneva, which holds the charter for Pack 239, giving the church ultimate authority.

Neil Doeblar, the pack's top supervisor, or "cubmaster," said church officials gave their blessing, and parents and others in the group were accepting of the change.

"Even those who were skeptical found it to be reasonable," Doeblar said. "There's really no down side to it."

So far, six girls have joined the pack, including four in second grade, one in first grade and one in fourth grade. The pack has about 65 scouts altogether in kindergarten through fifth grade, with each grade constituting its own sub-group called a "den."

Each den generally meets once a week under the supervision of a den leader or leaders, usually parents.

Under the new rules of the national Boy Scouts, any den accepting girl members must also appoint a woman den leader to supervise those girls separately. The girls and boys conduct activities together, but separate sleeping arrangements must be made on camping trips and so forth.

Pack 239 leaders say



Rachel Strong, center, wears her new Cub Scout uniform while helping to fold a flag during an event with her Cub Scout Pack 239 in Lake Geneva. (Contributed photo/Regional News)

that many girl members were not exactly new to scouting entirely, because many had brothers already wearing the uniform.

Nicole Zinkowich, chairwoman of the pack's administrative committee, said Cub Scouts frequently have younger sisters who attend meetings and events, and had previously been relegated to the sidelines.

By going co-ed, scouting does a better job of embracing its mission of serving families, Zinkowich said, including girls who now can put on their own uniform and join the fun.

"They wanted to do it," she said, "and now they can do it."

Rachel Strong was once such a spectator.

She attended Pack 239 meetings with a boy cousin who is three years older. Rachel sat and watched her cousin and the other boys enjoy all that Cub Scouts

had to offer.

When the door was opened to make scouting more inclusive, Rachel was among the first to step through it, along with another cousin, Lily Hafferkamp, also a second-grader.

They could have joined an all-girl Brownies troop, Cassandra Kordecki said, but that would have presented logistical problems, having kids group meetings in separate places. Besides, the girls wanted to do Cub Scout activities with the boys they knew.

Cassandra Kordecki was so pleased to see her daughter and niece accepted that she agreed to become a den leader to help supervise the girls.

"Cub Scouts allow families — there's a lot of family activities," she said. "This way, we can all work together to support the same group."