

Getting parents excited about Scouting

By Mark Ray

Illustrations by Bill Basso

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Scouter N.L. has noticed that inactive Scouts tend to have uninvolved parents. She asked how other Scouters get parents excited about the program.

We found ways to include the whole family. For example, we took a family hike and held a picnic where the boys cooked for their families. We had athletic events and obstacle courses the whole family could participate in. As a result, other siblings and parents became friends as well. Within a matter of months, we had an adult at every event with every boy.

Pack Committee Member A.W., Newark, N.Y.

We have two den leaders. When one is working with the boys, the other is talking with the parents, asking questions and doing the business of Scouting. This is a time to build relationships with the adult members of the boys' families.

Den Leader P.R., Sellersburg, Ind.

One of my favorite things to do at a Cub Scout roundup is to ask a few parents if I can take their cars for a spin. The parents are usually very hesitant. I then ask them which is more valuable to them: their car or their child. Roundup is the time to get all parents involved. Ask them what they can do for the pack, not whether they can help. Have a list of positions that need to be filled and let them choose.

Venturing Crew Advisor W.G., New Prague, Minn.

Only one or two families attended camp-outs during my first year with our pack. To show how much fun these camp-outs were, we started taking pictures of the stuff we were doing. We then created display boards and made sure to set them up at every pack meeting. Since then, we've had an increase in attendance year after year. As new families join, they see the fun and can't wait to go.

Pack Committee Chair M.J., Clearwater, Fla.

Rather than worry about parents who don't participate, I do right by parents who do. When camping, I bring my Italian coffeepot and serve my



favorite blend of espresso; another dad brings a cooler with fresh cream. At times, parents cook in their own "patrol" and enjoy gourmet meals. As adults learn to make each other a little more comfortable, taking their boys on outings becomes a treat and not a chore.

Assistant Scoutmaster C.J.G. Pittsburgh, Pa.

Our troop policy is that every parent must do something. We post a signup board at the beginning of May with jobs listed. At the end of May, we have a parent meeting where we fill the empty spaces with those who haven't volunteered. Parents want to sign up first so they have better choices.

Assistant Scoutmaster M.K., Alpharetta, Ga.

Leaders with active unit parents have several characteristics: They are enthusiastic about their roles. They have a vision that is shared and supported by other leaders. They find roles that excite volunteers and give them room to fill those roles. They find resources to make the unit successful and efficient. They respect their volunteers' time and find ways to thank them for their efforts.

Roundtable Staff Member C.S., San Jose, Calif.

To draw in a parent, we talk about the positive things we have seen their son accomplish and discuss the potential their son has. Then we invite the parent to a committee meeting (after promising no ambushes with an assignment!) or to a family-

friendly activity where they can get to know the leadership better and gain an understanding of the program.

Assistant Scoutmaster M.S., San Jose, Calif.

Good communication with parents is essential. Speak directly to them, not through the Scouts. Explain in detail what you are doing and how the activity will help their Scouts advance. Parents want to see their kids advance; they just don't always know what will help in the process.

Den Leader B.B., Manhattan, Kan.

Make Scouting a great social occasion. Be sure your events can involve siblings. Have a cookout at your leader meeting. Ask parents and siblings to help with activities. If your pack makes Scouting fun for the whole family, more parents will get involved, which will make a pack grow and thrive.

Tiger Den Leader J.O'C., Broken Arrow, Okla.

This problem occurs when the parents don't understand what is required of them. At their very first meeting they need to be told that Scouting is a commitment that must be made by the child and the parent and brought to fruition through the den leader. In Cub Scouting the parent is the one who helps the child complete his projects, read and study his assignments, and earn his badges. We den leaders can guide the child, but we can't be his parent.

Webelos Den Leader R.S. Wichita, Kan.

Involving parents in your program requires helping them get to know each other. One idea is to have breakout sessions during meetings; another is to use a "get-to-know-you" game during a court of honor.

Scoutmaster J.N. St. Charles, IL.

Invite parents to events where Scouts perform activities and display skills. Encourage them to participate in the activities with their children. Interest will surely develop among the elders.

Scouter R.G. Gujarat, India

If a Parent that can't commit to a full time volunteer position, may be able to fill short term help needs with a number of events and task. Including:

Merit Badge Counselor – Have talent or skill and willing to share that talent with one or more of the Scouts. Volunteer as a Merit Badge Counselor for the Troop only or Council-wide. Contact the Scoutmaster for more information. There are currently 135 badges to help with.

Fundraiser Coordinator – We run fundraisers a couple of times throughout the year. We can use your skills if you are willing to share them with us! Learn the In's and Out's of Popcorn Sales, Wreath sales, Candy sales, the troop Spaghetti Dinner or running a Car Wash. If you have other ideas bring them to the Troop Committee.

Ceremony Reception/Banquet Coordinator – Are you a Party Planner? We could use your help coordinating the invitations, VIPS, food, drink, desserts, tables and chairs, cleanup, parking, and recruiting more volunteer help.

Event Coordinator – We could use your help coordinating the troop's participation in any number of events throughout the year. Scout-A-Rama, Scouting for Food, Adopt-a-Highway Road Clean Up, District First Aid Meet, Assisting the Cub Scout packs with the Cubmobile races, Boo Camp, Pinewood Derby races, etc. Do one or help with them all.

Special Projects – At least annually, we take and order troop T-Shirts and Hoody's. Coordinate the order forms, payment and distribution of the apparel to the boys, leaders and other parents.

Volunteer Driver – Can't go camping this time but have the time and room to drive. We appreciate whatever you can assist with.

Event worker – Just come over and help for a few hours or the whole day. Your son will have a great role model and the Troop will greatly benefit and appreciate it.

Volunteer to come camping with us – We are always in need of parents, older siblings (18+), and grandparents to go camping with us. You may find you love it!