

Troop 944

Ellicott City, Maryland
"A Boy-Guided Troop"

A Primer for New Scout Parents (and Scouts, Too)

Welcome to Troop 944! Thank you for choosing our Troop. Please feel free to ask any adult or Scout for information. We recognize that this is a lot to take in the first night.

Boy Scouts is the continuation of a journey on the way to manhood, good citizenship and the development of physical, mental and emotional fitness. Since the very word "Scouting" encompasses "outing," we base our program on monthly camping trips. Much of our focus is on learning outdoor skills and the ability to take care of oneself in the wilderness. It is a growth opportunity for both boys and parents.

Mission Statement: The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

Vision Statement: The Boy Scouts of America is the nation's foremost youth program of character development and values-based leadership.

Meetings: Troop 944 meets nearly every Wednesday year-round at Bethany United Methodist Church. Meetings are scheduled to run from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Meetings normally consist of an opening, a skill instruction, Patrol corners, a game, and a closing. Activities are often geared to preparing for the next outing or working on a specific merit badge.

Typically the Troop has one camping trip each month. The Troop also usually has 12-14 Service projects each year.

Uniforms: Boys are expected to be in full "Class A" uniforms at the weekly meetings, any Troop sponsored function and when we travel to and from outings. Wearing the uniform is an honor and shows each Scout's commitment to the aims and purposes of Scouting. Uniforms also make the Troop visible and create a positive youth image in the community. Additionally, the uniform provides a way for Boy Scouts to wear the badges that show their accomplishments. Uniforms can be purchased at the Scout Shop in Baltimore or at any Sunny's location. (Should there be a financial obstacle in obtaining a full uniform for your scout, please consult the Committee Chair or the Scoutmaster in order to discuss potential remedies.) The Troop also issues a Class B uniform for other occasions.

Scouting Ideals: The ideals of Scouting are expressed in the Scout Oath, Law, Motto, and Slogan. We encourage the Scout to measure himself against these ideals and continually try to improve. The goals are high, but attainable. Positive reinforcement is provided by fellow scouts and our Troop's adult leaders.

Patrol Method & Camping: Troop 944 uses the "Patrol Method." The Patrol method gives Boy Scouts an experience in group living and citizenship. It allows Scouts to act in small groups where they can easily relate to each other. It also teaches responsibility as the group sets up their own campsites (with help at first). It is at the Patrol level where boys learn teamwork, leadership, and basic camping skills. The Scouts themselves control activities such as site selection, tent pitching, meal preparation, and cleanup. It places a fair amount of responsibility on young shoulders and allows the boys to grow, learn, and practice decision-making.

Boy Scouts Differ from Cub Scouts: It is important to remember that in moving from Cub Scouts into Boy Scouts the boys become self sufficient while parents move to a *supportive* role. Here are just a few of the main differences:

- ✓ In Cub Scouts the adult leaders and parents plan and run all of the activities; in Boy Scouts, the boys take control (with supervision).
- ✓ In Cub Scouts the Cubmaster or Den Leader plans and runs the meetings; in Boy Scouts the Senior Patrol Leader (an elected First Class or higher scout) plans and runs the meetings. The Program Staff (Scoutmaster and his Assistants) are there to provide guidance when needed and to teach skills.
- ✓ In Cub Scouts parents can sign off on requirements; not so in Boy Scouts. To advance in rank a Scout must fulfill the requirements for that rank (all found in the Scout Handbook). Trained Scouts of First Class or higher rank test the younger scouts (Tenderfoot through First Class) on their skills and knowledge and sign their books. Then the boy has to complete a Scoutmaster conference with the Scoutmaster or one of the Assistant Scoutmasters and a Board of Review (a meeting with a minimum of three Committee Members). Upon successful completion, the boy will be advanced in rank.
- ✓ Boys must seek the approval of the Scoutmaster or Advancement Chair and receive a "blue card" BEFORE starting any merit badge. An individual boy or a group of boys will work with a registered Merit Badge Counselor to complete the merit badge and the counselor must be the one to sign off that the requirements have been completed.
- ✓ The boys meet once a year at a Troop Organizational Workshop (TOW) to choose outings for the next 14 months (again, with supervision). The bottom line is that the boys decide what they want to do and they plan their own trips—within the guidelines and ideals of Scouting.

New Scout Goals: The program is designed for new Scouts to work on requirements through First Class in the first year. Although they will typically take 2-3 merit badges in Summer Camp, the focus is NOT on Merit Badges during the first year. The Troop guides have a goal of working with Scouts to achieve the First Class rank in a year (this is also a national goal).

The assigned Troop Guides will train and sign off rank advancement as they are earned. When all rank requirements are completed for a position, the Scout will ask the Scoutmaster for a Scoutmaster Conference. After passing the conference by the Scoutmaster or his designee, the Scouts will ask the Board of Review adult for a Board of Review. After passing the Board of Review, the Scout received the rank

patch in the next regular Troop meeting. He will later be awarded rank certificates and recognized at the next Court of Honor.

Parent Participation in Scouting: The success in delivering a successful Scouting program requires heavy involvement by parents. It is imperative that parents be involved to make the Troop a success. It doesn't matter whether your job is big or small, help is needed from every adult. We ask that all parents register with the Troop/BSA if you are going on trips so you will be covered by BSA insurance and other requirements (the Troop covers this cost). If you want to actually work with or otherwise supervise the boys in any capacity, you are required to take BSA Youth Protection Training (available online at www.baltimorebsa.org). Once completed, your Youth Protection certificate is good for 2 online (or 3 years with face-to-face meeting). We realize that every parent is busy, however any amount of time you can invest in Troop 944 is time well spent. Here are just a few of the opportunities open to every adult.

Program Staff (Scoutmasters): If you prefer to teach skills, work with the boys and go on campouts, you should indicate this interest to the Scoutmaster.

Patrol Coach: Coaches work with boys in their Patrol through the Patrol Leader, Troop Guides and other Scout leaders. The Troop has a Coach handout to better explain the duties. Each Patrol should have two active Coaches.

Merit Badge Counselor: Please volunteer to become a merit badge counselor to help teach the boys; the topic could be in your job discipline, hobby, or other interest

Troop Parent/Committee Member: Every adult is automatically a member of the Troop Parent/Committee. The group meets once a month to discuss Troop business. The positions and responsibility range from large to small. You can be a member at large or hold office (Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Advancement, Membership, Fund Raising, Eagle Advisors to name a few). Parents are encouraged to attend as many meetings as possible.

Other Ways: There are always ways for parents to participate. Help is often needed to transport boys to or from outings or to help with a fundraiser. The bottom line is that the Troop is only as strong as its adult support. Be there to help your son.

Camping: Camping is at the very heart of boy Scouting. While parents may sometimes accompany the Scouts on campouts, the Scouts camp and participate with their Patrol and NOT with their parents; the boys and adults have separate camping areas as space allows. This is where Boy Scouting is different from Cub Scouting, including Webelos. If you attend an activity with your son, give him space to permit him to enjoy the event and learn with his Patrol buddies. If they need assistance, boys are asked to first go to their Patrol Leader or Senior Patrol Leader. If further assistance is needed the boy should go to one of the Program Staff. This does not mean that you cannot see or speak to your son, but we have the Scout seek out an adult who is not his own parent. Believe it or not this makes for a much

more relaxed atmosphere and you will be amazed as you watch the progress your son will make as he begins to stand on his own two feet.

Troop Policies Regarding Camping: Following is a summary of the BSA and Troop policies followed by Troop 944. There are exceptions, but these policies are in effect on most outings.

Scout Tenting and Meals: Scouts tent with their Patrol in a Patrol site, which is separate from other Patrol sites when possible. Patrols plan their own menus, cook their own meals, eat together as a team, and clean up together. Duties are rotated so that at some point all boys will get a turn at each job.

Adult Tenting and Meals: Adults tent and eat with the adult group in a separate area from the boys' Patrols. The adult group plans its own menu, and cooks and eats together as the Grizzly Patrol. Adults provide their own tents.

BSA youth protection policies forbid an adult and a boy to share the same tent. While youth protection policies may not apply to a father or mother and son tenting together, it is a Troop 944 policy that boys share their tents with other boys and adults tent singly or with other adults.

Boy Leadership: Adults should not interfere with the functioning of boy leaders, even if they make mistakes (we all learn best from our mistakes). Step in only if it is a matter of immediate safety or if the mistake will be costly. If available, involve a uniformed member of the Program Staff first.

Senior Patrol Leader: The SPL is responsible for running the Troop. He is a Scout of First Class or higher rank and is elected to this post by the Scouts. He works with his staff of Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders and the Program Staff to make the Troop work.

Patrol Leaders: The person responsible for a Boy Scout Patrol is the Patrol Leader. This is not token leadership. As an elected position from within the Patrol, the Patrol Leader is granted real authority and genuine responsibilities. Much of the success, safety, and happiness of the rest of the Patrol depends directly on him. Boy Scouts teaches leadership. As our Troop has learned, boys learn leadership by practicing it, not by watching adults lead.

Adults: With so much direct authority in the hands of the boys, what is left for the adults? We encourage adults to be in sponsor of a trip, in charge of fund raising, supervise service projects, present Merit Badges at meetings, and work with Scouts to coordinate events.

Troop 944 offers these guidelines on the indirect, advisory role you now enjoy. The underlying principle is to never do anything for a boy that he can do for himself. We allow boys to grow by practicing leadership and by learning from their mistakes. While Scout skills are an important part of the program, what ultimately matters when our Scouts become adults is not whether they can use a map or compass, but

whether they can offer leadership to others in tough situations and can live by a code that centers on honest, honorable, and ethical behavior.

Grizzly's Patrol: When a parent goes on a campout, the parent is automatically a member of the "Grizzly's" (adult) Patrol. This Patrol has several purposes two of which are sharing good food and camaraderie. However, one of the most important purposes is to provide an example that the boy Patrols can follow without telling them what to do. Since a Patrol should camp as a group, the "Grizzly's" will, too. The Patrol Leader for the Grizzly Patrol is another adult volunteer. He has the same authority with respect to the Grizzly Patrol as the boy Patrol Leaders have with their Patrols.

We have booklet with how to be in charge of a campout. This goes through planning, reservations, equipment, Patrol Methods, and other details.

Adults at an outing are expected to follow the program that the boys establish with the Program Staff. The adults attend *in support of* and at the convenience of the boys' program. Camping is FUN in addition to being a learning experience. Depending on your knowledge and background, you may be called upon to assist in the activities.

The main point is to enjoy watching your young son grow into a man. The Scouting program and our Troop's policies help make that a safe, enjoyable, and memorable journey. Again, welcome to Troop 944!

A Couple of Important POCs:

Committee Chair: Susan Blaha
Scoutmaster: Chip Galloway
Treasurer/New Registration: Bruce Hoelzer
Board of Reviews: Susan Blaha or designee
Advancement Chair: Lynn Galloway
Health Forms: Kathy Johnson
Troop Quartermaster: Joe Stock
Troop Guide Coordinator: Rich Johnson