

"World Famous!"

TROOP 12



WORLD FAMOUS TROOP 12

VISITOR'S GUIDE

TO THE BOYS

Welcome Aboard!

Welcome to World Famous Troop 12. We're glad you're interested in Boy Scouts, and we're glad to have you visiting with our troop. By now, you've been to one troop meeting or an outdoor activity that may or may not have been typical for us. If you enjoyed your visit, we hope you'll come back, and perhaps join us permanently. If you didn't care much for what you saw, please visit us again soon. Some of our meetings are all "business," and those can be pretty boring to visitors - you feel kind of like an outsider. But we do a lot of other fun stuff that you'll fit right into. And the other fellows in the troop love a chance to show off for the new guy, so they'll help you get into the swing of things in no time.

We've put together this little booklet for you and your folks to look at so that you can get into the program faster. This first section is for you, and it's got most of the cool stuff in it. Afterward, we've got another section for your folks with all the boring stuff. Feel free to read the Parents section if you want to, and they are welcome to read this part. There aren't any secrets, we just thought that dividing it up this way would make it easier to find the good stuff faster.

What We Do

Almost hate to say it, but the Boy Scouts of America - or BSA, for short - is another one of those programs that tries to teach you something. We want you to learn teamwork and character and leadership and yadda-yadda. The good part, though, is that we don't make you sit at a desk and take notes to learn it. Nope! We learn all that stuff by going camping and swimming and canoeing and horseback riding and cool stuff like that! We figure it's a lot easier to learn if you're having fun, so we pack as much fun into the program as we possibly can. You won't necessarily like everything we do, but you'll find enough to enjoy so that the other activities won't matter too much.

How It Works

Patrols

Pretty soon after you join, you'll be put into a patrol. Patrols have about 5-10 boys in them. Patrols do everything together. They have their own meetings, they elect their own officers, they raise their own money, and they've got their own gear.

When the troop goes camping, the patrol camps all together in a group. They pitch their own tents, set up their own campsites, cook their own meals, everything! Patrols come up with their own names; they design their own patrol flags, their own patrol patches and their own patrol yells.

A lot of times, when a fellow first joins the troop, he is placed in a "new boy" patrol. In the new boy patrol, one of the older guys - he's called a Troop Guide - will help you learn all the basics and advance through the lower ranks pretty quickly. When you reach the rank of First Class (usually in about a year), you move out of the new boy patrol and into one of the upper-rank patrols. If that isn't real clear right now, don't worry; it'll make plenty of sense after you've been at it awhile.

Ranks

In Boy Scouts, you work your way through ranks, sorta like in the Army, but with a lot less pushups! When you first join, you're just called a Scout. It's kind of like being a buck private. Pretty soon, after completing a few requirements, you become a Tenderfoot. After that comes Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, then finally Eagle. It takes a whole lot to get to Eagle, and a lot of guys never get that far. If you do, though, it is extremely decent, and the troop makes a pretty big deal about it. You get your own party and everything! Most of the time, troop meetings consist primarily of helping you do the things you need to advance through the ranks.

Merit Badges

In addition to the stuff you gotta do to make rank, there are also merit badges to be earned. Each merit badge involves studying one subject pretty intently. You have to earn 21 merit badges before you can become an Eagle Scout, but there are over 100 different merit badges available, so earning 21 won't be too hard. Merit badges cover everything from first aid, camping and rifle shooting to computers, photography and moviemaking.

Courts of Honor

About four times per year, the troop holds a Court of Honor, where everybody who's won any awards, ranks or merit badges gets special recognition. The troop usually tries to go all out for this, putting on a big production. Be sure you come to these, and bring your folks. It's always way cool!

Meetings

The troop meets every Monday night from 7:00 till 8:30 except on holidays. We meet at the Scout Hut on the corner of Clairemont and Mt. Vernon, right behind Meadowbrook United Methodist Church.

We go camping one weekend a month if we can, and we go to a weeklong summer camp once a year. Sometimes we go on field trips or work on a fundraiser or community service project, but we always send home announcements about those things.

The Rules

The rules are pretty simple, but we're really picky about everyone following them. Most of the rules can be summed up in the Scout Oath and Scout Law, which you have to memorize before you get your Scout rank. Since you gotta learn 'em anyway, we're sticking them in here.

First off, though, let's talk about the Scout Oath. Do you know what an oath is? It's like a really serious promise. When you take an oath, you're basically saying "I promise to do this all the time, no matter what. If something comes up, or if somebody does something against what I'm saying, I'm still going to do this, period." Here's the Oath that all Scouts take:

"On my honor, I will do my best

To do my duty to God and my country

And to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight."

That's a lot to promise. You might want to think about it, and maybe discuss it with your parents before you take the oath. Also, did you see that part that says you promise to obey the Scout Law? Sorta hard to obey something if you don't know what it is, right? Well, this is it:

"A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, clean, brave and reverent."

That's a bunch more stuff to promise, and it's also something that Scouts are expected to do and live by every single day. The adult leaders of the troop - they're called Scouters, by the way - are pretty quick to point out when a Scout is not following a point in the Scout Oath or Scout Law, and they put their foot down pretty quick when somebody isn't.

There are a few more specific rules, like "no hitting" and "no swearing," but, really, if everybody just follows the Oath and the Law, the other rules won't matter too much. Just watch the older guys and do what they do. You'll get it all figured out in no time.

That's pretty much everything you'll need to know to get started. You'll learn the other stuff as you go along. We sure hope you'll join us. It'll be the adventure of a lifetime!

TO THE PARENTS

Welcome

Your son has expressed an interest in Boy Scouting with World Famous Troop 12. We'd like to thank you for allowing him this opportunity to experience Scouting and to say "welcome aboard!" Like all the different things that boys try at this age, your son may wander in and out of Scouting as he explores his various interests. Or he may become so excited by the things that Scouts do that he sticks with it all the way through high school. Either way, we'll be here for him - and for you, too.

We've assembled this booklet so that you can learn more about those things important to parents and to explain your involvement in your son's Scouting adventure. We hope you find it useful, but whether you do or not, we'd appreciate your feedback to help improve future editions.

History

Boy Scouts of America (BSA) was founded in 1910 by a newspaper publisher and a group of gentlemen who worked in New York City but lived upstate near the Hudson River (still a pretty wild and untamed place at the time). Based on similar programs both in the U.S. and Great Britain, the goal of Boy Scouts was to allow boys living in the squalor of the city's ghettos (mostly the children of immigrant families) to develop character and leadership skills through outdoor activities and achievements. That still pretty much describes the program today. The idea was such a good one that it spread across the American landscape like wildfire. Within a decade there were Boy Scout troops in every major city from coast to coast.

Troop 12 in east Fort Worth was among the first troops chartered in 1920 under the newly formed Central Texas Council (now called the Longhorn Council). The troop has been in continuous operation since that time. We've sent boys to fight in four wars, helped establish businesses, placed many a young man in pulpits and operating rooms, the list goes on and on. One glance around the "Ring of Honor" inside the Scout Hut will be enough to impress on anyone the importance and longevity of the troop and its proud heritage.

Structure

The structure of the program begins and ends with the boys themselves. It is truly a "boy run" operation. The chain of command starts with a patrol made up of 5-10 boys. Each patrol is responsible for devising their own activities, developing the program, electing the patrol leaders, creating work details and collecting money. Your son will be placed in a patrol as soon as possible, and he will be acclimated into the program through a personal mentor called a Troop Guide. The guide is an older boy (First Class rank or above) who has been elected to his position because he has displayed a healthy combination of patience, maturity and a sense of fun. Each patrol has an Assistant Scoutmaster (ASM) assigned to it. This is an adult who has been thoroughly trained in BSA protocol. The ASM's function within the patrol is to act as overseer: to keep the boys on track within their selected program and help resolve any problems too great for the boys to solve themselves.

The patrols collectively form the troop, which is run by the Patrol Leader Council (PLC). The PLC is made up of the various elected Patrol Leaders, as well as other officers among the patrols. This is the group of boys charged with creating the troop's activity calendar, developing fundraising activities, and generally running the troop. They work closely with the Scoutmaster, a trained adult leader with expertise in planning and organizational structure.

The Scoutmaster and the PLC answer to the Troop Committee, a body made up of parents, volunteers and at least one representative from the chartering organization (in our case this would be Meadowbrook United Methodist Church). The committee is responsible for raising the funds necessary for the boys' programs and activities, the troop's public image, maintenance of funds, relationships between the troop and the chartering organization, the district and the council, and communication within the troop. Individual members of the committee also serve as the troop's Training Coordinator, Equipment Coordinator, Chaplain, etc.

A group of troops gather to form a district (in our case, the Trailblazers District). Districts form councils (Longhorn Council), and councils form the basis for the national Boy Scouts of America, headquartered in Irving, Texas. The BSA, in turn, is a founding member of the World Scouting Organization.

Finances

Funding all this activity can sometimes get a bit tricky, as you might well imagine. Oftentimes, people are a little surprised to learn exactly where the money comes from.

As many parents will already know, about 10%-25% of the BSA's funding comes through the United Way (the exact amount varies from year to year). This money goes to finance activities on the national level, and a small part of it is used to help defray the costs of running the hundreds of council camps scattered across the country. Most important to parents, however, is the fact that no money from the United Way or any other benevolence is spent on districts or individual troops.

The chartering organization is financially responsible for the physical structures enjoyed by the troop (the building, utilities and equipment). Troop 12 is fortunate that the congregation of Meadowbrook United Methodist Church typically also provides an annual stipend to offset some of the other troop costs, such as provide a few summer camperships and purchase books and videos. This is done voluntarily by individual members and at their discretion.

Beyond the above resources, the troop is on its own to raise the money for monthly campouts, registration fees, etc. Even with the assistance mentioned above, the costs for running a successful troop are staggering. Even so, Troop 12 has an 85- year history of never letting a boy down because of financial problems. We have no immediate plans to change this policy.

First and foremost, we keep costs to a minimum by using 100% volunteer labor. No one involved in Troop 12 activities receives a dime for his or her time and effort on the troop's behalf. It is also common (too common, in fact) for an adult leader, upon determining a troop need, to dig into his or her own pocket to provide equipment and supplies for the troop. This activity is not encouraged, but we know it happens anyway.

That having been said, nobody here is loaded with money or free time. We all work middle-class jobs that take 40 hours a week and we have the same family obligations as everyone else. It would therefore be incorrigible for the troop to rely on the troop leaders' goodness to completely fund the troop's activities and programs. However, we know that few parents are made out of money, either, so we still try to keep the begging to a minimum.

As a result, we have three main ways of raising funds for the troop. It is only after these three efforts have been exhausted that the troop will ask parents to chip in.

(1) Patrol Dues - Your son will be expected to bring dues to his patrol meetings. These dues are less a method of fundraising and more a means of teaching the boys some fiscal responsibility. That being the case, the dues are ridiculously miniscule - rarely more than a few dollars per week. When these funds have been collected and credited to your son's "account," the money raised is used to purchase merit badges, food for campouts and other small expenses.

(2) Community Involvement - Usually, if a major expense comes up such as new tents or replacement of the kitchen refrigerator, we'll start by asking for volunteer help within the local business community. Often, business owners are glad to help the troop (provided we don't hit them up too hard or too often). It helps establish the business as a good neighbor to the community, and they can usually write off the donation from the company income taxes the next year.

(3) Fundraising - We receive the lion's share of our income through fundraisers. The fundraising activity changes from year to year, but we usually try to have 2-3 good fundraisers a year just for own troop accounts (there is also an annual popcorn sale that funds the district and council).

Again, it is only after we have exhausted all these possibilities and come up short that we'll start asking parents for some financial assistance. However, there are some finances directly related to your son's participation in Scouting that you'll want to be aware of. Except registration fees and insurance, virtually all of those expenses are related to equipment and other paraphernalia, which are covered thoroughly in the Troop 12 Handbook. Your son will receive this handbook the night he joins the troop, so let us move on.

Safety

Your son's safety is of primary concern to us. To that end, the national I conference has established a list of guidelines that all troops are required to follow. We thought you'd like to know a few of them:

- (1) No one ever hits anyone. Ever. Hitting is cause for immediate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the troop.
- (2) All adults and boys shall be treated with dignity and respect at all times. At no time shall any adult or boy be barred from participation in the program because of race, religion, creed, national origin, or physical or mental challenges.
- (3) All boys and adult leaders shall renew their child abuse awareness training annually.
- (4) All troop activities shall include "two-deep" adult leadership. This is to say that no adult shall, at a regularly planned troop activity, ever be alone with anyone boy or any group of boys. There shall always be at least two adults participating in all troop activities, and, while troops are often divided into small groups, the groups shall be formed in such a way so that the groups of boys and adult leaders are always within clear sight of one another. If an inadequate number of adults are in attendance for a given activity, that activity shall not be performed, parents shall be contacted, and the boys shall be dispersed to return home.
- (5) Scouts shall always employ the buddy system during any outdoor or potentially hazardous activity.
- (6) Potentially hazardous activities will never be conducted except under the supervision of adult leaders well trained in first aid, CPR and the unique safety requirements of the activity at hand.
- (7) Boys shall never be transported in any motorized vehicle not designed for human transport. All vehicles used to transport boys shall have seat belts adequate for the number of occupants, and shall only be operated by licensed, insured drivers eighteen years of age or older.
- (8) Homosexuals of any age shall not be allowed to participate in the Boy Scouting program.

Your Responsibility

As you can see, there is an enormous amount of time and money that goes into the success of a scouting program. It's way too much for anyone person - or anyone group of people - to handle alone. Ask any former Scout why he left the program, and his answer will most likely be "not enough planned activities." Ask any adult Scouter what is the greatest challenge to proper program planning and implementation, and the response will almost certainly be "not enough parental involvement."

Let us be perfectly frank: we know your time is valuable. So is ours. However, it is rather amazing how many parents seem to think that BSA stands for "Baby Sitters Anonymous." The truth is simple: we're here to help teach your son leadership skills and character development, spiritual communion and environmental respect, teamwork and self-reliance. But we're not here to substitute for you, his parent, in his upbringing. If your job with Scouting is simply to drop your son off at the Scout Hut before the meetings each week, and otherwise no one in the troop ever learns your name, the program just won't work. So, we've established a list of things we need parents to commit to doing in order to keep the troop running full steam ahead.

- (1) Arrange for your son's transportation to and from troop meetings and activities.
- (2) Participate in some way in troop fundraising activities.

- (3) Attend troop meetings and troop committee meetings as regularly as possible.
- (4) Provide transportation to and/or from three campouts per year.
- (5) Attend one campout per year.
- (6) Help out as you can with called workdays (when we all get together and clean the Scout Hut, etc.).
- (7) Help with telephone calls and/or e-mail lists as needed.
- (8) Attend your son's Courts of Honor and/or Scoutmaster Conferences.
- (9) Encourage your son and help him continue living his Scouting principles at home as well as in the troop.

Like finances, we know that time can be pretty tight, so if you have trouble meeting any of the above requirements, let someone on the troop committee know. They can often find ways you can help the troop in substitution for some of the above.

That's pretty much it for the general information. More specific "newcomer" information can be found in the Troop 12 Handbook and in the pockets of the hardcopy version of this document folder, available upon request. Again, we're glad your son has shown an interest in Scouting, and we look forward to meeting him and you as we grow together.