

PROMOTING SCOUTING DURING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES

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To the Doctorial Candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Johnnie L. Boling, Jr, entitled "PROMOTING SCOUTING DURING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES". I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Commissioner Science.

Art Mullins, Advisor

We have read this Dissertation
And recommend its acceptance

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Chairman,
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and Daniel Boone Council

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As District Commissioner, I think of all the adult leaders in my district as my troop. So, I want to thank my troop for buying into all the things my district commissioner corps and I changed. I want to thank them for hosting and participating in all the activities that we reworked, planned, and attended. I want to thank all of my fellow commissioners of the Cumberland District. They are the "we", when reference in this work. In particular, I want to thank commissioners Jimmy Elkins and Deverell Mahooty. They are my commissioners that are always there. I want to thank my boss. Don Lee is the council commissioner. I've always called him my boss. I am proud to be a part of his reorganization and reenergizing of the council commissioner corps.

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this paper is PROMOTING SCOUTING DURING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES. Our country is going through one of the most difficult times it ever has. So are our employers and our families. So are the Boy Scouts. In our district, this has caused the number of boys and leaders participating in Boy Scouts to drop. Everything from roundtables to camping trips has been affected.

The commissioners of my district and I met and began a review of every Boy Scout activity in our district. We thought this would be very appropriate since we were on the cusp of the 100th birthday of the Boy Scouts. We did this with increasing interest and increasing participation in mind. We also reviewed everything with reducing cost in mind.

We changed aspects of our roundtables, camporees, and training events. We attempted to make each district event more fun and something everyone wanted to attend. The roundtables were identified as the most important event, since it was held every month. We combined the Scout and Cub Roundtables. We moved it to a new place outside. We started cooking a good camp style meal before the roundtable. You might say we added value to the roundtable. These changes have increased attendance to between 40 and 50 every month.

We changed our camporees to include Cubs and their families. We now encourage every family member to camp with us. Our camporees are now 2 or 3 times the size they used

to be. The Cubs also get to rub elbows with the Scouts. They get to see the OA in regalia. This has increased the number of WEBLOS crossing over to Scouts and adults becoming leaders.

We changed our training methods. In the past we would set a training date for a Saturday. Over time the attendance dropped to zero. People in our district are too busy to spend a whole Saturday in training. So, we decided to offer training at every event and not have weekend training. Other districts and the council have weekend training for those leaders that can attend. We advertise all of these.

All of the changes we made were specific to the conditions of our district. Your district is different. Your changes will be different. Perhaps the most important concept of this paper is to rethink operations. Change things to make them more interesting. Get rid of things that aren't working. Add whistle and bells as long as they don't cost too much.

Take this 100th year birthday of the Boy Scouts to analyze your district or your unit activities. Look at everything with fresh eyes. Don't hesitate to make changes just because that's the way you've always done it. Be bold. It's a whole new century!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Keeping a vibrant and growing Boy Scout movement in this day and age is becoming increasingly more challenging. You might even say difficult. Even without the present economic climate, making Scouting interesting to youth and keeping them involved is difficult. Cultivating and keeping adult leaders is just as difficult.

Here we are at the 100th year of the Boy Scouts in America. Our council and district commissioners and professionals have been thinking and planning a long time for this year. I have also. I consider this project and this resulting dissertation as one of my personal 100th year objectives. In addition, our district commissioners took this opportunity to reevaluate and rethink district operations as a 100th year project. We continue to make changes to attempt to reinvigorate our district. We are doing this by making events more interesting. Many times these days, leaders can't attend meetings because of work, money or gas. So, we also rethought activities with reducing costs and good economics in mind.

We are making positive changes to our district roundtables, day activities and camporees. We increased roundtable attendance from 3 to over 40 leaders. We combined Boy Scout and Cub Scout campouts and other activities creating some of the most well attended events we've ever had. We now invite the entire family to events. We increased the number of district leaders that were trained. We significantly increased the number of boys and leaders attending district events.

OUR DISTRICT

The proud Cumberland District of the Great Smoky Mountain Council is my district. This district covers the three most northern counties of our council. These counties are Scott, Campbell, and Claiborne. It includes the larger towns of Lafollette, Oneida, Jellico, and Tazewell. It also includes several smaller communities. Our district borders the state of Kentucky and Bluegrass Council to the north and Sequoyah Council of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia to the east. Our Council Service Center is in Knoxville, which is 90 to 100 miles away from the far reaches of our district. However, it is even farther away in affluence. Year in and year out, these three counties are among the poorest in Tennessee. They presently have the highest rates of unemployment in the state. Unlike the urbane and relatively wealthy Knoxville, this area is classic Appalachia. This economically depressed region starts here and goes north and east for hundreds of miles into eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia. There is no heavy industry or manufacturing in the district. The main industries are strip mining, deep mining, timber harvesting and light textile manufacturing. There are many fewer jobs than residences. Many residents commute miles to Knoxville or Oak Ridge to work. This area has been in recession for decades and looks to continue that trend for a long time. Unlike the media reports, here the recession is ongoing and deep.

The Cumberland District is blessed with farms, woodlands, trails, streams, and lakes. The district is blessed with two national parks and two state parks. It's a real outdoorsy place. Camping, hiking, and hunting are really popular in this area. I once asked if any new

Cubs had ever been camping and one said he had helped his dad take and clean a deer the week before. So, the lure of camping and hiking is strong among the boys of our district.

In this atmosphere, scouting is alive. This area has a longstanding tradition of military service. Many men and women have joined the military and fought for our country as a way to break away from the poverty of this area. This is common in all of Appalachia, like many impoverished areas over the country. Over the years, this has led to a real appreciation of the armed services, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. Many of these service men and women have come back home and participated in scouting. This has led to a long history of good leaders in our district. However, as the years have passed many of our military veteran leaders have aged out or are presently deployed. At the present time, we have few fully populated unit committees.

Our lack of leaders is in large part due to economics and education. The people that live in this area, I'm sorry to say, have a real lack of education. They have a real difficulty taking training off the printed page or from a computer application and putting it to practice. This has led us to perform a real hands-on type of training at district events. We do this by simulating pack and troop meetings at roundtables.

Our district has the same problems with the retention of boys and leaders as any other district or council. We are continuing to attempt to coexist with sports. In the larger towns of the district, football has become the most popular extracurricular activity. In the smaller communities, basketball and baseball have become the activities of choice.

CHAPTER II

RETHINKING EVERYTHING

We started small. The first item that we addressed was the low attendance at roundtable. The roundtables were being held in a church at the approximate center of the district. It was in a classroom with cinderblock walls and partially underground. A line of folding tables centered the room. A coffee urn was on a table in the rear. The last roundtable had three attendees. All three were commissioners and I was one of them. Don't get me wrong. I love that church. We have our district banquet there every year and they have hosted a Cub Scout Pack for years. We just needed to shake things up to get the roundtable going again.

We also started rethinking the way we did campouts, hikes, camporees, Cub Scout day events, unit meetings, etc. Basically, the big difference we made was inviting families to come to every event.

ROUNDTABLE

We as commissioners identified the roundtable as the most important meeting we hold in the district. The roundtable is the glue that holds everything together. We felt that revitalizing the roundtable should be the first and most important item we worked on.

Our roundtables were basically ineffective. Everything was stale. They had very little attendance. I'm sorry to say. Several times the commissioners were the only leaders attending. Considering that some of the unit leaders have to travel over 100 miles round-trip, attending wasn't worth the trip. The program had gotten boring and businesslike. Some of you will say that is the way they are supposed to be. Well, it just wasn't working. We needed to change everything about the roundtable. We wanted to change it from a chore to an event.

Location

In the past, we would sometimes have a short outdoor program on the church lawn, after the normal roundtable business meeting. It usually involved cooking on a homemade stove or dutch oven. We would sometimes have guests talking about sleeping bags or packs, etc. These programs were always well received. The leaders liked being outside. Some of these folks had been inside all day. Most all of them had driven for miles. The leaders liked walking around and the mix and mingle. There was always joking and kidding. This was always the most popular part of the program. So, I discussed emphasizing the outdoor program a little more and the indoor program a little less with my D.E. and the other commissioners. They are all outdoorsmen and they liked the idea. I also discussed combining the Boy Scout and the Cub Scout roundtables to reduce travel and costs, and we commissioners would all attend. They agreed to try this one time. Then we would all evaluate how everything went and decide whether to continue.

I suggested we have the entire meeting outside. I suggested we move our district roundtable to Cove Lake State Park. The park is about seven miles west of where we were currently meeting. The leaders from the east would have to drive a little farther. But, when we asked them nicely, they agreed to drive a little farther. The park has really nice picnic pavilions with fireplaces. The fireplaces were one of the main reasons we agreed on this spot. Reserving a pavilion was not free. So, we did not reserve one. We agreed to meet on the last Monday of the month. On weekdays, most of the pavilions are empty. We took our chances. Since the commissioners came early and started cooking, the same pavilion was always available. However, we did have a contingency plan. We made sure everyone knew where we would move, just in case our pavilion was taken. We also made two roundtable signs to point to where we were meeting. There are indoor facilities, but they are expensive. One idea was to perform work projects for the state park in exchange for using the indoor facilities in the winter. Sometimes, we do work projects in exchange for free camporee camping.

Our outdoor roundtable was going to be a one shot deal. We were going to hold it one time and see how it was received. Then we were going to vote to see if meeting outdoors was acceptable and to continue or go back to the church. The outdoor program went very well and was well received. Everyone really enjoy being outside. The commissioners cooked an outdoor meal on camp stoves and the fire. We all said grace and ate dinner together. We even did a little Scout business. Several of the more experienced leaders commented on how enjoyable the meeting was. So, we all took a vote and decided to continue holding the combined roundtables with dinner at the state park until further

notice. Over time the roundtable attendance has increased to 40 to 50 leaders. Some leaders come alone. Some bring other leaders. Some bring their entire families.

Combining Everything

Our far-flung leaders will not or can not meet more than once a month. We've tried many times. Almost every time we tried to have the regular schedule of two or three meetings a month, attendance was low. There is too much time, energy, gas and money involved. So, we commissioners decided to combine the commissioners meeting with the Boy Scout and Cub Scout roundtables and have everything in one. This combined roundtable has been well received for many reasons. The roundtable has become the meeting where all district business is done. The commissioners come an hour early and we get our stories straight. We cook dinner together and have commissioner fellowship. We also decide who is doing what during the roundtable. The roundtable is conducted like a unit meeting. After we eat, we try to have a boy from the OA lead the Pledge of Allegiance and the Scout Oath and Law, etc. We start the meetings together and then separate into specific roundtables. If we have leaders that need training, we will even have one of the commissioners take them aside and train them. Coming to our roundtable now is like one stop shopping.

One of the Cub units from nearby liked the atmosphere so well they started having their unit leaders meetings before roundtable. While cooking one week, we saw the pack leaders sitting around the playground across the street having their monthly planning

meeting. Every leader from this pack started attending roundtable. That was really good to see.

Everyone is welcome

We next decided to invite everyone to roundtable. Since we decided to combine the roundtables, there was a good chance both parents would need to attend. We also encountered particular leaders that had been telling their assistants and committee members that the roundtables were for Cubmasters and Scoutmasters only. So, we put a stop to that myth. This may be a rule in other districts and councils. But, in our district, that was not a good way to encourage good leadership. We have so few good leaders, we wanted everyone to come. We now have a standing invitation to leaders of all levels and their families, including Scouts, Cubs, and tag-a-longs. An unplanned benefit of the state park is a playground for kids within sight of our roundtable pavilion. The kids eat dinner and go play. A couple of parents will follow and watch them during our business meeting.

Food

Think about when you go to visit your family. If your family is like mine, when visiting any of them, there is always food. I remember visiting my Grandmother Boling. She met us at the front door and immediately headed to the kitchen. Eating and socializing among family has been a positive bonding technique used forever. Since we consider our leaders as family, we decided to cook a good hot meal before the roundtable. This would keep

leaders from spending money to eat before or after roundtable or hurrying home to eat. We started cooking a good scout meal on camp equipment. We now eat dinner together, socialize, and discuss scouting. Then we have a quick fun roundtable. This has allowed all of our leaders to meet each other and get to know each other. The outdoor cooking has become a real teaching tool. Using the cooking, we indirectly teach economics, menu, diet, cleaning, hygiene, recycling, and composting.

We do not charge for the roundtable meal. We made this decision as a way to increase attendance. We also decided to try to keep the cost of the meal to a minimum. We accept donations, donated food, and food brought by volunteers. Some of our leaders may not have had a good meal all day. They might not have any money for food. So, if they take their time and money to come to roundtable, we will feed them a good hot meal.

We tried several other cooking methods. We tried a potluck dinner. That worked one time. However, after a couple of months that stopped working too well. It also defeated the purpose of reducing work on the leaders or their spouses. Eventually, everyone was stopping by the grocery store and purchasing packaged food. One month everyone brought cost cutter cookies and soft drinks. Sometimes, we had particular leaders volunteer to make dishes. However, we commissioners decided that we would do all the cooking. Asking unit leaders to plan and cook was not making life easy for them. Some leaders come straight from work. Some leaders come from home with the entire family. All of them travel a long way. They really enjoy and appreciate the commissioners

cooking a hot dinner for them. The commissioners are now being seen working. This has caused them to be looked upon in a more positive light.

The commissioners try to make the best meal possible. So, all we have to do after that is put on a good show. The biggest part of the show turns out to be teaching. We use the cooking part of roundtable to teach outdoor technique. A big part of that is menu planning and cooking technique. We keep the cost of an individual meal between \$1.00 and \$1.50 and have almost all of the costs donated. We teach how to accomplish this budget and how you can blow a budget by trying to get fancy with food. I learned the power of having dutch oven cobblers and ice cream from going to Philmont Training Center. The Philmont staff cooks cobblers outdoors at all of the sub-camps twice a week. All the adults and kids attend. Everyone has fun and eats heartily. So, we decided to try cooking dutch oven desserts. But, no ice cream. I always get complaints about not having ice cream. We, sometimes, have chili and hotdogs over the fire and marshmallows for the kids. The leaders eat as many marshmallows as the boys do. Just having a fire is a real draw. It gives a real scout campfire atmosphere. Teaching proper outdoor cleaning is a big part. We also teach how to reduce waste. We use metal plates, cups, and utensils. In the long run this save money, by not having to purchase everything on every outing. We stress recycling by trying to not put anything in the garbage cans. The park has a huge flock of Canadian Geese. So, they get the compost. It seems they know when roundtable is scheduled. They now come early. We try to not put anything in the state park garbage. The boys enthusiastically recycle. The leaders still have a problem with it. It's really difficult breaking old habits.

Add a little Humor !!!

On first blush, this seems to be such a small thing, a minor point. But, it isn't. Humor is one of the intangibles that make things interesting. If you don't make things fun and interesting, people don't want to come to events. Bad humor is not acceptable. This is one of a handful of things that can kill good scouting.

As an engineer, I have attended thousands of meetings. Probably, 95% of them bored me to tears. I was getting the same feeling at our district meetings. Our roundtables had become heavy and boring. Our leaders did not want to drive over a hundred miles to a boring roundtable. So, in addition to the dinner, we commissioners made a commitment to put on a good roundtable show. One of the main methods we use to put on a good show is to use a lot of humor.

Our Cub Scout Roundtable has been reformatted to be a full-fledged meeting. This includes everything from props, skits, quizzes, and costumes. We are so lucky to have the best Cub Scout Roundtable Commissioner ever. He is a big, jovial leader that really gets in to training leaders. He creates a lot of laughs. But, more than that he trains the cub leaders exactly what to teach and how to teach it. All of his materials come straight from the official Program Helps or Scouting magazine.

Campfire Atmosphere

The fire adds so much to our roundtables. Our meetings seem like a campfire. It also allows us to meet outdoors until November or December. We use the fireplace to teach many things. We teach fire building, fuel conservation, and safety. We cook on the fire. Some months we make charcoal fires for the dutch ovens. In the chilly months, we build a big fire and huddle around with coffee and hot chocolate. Eventually, we move to a nearby restaurant. I had my doubts about a restaurant. But, people kept coming after we move inside. So, we now meet inside during the cold months. The first meeting outside in the spring is always anxiously awaited. They won't let us build a fire in the restaurant.

The layout of the pavilion is a covered rectangle with picnic tables. The tables ring the fireplace. This is a great place for a Scout meeting. It is very informal and we wanted it that way. During the meetings, the leaders continue eating, walk around, stand, or mingle. The arrangement of tables in a straight line with the speaker at the end has been shown to not work well. The listeners are sitting perpendicular to the speaker and have to turn to make eye contact. So, allowing random seating in the round with the speaker in the middle makes a really good place to talk and train.

Dates and Times

Dates and times are crucial. Since we combined the roundtables we all had to agree on what evening to meet. We all voted on the time for dinner and the meeting. Everyone has to agree on everything. The time for dinner and the ending time were settled. The roundtable must start and end exactly at the agreed upon times. We all agreed the ending

time needed to be strictly observed. The time was 6:00 for dinner and 8:00 ending time. The date was set at the end of the month. The Cub Roundtable Commissioner wanted to have it at the end of the month. He comes prepared with all the resources for the next month theme. So, presented at the end of the month, his good work remains fresh in the Cub Leaders minds.

To keep on schedule, we have to make everything short and sweet. We actually start the program while everyone is eating. We don't try to over do it. We start with upcoming events and the calendar. Then the D.E. has a few minutes. Then we split into the two roundtables.

Calendars

We supply daytimer type calendars to all the leaders that have none and encourage everyone to bring them every meeting. Some leaders don't grasp the importance of calendars. So, the calendars are used as a teaching tool. We have them share the dates of their unit's activities and record district and council events. This stimulates ideas for new units and leaders. It also lends itself to multi-unit outings. We continue to stress the use of a common calendar that contains all council, district and all unit activities. I know some of you will say that's obvious. Sorry, we can't take anything for granted. When we meet I ask them to get out their calendars and we have a short talk about upcoming activities. So, there is no reason for anyone that comes to roundtable to say they did hear about a council or district event. This also stimulates Cub Packs to hook up with other Cub Packs to do things together. The same thing happens with Boy Scout units.

The Order of the Arrow

We have begun asking the brothers of the Order of the Arrow to help more at our district events. We tried to have OA chapter meetings at roundtable. That didn't work too well. The boys had trouble lining up rides and attending on a weeknight. However, they have helped us by making a bigger presence at camporees. They have also been helping us with district Cub Scout crossover ceremonies. The brothers can now wear their full regalia on many more occasions. The Cub Scouts really enjoy seeing them. They all want to be an Indian. We're sure this has helped increase the number of boys that have crossed over into the Boy Scouts.

Unit Commissioners

Our council asks commissioners of all levels to become Unit Commissioners. This began about 2 years ago and has really helped us. This has stimulated our commissioners to be much more active with their units. We now go on campouts and hikes with our units. They never did this in the past. One of my units has adopted a 5 mile section of the Cumberland Trail and I go with them every year to keep it clear. We make sure that we have a group of commissioners attending all Boy Scout courts of honor and Cub Scout crossover ceremonies, if at all possible.

Court of Honor

We heavily encourage leader advancement. Every roundtable we talk about everyone getting their knots. We try to have posters of leader knots and the requirements cards at every roundtable. When leaders earn knots, we have the court of honor at the roundtable. This teaches the new leaders how to hold a proper court of honor. It's also a perfect opportunity to have some fun.

Training

We now train on the spot at roundtables and camporees. This takes one or two extra trainers. Since we all started camping together we've had plenty of trainers. In our case, the trainers are commissioners or training committee members. We try to train on the spot. But, sometimes it's difficult to train without advance notice. So, we ask Cubmasters or Scoutmasters to give us a heads-up, if they have assistant leaders or committee members that need training. We schedule specific training for entire units at upcoming roundtables and then advertise it to our other units. It really makes you feel good when five to ten new leaders come to roundtable for training. After a good meal and a few laughs, good training is effective.

We also hold training at camporees. We train new Cub Scout leaders while the boys are off doing camporee events. The Cubs and Scouts go do their activities and we teach the Cub leaders Baloo and Webelos Outdoor Leader classes. We don't teach Scoutmaster outdoor training. We encourage everyone to attend the council's two-part Scoutmaster

training that teaches outdoor lessons. Going to council training also gets them exposed to Wood Badge. Camping together allows units with Cub leaders that don't have their training to camp with us and get trained. Since everyone is set up in camp, it's very convenient to teach these classes. All you need is 4 or 5 good trainers.

In addition, we teach classes for everyone on how to camp without spending a lot of money on gear. Lack of equipment keeps some boys and adults from participating. So we want to show them that they don't need a lot of expensive equipment. We teach how to make tents out of ropes and tarps. We teach how to make sleeping bags out of household linens. We teach how to cook over a fire without a lot of pots and pans.

A friend of mine worked on oil wells out west. One night he was trapped in a blizzard unprepared. From then on he lectured me on what to carry in my trunk survival kit. Applying that idea to the Scouts, I made a commissioner survival kit for my car. I have all the training materials for all levels of Scouting. I have books, posters, forms and applications off all types. The new CD/DVD format training materials from national are compact and convenient. I can carry my laptop computer and train on the spot. This is handy at roundtable when someone comes unannounced that needs training.

Camping

We plan Cub and Scout camping trips and camporees together now. We invite the whole family. Everyone attending activities together saves on travel, planning and costs. This really helps families with cubs and scouts and tag-a-longs. The whole family can attend

together thus saving on food, gas, entertainment, baby sitters, etc. Several parents have stepped up to become leaders after camping with us. At the fall camporee we have more Cubs and families than Scouts and families. One of my best scoutmasters said he had never smelled burnt marshmallow over the entire campground like he did last year. We have stressed that only registered scouts and leaders are covered under the scout insurance program. However, this has not become a problem. On the district level, combined cub and scout activities also reduces needed staff, planning, props, venue costs, and leadership on campouts. When a unit plans a trip, we encourage them to invite and take along a fledgling unit, if possible. This has led to some really strong relationships between units. It also gives hands on training to the new unit's leaders.

Online Scouting

Over the last few years, searching for scouting information over the internet has become very convenient. Some of our leaders think they can manage their units without going to roundtable or council activities. We are beginning to hear rumors of National Council ending support for the roundtable. We can't see what will adequately replace the roundtable. Online Scouting seems to be the hot new thing. Maybe using the internet for scouting will work in urban areas. But, we don't think this is a good idea for rural areas. Online scouting doesn't work too well in our rural district. We have leaders that have no internet access. We have leaders that have no telephone. Having a monthly roundtable at a set place and time is the only way many of our leaders keep connected with the district and council. Meeting together in roundtable is as much for face time and fellowship, as scheduling and scoutcraft.

We commissioners glean pertinent online information and orally present it at the beginning of each roundtable. The council has online calendars for the council and each district. Our leaders have a hard time using them. The information is hard to read and behind the times or information posted late, or wrong, or not at all. Considering a large number of our boys and leaders do not have internet access, we will continue to have physical roundtables and pen and paper.

Scouting Aid

One of the main points that we emphasize in our rethinking of everything scouting is aid to needy scouts and units. Our philosophy of not turning away needy scouts for any reason has been enhanced. We now take a portion of our discretionary funds to aid needy units and scouts. These funds have been used to supply handbooks and supplies to boys. One of the most popular programs has been to supply soapbox cars to needy boys. We also supply manuals, posters, and craft items to needy units and leaders.

Except in special cases, we do not supply free uniforms. We have determined that boys in this area that receive free uniforms do not cherish them as much as if their parents purchase them. We encourage families and units to purchase used uniforms. We also encourage leaders to bring used uniforms and camping gear to roundtable for donation. We also discuss other ways to find equipment. Some of those ways are: online sites like EBAY and CRAIGS LIST, want ads, yard sales, jockey lots, flea markets, old scouts, etc.

Since so many boys in the district can't afford them, we don't require full uniforms. We ask that they purchase a shirt. No other uniform parts are required. We do not specify the purchase of any particular uniform. If a boy has no uniform, we treat him as if he is in uniform, just like everyone else. Some units will award a shirt once a boy becomes a First Class Scout. This is a good idea. However, we didn't adopt this idea as a district. Some units can't afford it. They usually give the boys a unit T-shirt when they join.

We do give out camping gear and handbooks. We have found that asking friends or older leaders to donate camping gear works well. Many families and individuals have unused camping gear and other scouting paraphernalia stored away in their homes. We encourage commissioners and unit leaders to actively search for used or low cost camping and Scouting gear.

As of this writing, we do not have a set policy on whether to pay the dues of needy boys or leaders. Now and again, we pay the dues of a few promising leaders and boys out of discretionary funds. This is done on an individual need basis. We really don't want to lose a boy due to inability to pay. We don't want to lose a good leader due to their inability to pay.

Parent Involvement

As was written above, we encourage leaders, Scouts, and their families to come camping with us at camporees. Allowing families to attend has increased enthusiasm for scouting and has increased the number of parents that become leaders. The Cub packs report that

they have more parents volunteering to go on outings. Since we started inviting everyone, we've had the biggest camporees our district has ever held.

We encourage parents that bring the boys to unit meetings to stay and participate. This reduces driving and driving expense. More importantly, if handle properly, this will lead them to become new leaders. If you have family members staying for unit meetings, make sure you plan for that contingency. Supply them with interesting activities or meaningful work to participate in. There are several new web sites designed specifically for families.

School Programs

School programs have been attempted. The schools are encouraging and do provide an appropriate meeting place. But, the school programs haven't worked too well in our district, because they are after school activities. In some other districts or councils this technique works very well. Most of the students in these areas are brought to school by personal cars. Most students in our district ride school busses to and from school.

Therefore, in our district after school programs do not work well. The busses leave within a few minutes after the end of the school day. Almost all of the eligible boys ride the bus. So they can't stay for Cub Scouts. We have tried to get particular schools to let us have meetings during school time, but that has not been received very well. We are continuing to work on that idea.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

This 100th year of the Boy Scouts in America is an opportune time to reevaluate Scouting at all levels. Commissioners that volunteer for the Cumberland district of the Great Smoky Mountain Council have taken on this task. In an attempt to increase interest and involvement, we have made changes to almost every district activity. This is a list of specific actions we took. Your situation will be very different. You may or may not be able to use any of them. However, the most important concept I wish to convey is to look at your situation. Rethink your operations. Cut out old stuff that's not working. Add new ideas and have a few laughs.

We changed almost everything about our roundtables. We combined the Cub and Boy Scout roundtables and moved them outside. Being outside makes so much difference. Adults enjoy being outside. Most have been inside all day. Basically, roundtables have become an outing with campfire. We keep it informal by using picnic tables instead of tables and chairs. We have organized our meetings like a real unit meeting. We go indoors in the coldest of the winter. The number of attendees has risen to between 40 and 50.

Serving a free dinner is a major draw. One of my commissioners told me, "They only come because of the food." Exactly! They are now coming to roundtable. We have them attending now and we can teach them what they need to know. Once they started attending, they realized we have good, interesting information for them.

Training at every event has become very important. Most leaders in our district cannot attend training sessions in Knoxville. So, we decided to train at every event. We train at roundtable, camporees, and outings. This has worked well. We now have more trained leaders than we have ever had.

We started combining Cub and Scout camping events. In addition, we now invite all family members to outings. Attendance at events has greatly increased. When we camp as a district, we try to make it like a family campout. We now camp more. Since, that's what boys want to do, we retain more Scouts.

Attitude plays as big a part in success as anything. My commissioners and I had a change of attitude after we started doing all these things. The leaders really appreciated it and responded by attending more events. The changes we made worked. We have increased interest in all of our activities. We have increased the number of units and the number of boys they service. In addition, we have increased interest and fervor of our existing leaders.

This 100th birthday of the Boy Scouts is a perfect opportunity to rethink and refurbish our districts and councils. We need to look forward to the next 100 years thinking how we can help make Scouting new and more interesting. Look at everything with fresh eyes. Have fun!