

# **SCOUTING HELPS**

## **For Stake Presidents**

LDS Relationships Committee

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**Table of Contents**

1. Lack of Parental Support or Understanding.....1

2. Disconnect Between Scouting and Duty To God Program.....5

3. Difficulty in Staffing Adult Leader Positions.....6

4. Training Adult Leaders.....8

5. Tenure of Adult Leaders.....11

6. Not Able to Implement The Varsity and Venturing Programs.....11

7. Negative Stigma of Scouting for Older Boys.....13

8. Lack of Leader Commitment.....14

9. Lack of Roundtable Attendance By Leaders.....14

10. Shrinking Youth Population in Units.....15

11. Prompt Recognition.....16

12. Cost of Scouting.....16

# SCOUTING HELPS

## For Stake Presidents

To assist us in meeting and overcoming the challenges that have been identified in fully delivering the promise of Scouting within our Stakes, please find below a comprehensive summary of “**Scouting Helps**” and recommendations. These resources and potential solutions are based upon Church and Scouting guidelines, the successes of Church leaders and the experiences of some of the most effective Scouting leaders in our Sector and Council. When possible, Church and Scouting references have been listed for our use in training our Youth leaders.

### **1. LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT OR UNDERSTANDING.**

Parental involvement is a critical element in the development of each young man. The family is the central unit of the Church. Both the Scouting Programs and the Youth Programs of the Church are based upon parental involvement and support.

While their son is a young **Cub Scout**, parents work with Akela (the Cub leader) to help their son accomplish the requirements for advancement and then review and sign off the achievements of the young scout in his Cub Scout Handbooks. As a result, the parents usually understand the Cub Scout program and are typically engaged in helping their son to succeed. It is here that we find the highest activity levels in Scouting.

As he becomes a **New Scout** and a **Boy Scout**, a transition takes place to allow the young man to develop *Adult Associations* with exemplary Scout Leaders and Merit Badge Counselors. In “The Scoutmaster Handbook” under the Methods of Scouting, page 75, it is stated that “*Boys learn from the example set by their adult leaders...and association with adults of high character is critical at this stage of a young man’s development*”. These Leaders become essential role models for the Scout to “copy”. The Parent is no longer asked or permitted to approve and sign off their son’s progression in their Boy Scout Handbook. This is done by the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters and other Scout Leaders during regular Scoutmaster’s Conferences and scouting activities. As a result, there is a potential for a parent to not fully understand how to help their son in his progression and to mistakenly turn their son’s progression over to these leaders. The parent mistakenly disengages from helping their son in his scouting progress or to participate in the scouting activities.

It is essential that parents and grandparents remain “*fully invested parties*” to have a successful Scouting Program. It has been said that “Scouts with drop-off parents, generally drop out.” Success is achieved when we help parents to understand the program and how much they are needed in it. Parents may be integrated and involved in the Scouting Program in the following ways:

**By Holding Regular Parent / Child Planning Sessions** – On page 3 of the Church’s “Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth” parents are instructed in how to best support their youth in the Church’s youth programs. It states,

*“... Although the Church has many leaders and resources to help them, you as their parents have the primary responsibility to help them succeed...”*

- *Help your sons and daughters set and accomplish goals that will appropriately challenge them ...*
- *Talk (regularly) with your sons and daughters about their progress. Each time they complete a goal or project, compliment their efforts...*
- *Talk (regularly) with your children’s Aaronic Priesthood or Young Women Leaders. Learn what these leaders are doing in Mutual and in other quorum and class activities to help strengthen your sons and daughters. Encourage your children to attend Mutual each week.*
- *Whenever possible, participate in Church youth events in which your sons and daughter are being recognized...”*

Great success is achieved by parents that have regularly employed these approaches in all of their son’s activities, including Scouting. Parents who set aside regular times for interviews and or individual dates with their children enjoy the blessing of retaining closer relationships with their children. These one-on-one moments provide an excellent opportunity to review the youth’s progress in Church and Scouting programs together and for the parent to provide positive reinforcement to their child.

**Leader Visits with Parents.** A member of the Bishopric and a member of the quorum presidency are encouraged to visit with each Young Man and his parents as he enters the Deacons, Teachers, and Priests Quorums (*p14 Guidebook For Parents and Leaders of Youth*) This visit is an ideal time for the Leader to welcome the youth to the quorum and to review the Duty to God program with the Young Man and his parents, highlighting the roles of each party. In a similar fashion, the parents will better be able to support Scouting if an overview of the Scouting program is also shared with the parents. The Scout Leader is encouraged to periodically visit with the scout’s parents and to share his / her perspective of their son’s progress in scouting and to discuss their role in supporting that progression.

**Invite Parents to Serve as a Scouting Committee Member and / or Scoutparent Unit Coordinator** - On page 3 of the Church’s “Scouting Handbook” it states:

*“Fathers and mothers of boys and young men may be considered as prospective committee members.”*

Grandparents, Coaches, Sunday School Teachers, and Home Teachers might also be considered as committee members (*for more information on the Unit Committee, see 3 below*).

You might choose to call a parent to the new position of Scout parents Unit Coordinator to assist in involving the parents of scouts. (see [www.scoutparents.org](http://www.scoutparents.org) for more information).

**Invite Parents to Serve as Merit Badge Counselors or Activity Experts** - Parents come from many backgrounds and careers and could be considered to be registered as a merit badge counselor to teach the unit these skills. Consider asking a parent to share their career insights with the older boys to help them to explore future hobbies and vocations.

**Invite Fathers To Accompany the Unit on a Campout or Activity** - Campouts, high adventure, and other activities might focus on a skill that could be taught by a parent in his field of expertise. Otherwise, consider inviting fathers to join your unit on an annual camp or its outings as an adult assistant.

**Create and Share the Annual Program Plan (Annual Calendar) with Parents** – Ensure that parents know what their scouts will be doing weekly, and well in advance, so that it does not interfere with their family planning and activities and so that their activities do not interfere with those of the Troop. This is best accomplished by creating an *Annual Program Plan* in the Fall of each year showing the dates and events that the Scouts have chosen to pursue during the next year. Many have found success by identifying a Priesthood Purpose for each activity that they plan for the year. Remember that this plan should be made by the boys, for the boys, according to their interests, so that they may learn to be leaders and so that they can run a program that will interest them.

**Hold Regular Courts of Honors** – Constant positive recognition of a Scout’s achievement is essential to ensure that the young man continues along the path to Eagle. We need to look for opportunities to “catch them doing good”. It is recommended that Stakes consider holding regular and periodic Courts of Honor. These Stake Courts of Honor should be in addition to the more intimate Ward Court of Honor. The Stake Courts of Honor, along with the Spring Camporee, Fall Camporee, Klondike and Summer Camp provide the units with opportunities to gauge their troop’s strengths and weaknesses and learn from the successful practices of others. It is appropriate to recognize the young man for the same achievement in both the Ward and Stake Court of Honors. In most cases, he cannot be recognized too much for doing good. Make each and every rank advancement a “big deal”. Make the boys look good. Invite the parents to join their son at the podium for the presentation and ensure that each mother gets a proper scout salute (a hug and a kiss) from their scout son as often as possible. If you can engage the mother’s support, you increase the young man’s odds for success.

## **2. DISCONNECT BETWEEN SCOUTING AND DUTY TO GOD PROGRAM.**

Over the years that has been a widespread myth that the Duty to God Program was going to replace the Scouting Program. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Duty to God and Scouting Programs are designed to go hand-in-hand with one another. President Charles W. Dahlquist II has said, *“In that vein, Duty to God was not intended to take the place of Scouting but is intended to help young men of the Aaronic Priesthood become better prepared to go to the temple, serve missions, and accomplish the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood.”* (Young Men General President’s Message, September 2004 Open House)

It is recommended that Leaders be called to serve in both the Aaronic Priesthood calling and its Scouting counterpart. On page 3 of the Church’s “Scouting Handbook” it states:

*“Under the direction of the bishopric, men called as advisers to deacons, teachers, and priest quorums serve as the Young Men presidency of the ward. Generally, they also serve as Scoutmaster, Varsity Scout Coach, or Explorer Post (now Venturing Crew) Adviser, respectively...If assistant quorum advisers are called, they may serve as Scoutmaster,*

*Varsity Scout Coach, or Explorer Post Adviser, or they may assist the quorum adviser...and must be duly registered with the Boy Scouts of America...Each Scout unit should have a senior patrol leader, a Varsity Team captain, or an Explorer Post (Venture Crew) president who is nominated by the bishopric and sustained by the quorum members, which for Scouting purposes constitutes election. This leader is usually the quorum president or an assistant in the Priests quorum but may be another worthy young man..."*

When these leaders in both the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting Programs are the same person, it becomes much easier to eliminate any disconnect between Scouting, the Aaronic Priesthood and the Duty to God Program. If the same leaders that advise the quorum on Sunday are also at the weekly Mutual activity, then continuity is fostered. Quorum Presidency Agendas can easily incorporate a review of upcoming calendared Scouting weekday activities and a Scout Meeting Plan could include a review of upcoming quorum responsibilities.

A conflict of time allotment can be avoided by specifying in the Annual Unit Program Plan which Mutual nights will focus on a Duty To God emphasis, which on a Scouting emphasis and which will do both. Many successful units schedule one night per month as a joint Young Men /Young Women activity, at least one night per month as a Duty to God Night and two nights per month for Scouting activities and advancement. They also schedule regular outdoor activities. For 12-13 year olds, it is recommended that the young man participate in 9-10 overnight campouts per year in addition to his annual camp. Leaders that study the manuals provided by the Church and Scouting; who are fully trained; and who follow the guidelines given therein will be blessed to understand how to properly run the Scouting and Duty to God Programs. They will find that there is little need or time for substitute programs to be created. They will be blessed with success of eternal consequence and they will not simply end up playing basketball for lack of proper planning. Failure to have a monthly and annual plan in place will result in wasted opportunities.

It should be noted that there are many Duty To God requirements that also fulfill a Scouting requirement and vice a versa. A quick search of the internet under the search "Correlation of Duty to God and Scouting" reveals that there are many private sights which have already identified the correlations between the Duty to God Program and Scouting and make them available for your reference at no charge. Generally, they are a good reference. However, always be sure to prove to yourself that the information is accurate before using it for Church or Scouting purposes and that no copyright laws are being broken.

There truly is no disconnect between the Duty to God and Scouting programs when fully understood, planned and implemented.

### **3. DIFFICULTY IN STAFFING ADULT LEADER POSITIONS.**

There are a minimum of 31 Scout Leader positions in a typical ward including: The Bishopric (3), Young Men Presidency (4), Assistants for each age group (3), Four Scouting Committees with a minimum of three members each (12), the Primary President, the member of the Primary Presidency over 8-, 9-, and 10-year old Cub Scouts (2), the Cubmaster (1), and Wolf, Bear and Webelos Den Leaders and Assistants (6).

Staffing these positions with two-deep leadership can appear to be a daunting task at times. Some suggestions for filling these positions are:

*As mentioned in 1 above, on page 3 of the Church's "Scouting Handbook" it states: "Qualified adults, whether members of the Church or not, may serve on these (Scout) committees. Fathers and mothers of boys and young men may be considered as prospective committee members. The member of the ward Primary presidency responsible for eleven-year-old boys serves on the committee that serves deacon-age Scouts. The member of the ward Primary presidency who is responsible for Scouting for eight-, nine-, and ten-year olds serves on the committee organized to meet the needs of those age groups."*

Usually, and subject to the inspiration of Priesthood leaders, it is considered acceptable for a member to serve on a scout committee in addition to another church calling. Grandparents, Coaches, Sunday School teachers, and Home Teachers might also be considered as committee members.

Scouting works best when the Scout leaders are supported by individual Unit Committees. For example, It is not intended for the Scoutmaster to run the troop by tracking advancement, arranging merit badge counselors, acquiring tour permits, acquiring and repairing equipment, obtaining funding, arranging transportation, supplies, etc. All of these functions are the responsibility of the Scouting Committee for that family of Scouting. The Committee is in essence a working administrative board for the Scouting Unit. Without this support, a scout leader's ability and length of service is often shortened, as he experiences frustration and fatigue and Stakes and Wards find themselves needing to fill another position sooner than otherwise necessary. On page 3 of the Church's "Scouting Handbook" it states, *"Where possible, the bishopric establishes a committee to help meet the Scouting needs of each age group in the ward."* The committees are the Cub Scout Committee, Boy Scout Committee, Varsity Scout Committee, and Venturing Committee. Each Scouting Program is totally separate and progressively different from that of the previous age group and each program is based upon different levels of maturity, adventure, challenge, and activities. We sometimes refer to this natural progression as the *Ages and Stages of Scouting*. The Committees that administer the program should be made up of dedicated adults and individuals with a personal interest in the scouts it serves. Each committee can be as large as needed, but is recommended to have at a minimum a Committee Chairman, an Advancement Chairman, and a Transportation Chairman / Quartermaster.

Each ward has a cadre of seasoned and experienced retired members. Many of these individuals would relish the opportunity to contribute via a calling. Their collection of life's experiences, including, in many cases, years as scout leaders, make them ideal candidates to help advise and administer the Scouting programs as a committee member, merit badge counselor, unit commissioner, etc.

Look to the father's of the young men. Serving as a Scout leader to a son's Scouting unit can be a rewarding and bonding experience for Father's and their scout sons.

As always, prayerful searching for the less obvious Scout leader will bring welcome strength to your units and to meeting the specific needs of your young men. Most importantly, these leaders should be individually worthy of being imitated and copied as examples for our young men.

#### **4. TRAINING ADULT LEADERS.**

Every boy deserves a well-trained leader! Every boy deserves to belong to a first-rate unit! Every boy deserves access to the full Scouting Program! Every boy deserves a chance to decide to be...!

As in any business, success requires a cycle of training and continual retraining of how to best perform one's duties. The training and retraining of those charged to deliver Scouting to our young men is a must for youth programs to be fully successful. Training engenders vision. Vision is defined as a "picture of future success". A leader with vision can picture what his or her troop should and will look like and how it will operate when it is fully operational. Vision precipitates wisdom and an understanding of how and when all of "The 8 Methods of Scouting" (see p 72 *The Scoutmaster Handbook*) are used in the various ages and stages of Scouting. This vision breeds success.

Our Council, Sector and District Key 3s and their Committees stand ready and able to provide the training that Scout leaders require to succeed. Each new Scouting leader should receive the following training as soon as possible after receiving their call to serve:

**Fast Start Training:** As the first step in the training continuum, Fast Start Training is meant to provide all of the information and resources for new leaders to conduct their first meeting, along with guidance for the meetings that follow. Fast Start Training is available for Cub Scout, Boy Scout and Varsity Scout leaders as-well-as for Venturing Advisers, Unit Commissioners and Troop Committee Members. Self-study, rather than group training, is the preferred method for Fast Start Training. This gives the new leader the opportunity to learn at his or her own pace. Fast Start Training can be done on-line in the leader's own home. Access this training by going on-line to the Utah National Parks Council home page @utahscouts.org and clicking the "Training" tab in the Middle of the blue header near the top of the page. Then click on Fast Start Training in the left hand margin. You will be presented with a menu of the Fast Start Training options. Click the box that corresponds to your family of Scouting. This will take you to the On-Line Training Center. Create a MyScouting account for yourself and the On-Line Training Center will keep a permanent record of your training.

**New Leader Essentials:** Is the classroom portion of the "Basic Leader Training" which each unit-level Scout leader should receive. It has been provided by your District Training Staff in conjunction with monthly Roundtables. A new course called "**This is Scouting**" will soon be available on-line and will replace the current New Leader Essentials course. For more information, please see the on-line training at MyScouting.com Until then, please continue to take advantage of the training provided by your districts.

**North Star Training:** Is the outdoor portion of the "Basic Leader Training" for Boy Scout and Varsity Scout Leaders. It is also found to be beneficial by many Young Men's (Venturing) Presidents, Committee members and CORs. This training is held twice each year. During this



overnight training, the Scout Leader is placed in a patrol and troop setting and taught an introduction to scouting skills and the Patrol Method is demonstrated and lived by each participant. See you Sector and District calendars for specific dates.

**Leader-Specific Training :** This is a 4 to 6 hour course designed to give Scout Leaders and overall greater vision of scouting and to provide them with specific tools and resources to help them to better serve in their specific position. With a few exceptions, Leader Specific Training is held most months. It is hosted on an alternating basis by the Sector's District Training Committees and is designed to be open to any Scout leader. To ensure greater accessibility by Scout leaders, Leader Specific Training is alternated between Thursday evening from 6-10 p.m. and Saturday morning from 8-12 a.m. Please refer to the Sector and District Calendars for the specifics dates, times, and locations of upcoming Leader Specific Training sessions.

**Youth Protection Training:** Each Scout leader is asked to be trained in youth protection. It is available on line and is critical in ensuring that we do everything possible to protect our youth from predators.

**Safety Training:** Each Scout leader should be thoroughly familiar with *The Guide to Safe Scouting* before taking a scout on any activity. Scout leaders should complete *Weather Hazard Training* before taking a unit into the outdoors. In addition, if the activity is planned in or around water, the leader should have completed *Safety Afloat*, and *Safe Swim Defense* before the activity. Shooting activities involving the use of firearms should be directed by an NRA trained and certified adviser.

*Weather Hazard Training, Safety Afloat Training and Safe Swim Defense Training* are all available on-line at [utahscouts.org](http://utahscouts.org). "*The Guide to Safe Scouting*" is available on line via [lds.org](http://lds.org).

It is important to note that Aaronic Priesthood activity guidelines include the guidelines found in "*The Guide to Safe Scouting*". It is incorrect for a Scout or Church leader to assume that if an activity does not comply with the BSA safety guidelines as taught in these training courses that he or she can simply label the activity an Aaronic Priesthood activity and do it anyway. In clarification of this misconception, Elder Gary L. Pocock, of the Seventy recently instructed us that, "*It would be well to point out to such leaders that the following statement appears in the official Church website: "The Guide to Safe Scouting, published by the Boy Scouts of America, can help Aaronic Priesthood, Young Men, and Scouting leaders conduct activities in a safe and prudent manner. The guide is not an official Church publication, but this link to it is provided as an additional resource."* Note that both Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting leaders are counseled to follow these safe practices. The link gives the guide official Church approval, lest there are those who think otherwise." (Instructions to Council Key 3, Utah National Parks Council, June 17, 2008.)

For more information on the Church safety guidelines, please see *Safeguarding Youth at lds.org* and <http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS/toc.aspx>.

**Roundtable:** A monthly Roundtable is conducted to inform the Scout leaders of upcoming events and training and to provide a fresh exchange of ideas and training for the leaders of all families of Scouting. Each of the 31 Scout Leaders in a ward can benefit when he and she

attends Roundtable on a regular basis. Some stakes choose to hold their Stake Key Scouters Meeting with its ward CORs and Unit Commissioners on the night of Roundtable to maximize the benefit of Roundtable.

**Woodbadge:** Woodbadge is truly one of the best week-long leadership training seminars available anywhere, at any level, on any subject, at any cost! It has the power to change lives not only for the boys and men you lead, but your life individually, at work and in your family. For most, it is a life changing week-long experience. Don't procrastinate sacrificing to go to Woodbadge. If you do, you will kick yourself when you finally do go. Each leader that is called to serve as a Scout leader for boys over 11 years old should also be committed to go to Woodbadge ASAP (Akela's Council is designed for Cub Scout leaders of boys 8 to 10 years old). During Woodbadge, the participant lives the life of a new Cub Scout, then progresses through the scouting programs. In addition, a series of leadership skills developed by the Harvard School of Business are taught to help the participant understand how to be a leader. President Charles Dahlquist II testified, *"As a newly called Scoutmaster, I think I did a reasonable job. We accomplished much, advancement was passable, and we garnered a number of awards at our annual council Scout camp. But not until I finished my basic Scouting training and then Woodbadge training did I realize how much more we could have done to strengthen our boys."* (Young Men Open House September 2004)

**Philmont:** Each year LDS Stake Presidencies are invited to attend a week-long training experience at Philmont Scout Ranch where participants are taught how to fully implement Scouting and Church youth programs in their local units. Normally, over 160 leaders and 500 family members attend during one of two available weeks. Philmont is a training camp designed with something for the whole family. Your wife will be pampered and entertained and your children will be taught crafts and scout skills and have a week filled with adventure. As part of their experience at Philmont, Stake leaders are encouraged to return home and plan and conduct a Stake (or multi-Stake) Little Philmont to teach the principles learned at Philmont to the leaders of their local units.

**When Issuing the Calling:** Great success has been had by Priesthood leaders who describe exactly what is expected out of a Scout leader during his or her calling. It is suggested that a summary be presented to the Scout leader during the call detailing his or her duties, the training they would be expected to complete, the meeting they would be expected to attend, the uniform they would be expected to wear and the reference handbooks and material they would be expected to acquire for their resource library.

**Tracking Training:** Some Stakes report that they have found it useful to call a Stake Scout Training Specialist. This person is asked to track the training of those in each scouting position in each ward so that Church leaders can instruct and assist them in receiving the training that they need to be successful in their calling.

It is recommended that a new leader go to the internet at [www.utahscouts.org](http://www.utahscouts.org) under *Training* and receive *Youth Protection Training* and *Fast Start Training* for his or her family of Scouting immediately after receiving their call. By opening a personal *MyScouting* account, the BSA will track and keep a permanent record of the training that you have received.

## **5. TENURE OF ADULT LEADERS.**

In 2006, Elder Rasband taught that the average tenure of all Scout leaders in the Church is just 22 months. It is less for Varsity and Venture leaders (17-18 months).

President Dahlquist has commented, *“When I was Stake President, I would tell our Bishops, “In this stake, when we speak of youth leader tenure in callings, we spell it t-e-n-y-e-a-r. It takes time in a calling before the youth build what missionaries have called a “relationship of trust.” That someone is qualified to serve in another calling is not sufficient reason to release a Scoutmaster to become a counselor in an Elders Quorum Presidency or for any other calling. Unless the Spirit shouts, I have found it a good rule of thumb to leave Young Men leaders in their calling for a sufficient length of time to be trained, to apply what they have learned, and to make a difference in the lives of the young men they serve.*

*It is often very difficult to find good leaders of young men. If they are good, leave them there. If you must change them, change them to another age group, but leave them where they can make a difference in the lives of young men and in the generations unnumbered that follow.”*

## **6. NOT ABLE TO IMPLEMENT THE VARSITY AND VENTURING PROGRAMS.**

It has been correctly observed that an unsuccessful Scouting, Varsity, or Venturing program is normally “not a boy problem, but a leader problem”. Stated in another way, problems implementing the Varsity and Venturing programs are a sign of a lack of understanding and vision on the part of Priesthood and Youth leaders as to what the Varsity and Venturing programs are and how they work so perfectly with the Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

We have recently been taught by Elder Ronald A. Rasband that we are losing 48 % of our young men of the Utah South Area between the ages of 13-20. Most are losing their way between the ages of 16-20. When the Scouting, Varsity, and Venturing programs are run as outlined by the Church and BSA and are guided by the inspiration received by prayerful, dedicated, and committed leaders the programs provide us with the tools necessary to save many more of our at-risk young men. Success comes from understanding and fully implementing the age-appropriate program at the appropriate age.

Scouting is not the same program for all age groups of boys. As a young man matures physically, mentally, and socially the scouting programs change to meet his need for every increasing challenge and adventure. This is often referred to as “The Ages and Stages of Scouting”. It is important that the young man be able to experience each stage of growth at the appropriate age. Not too early and not too late! On page 4 of the Church’s *Scouting Handbook* it states:

*“for Eight-, Nine-, and Ten-Year-Olds (Cub) scouting ... is a learning, happy, fun-filled home-centered, activity program. Parental involvement and help is the key to success in this program. The Church does not approve Scouting programs for boys younger than eight years old. Boys enter the Webelos program when they are ten years old. No Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for boys under age eleven...Eleven-year-old boys meet separately from Aaronic Priesthood-age Scouts because they are not yet*

*part of the quorum. Eleven-year-old Scouts may participate in a one-night camp three times each year. No other Scout-sponsored overnight camping should be planned for eleven-year-old Scouts. All boys twelve and thirteen years of age attend the ward Scout troop.”*

A young man earns his Bobcat rank as he joins Cub Scouts. Ideally, it is recommended that a boy earn his Wolf, Bear, Webelos and Arrow of Light awards as a Cub Scout and that he work as a New Scout to achieve the rank of First Class before he turns 12 years of age and joins the Deacons Quorum. When the program is coordinated so that the boys reach this goal of being a First Class Scout (and working on the rank of Star) by age 12, then the next two years can be focused on more advanced skills as he earns his Star, Life and Eagle ranks. It is more difficult to achieve these results if the troop needs to spend part of its time passing off the First Class requirements. This difficulty is compounded if the boy is still working on the ranks of Star, Life and Eagle after he enters the Teachers quorum and Varsity Scout Team at age 14.

With the rank of Eagle Scout achieved by age 14, the Varsity Scout activities can transition into a higher level of challenge and high adventure as he works towards earning his Varsity Letter and Denali Award. Having progressed in ability and confidence the young man is prepared to take on the even greater opportunities and adventure of Venturing and learns additional Leadership skills and to make mature and ethical decisions.

As a 16 to 18 year old, the priest-age youth emphasizes team building and working with others in areas of interest to him and to his Crew. They gain confidence in acquired skills that can benefit them for the rest of their lives as a hobby or an occupation. Some crews will focus on one area of interest for an extended period of time in order to become fully skilled in that area or to prepare and accomplish a service project or an annual super activity. For example, a Crew might have interests in the Medical field and focus on this area for a period of time. Then, they might emphasize Computers for a time to activate a less active member of their quorum who is interested in computers, or perhaps they might develop skills in a sport of their choosing. They might decide to build Kayaks or become certified in scuba diving for a summer super activity. Put simply, the Venturing Program is directed by the interests of its Crew members. Venturing is guided discovery. Venturing is an empowering experience. When the Venture plans and administers what he is interested in then he is likely to find a way to continue to participate in the program. He will choose to make time for Venturing among the many good choices that he has. If leaders try to compete with the world and “out entertain” the world, the odds of success are not in their favor and they risk losing the boy. Instead, the Venture program should provide multiple opportunities for the young man to learn and to provide meaningful service. It is each leader’s responsibility to recognize that Varsity Scouts and Venturing are different than the Boy Scout program and to learn to provide the full Varsity and Venture Program to its members. Venturing can include skills that will assist a young man in developing skills to prepare for his mission, but is not intended to focus solely on Missionary preparation. Avoid the temptation to create your own “better” priest-age program. On page 187 of the Church Handbook of instruction we read,

*“Scouting should be used to support the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood and help young men put into practice the gospel principles they learn on Sunday.”*

As a Venture, the young man should continue to set and achieve goals and can qualify to earn one or more Bronze awards (such as the Religious Life Bronze award), the Gold and Silver awards as-well-as the Ranger and Quest Awards.

When properly planned and coordinated by the sponsoring institution (Ward and Stake) the percentage of young man who will enjoy each stage of scouting will increase and he will look forward with excitement to the day when he advances into another quorum and family of scouting. Therefore, it is essential that the sponsoring institution maintain a discipline of not taking the younger boys on high adventure activities with the older boys. Let them wait! Let them experience all they can in Scouts before they graduate to the greater high adventure of Varsity Scouting. And then, let them enjoy the five emphases' of Varsity Scouting before you move them to the higher excitement of Venturing. This practice fosters continued interest and excitement on the part of the young man as he looks naturally to the maturing process.

Be careful not to pick and choose which methods, emphases' and guidelines of the programs you will incorporate into your unit and which ones you will not. Scouting runs best when all of the 8 *Methods of Scouting* are fully considered and implemented (see p. 72 *The Scoutmaster Handbook* and page 14 of the *Varsity Scout Guidebook*). Varsity Scouting functions best when the 5 *Fields of Emphasis* of the Varsity program are employed (see p. 27 of the *Varsity Scout Guidebook*), and Venturing works when a balance is achieved among the 7 Methods of Venturing (see p. 49 *Venturing Leader Specific Training*).

To use an analogy, scouting can be compared to baking a delicious cookie. When each ingredient is placed into the cookie at the prescribed amount, baked at the prescribed temperature, for the prescribed length of time, the result is a plump and delectable treat. If an ingredient is left out, or the timing is off, it is likely that a less desirable looking and often inedible cookie will be had.

## **7. NEGATIVE STIGMA OF SCOUTING FOR OLDER BOYS.**

President Charles W. Dahlquist II has said, *"I have found an unexplained reluctance on the part of some priesthood leaders to implement fully Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing as the activity arm of their quorums and to become trained themselves."* Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone once said, *"I do not believe that Varsity Scouting is on trial in the Church, nor is Boy Scouting, Cub Scouting, or [Venturing]. But rather it is my firm belief that bishops, and the ward leaders, the advisers, Scoutmasters, coaches, and [Venturing] advisers are on trial. The program will work if they will work and become trained and put into effect the things they have been trained to do"* (personal letter to Thane J. Packer, Oct. 7, 1997, in Thane J. Packer, *On My Honor: A Guide to Scouting in the Church*).

President Dahlquist further bore testimony of youth activity programs by saying *"If we build it [or, better still, help them build it] they will come! And not only will the active young men come, but those who have become less active and also the friends of other faiths who are looking for a fun, character-building experience will come."*

Recently, a good Bishop in one of the local wards, who was alarmed about the loss of his young men, decided that he needed to learn about and fully implement the Venturing program. As he

studied the manuals and received Venturing Training he decided that he would assume the position of President of the Venture Crew so that it ran hand-in-hand with his role as President of the Priest Quorum. He made his First Assistant in the Priest Quorum one of the Venture Vice-Presidents. The crew chose to design its own distinctive crew uniform instead of using the spruce green Venturing uniform. He began holding presidency meetings and attending each meeting and activity and running the program as prescribed. He found that his crew had an interest in shooting sports and together they learned about it and participated in this activity on a regular basis. He found that many of his priests who had previously seemed too busy or disinterested in the Venturing program began coming to the activities and some of his less active priests became active again. He didn't invent a new program. What he did do was to run the Venturing program as it is given to us.

Also, see #6 above.

## **8. LACK OF LEADER COMMITMENT.**

Please refer back to the principles discussed in numbers 1 through 6 above. Each of these principles could help to inspire a leader to serve with commitment. In many cases, the lack of commitment is a sign that the leader needs to be helped to understand how Scouting works and to have a vision of what success looks like. Elder Dahlquist teaches that we can help this leader in the following way: *“When you call leaders, make it a memorable call. Take time to discuss your expectations and what is required of them. Talk to them about time commitments, training expectations, personal preparation, and the need for one-on-one contact with each boy. Have in your hand a list of young men in the quorum, and take time to discuss the needs of each boy with the new leader.”* As implied by President Dahlquist, sometimes leaders ‘live up to’ or ‘live down to’ our expectations. Have a list for the new leader describing his responsibilities and the Lord’s expectations of one holding that position. List for him the training he will need and the time commitments that the calling entails. List the uniform(s) he should wear. List the meetings he should attend and the materials that he will need as resources for his calling. Discuss any concerns with him and by following your right to inspiration you will know how to inspire, (or retire) that leader. However, carefully monitor the situation so as not to let the boys of his unit suffer on a long-term basis, if problems persist. That price may be too high to pay!

## **9. LACK OF ROUNDTABLE ATTENDANCE BY LEADERS.**

Most Scout leaders are the crème de la crème among your Stake members. They are dedicated and faithful. However, they too must know that it is their responsibility to attend Roundtable on a regular basis in order to stay up on the latest calendared events, policies and ideas pertaining to running their unit. If this is a major problem, you can affect a positive change, by leading the charge and by placing increased emphasis on attendance. You can imagine the impact that your invitation or one from your Bishops to, “Come and go with me!” would have on these good leaders. Help them to know which Roundtable section they should go to and help them to have a good experience while there. If you notice a weakness in the content of the breakout session, please communicate that fact to the District Commissioner so that he or she can strengthen that area and ensure that your leaders are being well fed when they come.

## **10. SHRINKING YOUTH POPULATION IN UNITS.**

A former District Commissioner in our Council reported accompanying the Scout Executive on his annual visits with Institutional Heads. During one particular visit, a new Bishop, having recently moved into the Stake and Ward, made the heartfelt comment that, "I've got to be honest with you brethren, I don't believe that we can make Scouting work in our ward, we only have five boys." Surprised, the District Commissioner responded, "Bishop, let me tell you a story. When I was a newly called Bishop, we would hold Stake Courts of Honor at which a coveted traveling Buffalo Skull trophy was awarded to that troop that demonstrated the best overall Scout program as manifested by a computation of the number of boys in full uniform, the number of boys receiving merit badges, the number of boys receiving rank advancement, the greatest number of service hours per boy, the best parental support at the court of honor, and the troop demonstrating the most Scout Spirit. It was somewhat frustrating to me that the same troop seemed to earn the award every Court of Honor. I recall leaving the Court of Honor with the feeling that there was no way to compete with this Troop because their Scoutmaster had a magical vision of how Scouting works. I made the comment then, that it may not be fair, because that ward only had five boys. Only five boys to focus on and ensure that they had a full uniform, only five boys to track to ensure that they were advancing and ensure that they were holding leadership positions. Only five boys to have Scoutmaster's conferences with, to arrange equipment for, etc. It seemed to me that this was a huge advantage to that troop." "Bishop", he asked, "do you know what ward that was? It was yours."

Apparently, the former Scoutmaster had moved from the ward and the new Bishop was not aware of the legacy once established in his ward. The only difference between a troop that was the envy of all and a troop with a perception of hopelessness was the understanding and vision possessed by the former Scoutmaster and Church leaders. He had taken the time to study what makes a troop successful. He was fully trained and was employing the principles that he had been taught.

A small population of boys and units may seem like a sure show stopper. It is true, that it makes it harder for the few boys that are in that unit to share leadership and have a multiple patrol experience. However, on the flip side, it is a marvelous opportunity to have two-on-one time with a special young man. It is a great opportunity to make sure that he has every opportunity to succeed. Make the few feel as special as they are. Be their friend when another is not available. Show them that you love them enough to run the whole program just for them. How can we fail with that type of formula.

Otherwise, it has been reported by some units that they have had success in combining some functions with another troop to increase their numbers. Some have combined for weekday meetings and some for summer camps. If the natural communications barriers of separate quorums can be overcome, this is a viable alternative. However, do not shy away from providing a full program just for "one" if that is what you have. That one is worth it!

## **11. PROMPT RECOGNITION.**

Prompt recognition is an essential element of positive reinforcement for positive actions. Within reason, it is nearly impossible to recognize a young man too much for doing the right thing. Consequently, positive recognition of a Scout's achievement fosters greater motivation and achievement. There are many ways in which achievement can be recognized. Some leaders use a bead and "beadbob" system wherein scouts are instantly recognized with an inexpensive colored bead for accomplishing an assignment or goal. Others hang a carrot in front of the Scout such as a special troop neckerchief, or neckerchief slide for cumulative progress by the scout. Successful leaders are constantly looking to compliment a scout on a job well done. However, the most common method of recognition is via a Court of Honor. The Court of Honor is designed to provide that recognition to the Scout and his parents as well as to set a stage for the Scout to be an example to other scouts and future scouts.

Courts of Honor should be held on a regular basis. It is a must that they be held on a ward level at least once per quarter. Many units find it beneficial to hold Courts of Honor every two months. Make the Court of Honor special, fun, and short. The Senior Patrol Leader should conduct the COH with troop officers fulfilling appropriate duties, such as the Song leader, leading everyone in a scout song, conducting a flag ceremony, or participating in a skit. Start and end the meeting with prayer, by posting and retrieving the colors, and always begin by reciting the Ideals of Scouting, i.e. the Scout Oath, Law, Slogan, Motto and at times the Outdoor Code. This is a good time to communicate calendared events with parents.

Many stakes have reported the benefits of also holding an additional Stake Court of Honor on a quarterly or semi annual basis. It is appropriate to re-recognize a scout for an achievement or advancement earned since the last Stake Court of Honor that has been presented previously in a ward Court of Honor in front of his Stake peers. Stake Courts of Honor provide troops with a rare glimpse of how their troop compares to other troops and fosters the sharing of successful practices.

Special achievements such as achieving the rank of Eagle, or receiving awards at a District Camporee might be noted in the Opening Exercises of Priesthood Meeting as directed by the Bishop.

## **12. COST OF SCOUTING.**

In the Young Men Open House in September, 2004, President Charles Dahlquist, II stated, *"Periodically we hear comments about the cost of Scouting. My response is "You haven't seen anything until you have five daughters and understand the cost of cheerleading!" I know what parents pay for school sports and other activities. Scouting is a drop in the bucket in comparison—especially when we recognize what Scouting offers in return...Brethren, the most recent increase of budget for youth activities was designed to help and lift the load of parents and families, and not curtail some worthwhile youth activities, including BSA council camps."*

On page 189 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* the following guidelines are given concerning financing:



*“Stake or ward budget allowance funds should be used to pay for all Young Men activities, programs, and supplies, including Scouting...Members should not pay fees to participate. Nor should they provide materials, supplies, rental or admission fees, or long-distance transportation at their own expense. Activities in which many members provide food may be held if they do not place undue burdens on members.*

*Activities should be simple and have little or no cost. They should not involve travel that could impose a hardship. This may require a reduction in some activities that stakes and wards are accustomed to having.*

*...If there are not sufficient stake and ward budget funds, leaders may ask participants to pay for part or all of one annual camp or similar activity by individually earning their own money. If funds from participants are insufficient, the stake president or bishop may authorize group fund-raising activities that comply with the guidelines on page 324 in the “Selected Church Policies” section. In no case, however, should the expenses or travel for this camp or activity be excessive. Nor should the lack of personal funds prohibit a young man from participating.”*

The planning of campouts and activities are ideal times to teach Scouts how to plan and live within a budget. Youth activities are not intended to be lavish or expensive.