Strengthening Your Unit Using Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring Resources

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March 2013

Program Variety — A Key to Unit Success

- **Program is key to a well-functioning and successful unit. It is also a major factor in retaining youth throughout their potential tenure in the Scouting Program.**
- As leaders, we face the challenge of developing interesting programs for meetings and campouts.
- For Cubs, the program is built around defined activities, but sometimes a Den or Pack meeting or outing that is not tied directly to advancement can add interest and variety.
- In Boy Scouting it's even more important to keep interest alive with fun and variety. Our PLCs may, in theory, develop and plan program and activities, but sometimes they need a push or a hint to get them moving.

Activity: Brainstorming. Query the group as to what sorts of activities or presentations would "kick their program up a notch". Write the responses on cards, whiteboard, or chalkboard. Be ready to ask leading questions about current program and to make suggestions to get the thoughts flowing. Just spend a few minutes on this activity and leave the list on the board for later.

Scouting's "Other" Programs — Scouting With a Different Flavor

- **In Scouting, we try to use adult and peer involvement to foster friendships, relationships, and examples between Scouts and Leaders. Helping our youth develop these inter-personal skills will help them to long-term success because business, work, and vocational success all involve personal relationships.**
- **The BSA programs for older Scouts (Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring) offer a wide-ranging and often untapped reservoir of skills and knowledge that can be brought into your Unit and used to spring your Unit to greater successes.**
- The Boy Scout program addresses the needs of boys aged eleven through seventeen while the Venturing and Sea Scouting programs are co-educational for youth aged thirteen through twenty.
- For boys about to age out of Boy Scouting, but not quite ready for positions as Junior Assistant Scoutmasters, these programs offer the opportunity to continue the Scouting experience at a different "energy level".
- Likewise, a boy whose interest in advancement within the traditional Boy Scout program is lagging may find new challenges in Venturing or Sea Scouting and be encouraged to continue his Scouting experience. If he is a First Class Scout (or higher) when he makes

the transition to Sea Scouting or Venturing, he can, if he chooses, continue with Boy Scout advancement on the path to Eagle until he turns eighteen.

- Cubs and Boy Scouts can both benefit from exposure to the Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring programs. These programs are an outlet for older boys who are seeking greater challenges and an encouragement to continue in the program for youth at all ages.
- The Youth in these programs have taken their Scouting experience a notch further than some Scout Units and certainly all Cub Units. They can be guides and inspirations to your Boys!
- Venturing and Sea Scouting are not in competition with Traditional Scouting (although dual-registration is permitted) and a desire to "do Venturing things" need not siphon off older boys. Rather, a Venture Patrol (perhaps facilitated by a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster dual-registered from a Venturing Crew or Sea Scout Ship) can provide an outlet for youth looking for greater challenges.

Untapped Resources, Skills to be Leveraged

- **Although advancement in Venturing (and, to some extent, in Sea Scouting) is not so strongly emphasized as in traditional Scouting, the programs encourage the development of a basic set of skills and youth choosing to advance will hone these basic skills to a high degree.**
- Communications is a major requirement for Venturing and Sea Scout advancement and there is an expectation that a Venturer or Sea Scout will pass their knowledge on to others.. Perhaps a Crew would be willing to provide a workshop or seminar on effective communications or teaching techniques to help your Unit hone their training skills?
- A particularly strong point of the Sea Scout Advancement Program is a built-in requirement to teach the material to others, once it is

learned. Often this happens in the context of a Sea Scout Ship, but it could just as well happen in a Cub or Scout Unit using material and a skill level appropriate to the Unit.

- Likewise, certain Venturing requirements explicitly require a talk, demonstration, or presentation to a Crew or other group.
- Ethical Controversies are used within the Venturing program to encourage careful and moral decision-making in the light of the Scout Oath and Law. These guided discussions are based on significant issues and questions in the life of youth. This activity can find a place in Cub and Boy Scouting provided the topics and content are age-appropriate. Learning how to run a Guided Discussion from a Crew or Ship can help you to bring this activity to your unit. Bringing in a team from a Ship or Crew may be even more effective because the visiting youth are closer in age to your Scouts and may be seen more as peers than a grown-up.
- Leave No Trace and Conservation. Venturers may be highly trained in these areas and able to work with your leaders and youth to develop a deeper awareness of environmental responsibility and to make the Outdoor Code as much a part of a Scout's life as the Oath and Law.
- Likewise, a Venturer or Sea Scout may have developed several Environmental Conservation projects which can be used as models or examples for your Troop's Life to Eagle program.

Trained in Traditional Skills, but Taking Them to a Higher Level

- **Venturers should be skilled in all areas of Scoutcraft and can be brought into your Unit to add variety and perspective to your Unit's training.**
- Having older Scouts help with a Cub Campout may do much to encourage the timid and break down some of the worries of both Cubs and their parents.

- Sea Scouts can help you develop an appropriate water-based activity, one that goes beyond “paddling in a rowboat” and is age appropriate for Cubs or for Scouts.
- Depending on the Crew and its High-Adventure Specialities, you may find experience in Backpacking, Caving, Cycling, Mountain Biking, Equestrian, Fishing, Hunting/Shooting, Mountaineering, Watercraft/Boating, Winter Sports, Water Sports, or Scuba.
- Soft activities, areas where Crews or Ships can bring fresh skills to your Unit include Ecology, Living History, Physical Fitness, Plants and Wildlife, Project COPE, Emergency Preparedness.
- A Crew specializing in Sports may be able to help your Unit develop a Physical Activity and Training regimen to prepare for a strenuous wilderness trek or just to develop a culture of physical fitness.
- The unique features of Sea Scouting make partnership with a Ship an exciting possibility for adding water-based activities to your program. Likewise weather prediction/awareness, safety drills, and special topics in leadership can be developed based on the Sea Scouting program.
- Since mechanical, electrical, and general maintenance are all important parts of Sea Scouting and form core requirements or advanced electives for Sea Scout Advancement, experts from a ship can bring practical knowledge of these “nuts and bolts” skills to your Unit.
- Don’t forget ropework! Marlinspike Seamanship and the specialized (and fancy) knotwork used around a boat can add an extra level of challenge for your Scouts who are interested in learning more about knots, rope, and rigging.

An Awards Program That Builds Instructors and Consellors

- **The Awards Program in Venturing and Sea Scouting is optional, but youth who pursue these awards are motivated and offer**

skills, abilities, and techniques that can enrich program for Cubs and Scouts.

- Venturers and Sea Scouts who have earned the Religious Life Bronze Award can bring a spiritual awareness and level of diversity to your Unit. They may be willing to assist as Religious Emblem Counselors.
- Trust award winners have explored their own religious tradition and investigated other cultures and their community. Besides the obvious potential for involving these youth in the Religious Emblem program, these youth may have additional skills in conflict resolution, building bridges of diversity, and serving the community.
- Quest award winners have demonstrated a commitment to physical fitness and discipline. These youth may provide outstanding examples of discipline, physical fitness, and skill to Scouts who may be unsure of their own abilities.
- At sea, the Quartermaster is responsible for the guidance and navigation of a ship. The Sea Scout Quartermaster award represents the pinnacle of the Sea Scouting program. A Sea Scout Quartermaster stands beside an Eagle Scout as an example of the finest in Scouting.
- Arts and Hobbies recipients may be able to spark interest in cultural and related activities. Remember, your Unit Program does not have to be one hundred percent Scoutcraft. Having fun and experiencing a diverse set of activities are also a part of Scouting and can bring new life to your Unit.
- A young lady from a Venturing Crew or Sea Scout Ship may make your boys stop and think again about unconscious stereotypes that they hold. Working with a female in a position of leadership may open young eyes and minds to the fact that gender need not define the abilities we can expect from an individual, and it will do this in an environment based solidly on merit and ability.
- Just having a Venturer come to your Unit and doing a presentation on the Venturing Oath could be a powerful witness to the fact that Scouting is a life-long activity. As we mature, the depth and

responsibility of our Scouting commitment increases.

Use Exploring to Explore Career Options and Develop Skills

- **An Explorer Post tends to have a specific career-based focus. And, as a result, it is often forgotten that Exploring is still a part of Scouting.**
- If you want an in-depth program on Aviation, EMS/EMT or Search & Rescue Techniques, members of an Explorer Post may be able to help build one.
- Likewise law enforcement, Fire-Fighting and similar career options can be explored with Explorers belonging to Posts affiliated with those specialities.
- Some Explorer Posts are involved in communications from network, radio, and television broadcasting to written communication and web design. These posts can be a valuable resource for youth who wish to follow a career in communications and related fields.

Merit Badges and Career Choices

- **Don't forget Merit Badges. Perhaps a Post (or a Ship or a Crew) can provide Merit Badge counselors themselves or, if not, perhaps a Merit Badge Instructor could be brought in to supplement a program and earning a merit badge can be tied in with covering more general material provided by the Post. Possibilities include Aviation, Backpacking, Finger Printing, and Forestry (to name just a few).**
- **If Scouts in your Unit express an interest in a military career, the traditional Scouting Program ties in nicely with the Army and**

Marines. You can help a Scout with an interest in the Navy or Coast Guard or in the Merchant Marine to prepare for future success by pairing him up with a Sea Scout Ship and encouraging dual registration.

Activity: Round Robin. Return to the list of "needs" generated at the beginning of the session and start a Round-Robin discussion of how Venturing Crews, Sea Scout Ships, or Exploring Posts might help a Unit to meet these needs. During the ensuing discussion, ask the group for their thoughts on appropriate ways of thanking or demonstrating appreciation to the other Unit and how the partnership could be made to work both ways.

Diversity of Youth and Program — A Recipe for Success

- **The possibilities of combined program, shared activities, and inter-Unit friendship and friendly competition between the Traditional Scouting (Pack and Troop) and Venturing/Sea Scouting/Exploring Units are as limited as your vision. Contact with Scouts from these programs can bring a different perspective to your Unit's program, spark interest, and add pizzazz to your activities.**
- **But, develop a partnership and share in both directions — what can your Pack or Troop bring to a Venturing Sea Scouting, or Exploring Unit? How can you give as well as receive?**
- **For Boy Scout Units, in particular: A Boy aging out of Scouting who is not inclined to continue with your Troop as a leader might be encouraged to continue his Scouting Experience in Venturing, Sea Scouting, or Exploring.**
- **Begin to build contacts. Get to know Unit Leaders and network**

with them at Roundtables, Trainings, and other events.

- Remember, our goal is the same as theirs: To build youth who are good citizens, youth who make decisions and live their lives according to the Scout Oath and Law.

Some Handy Resources on the World-Wide Web

Below are listed just a few of the many resources for Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring that can be found on the Internet. Some of these are National or Regional sites, others are local and specific to our Council.

http://www.tcscouts.org/venture.htm

http://www.seascout.org

http://www.ithacaseascouts.org

http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Venturing.aspx

http://nerventuring-bsa.org/about/

http://exploring.learningforlife.org/

http://exploringpost24drydenny.yolasite.com/