Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

New Advancement Educational Presentations Posted

Take a look! You can find our new presentations for advancement administrators at www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/resources.aspx. Please take a moment to review them for us and send your suggestions to advancement.team@scouting.org. We will be updating the presentations this spring before the expiration date that appears on the title slide.

Getting the Most From Internet Advancement

The Boy Scouts of America uses eight methods to deliver the program that moves young people toward three basic aims: character development, citizenship training, and mental, emotional, and physical fitness. This is important because, from time to time, we as leaders find ourselves focused so heavily on the methods that we forget they are merely tools used to achieve the aims. For this reason, the BSA has instituted the Journey to Excellence to measure performance—that is, to see how we are doing at achieving those aims. One of the most meaningful JTE measurements is the rate of advancement. History has shown the higher this rate, the more Scouts we retain in our programs.

The newly designed 60- to 90-minute presentation “Getting the Most From Internet Advancement” will help participants understand the importance of reporting advancement. It provides guidance to unit advancement processors, unit committee members, and other leaders through their responsibilities in support of the BSA advancement process. It will also show participants how to access and successfully use the Internet Advancement portal to report unit advancement progress.

The advantages of using the online Internet Advancement system versus the paper process are numerous. Among the advantages are reducing or eliminating gaps in Scout record, providing convenience through Web access, and access to a wide variety of useful reports.

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- A Peek Ahead: Topics Planned for March
The Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling

This presentation helps merit badge counselors understand their role in the BSA advancement program and the proper methods to use in working with youth. It is intended for presentation on a face-to-face basis by a prepared presenter and takes 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

Nine Presentations With Voiceover Based on the Guide to Advancement

The following presentations have been created to help build a better understanding of this fundamental publication of the Boy Scout advancement program.

1. Introduction to the Guide to Advancement
2. Judgment Calls (defining “active,” positions of responsibility, Scout spirit, and “reasonable”)
3. The Merit Badge Program
4. Boards of Review
5. The Eagle Scout Service Project
6. The Eagle Scout Application Process
7. Eagle Scout Boards of Review
8. Boards of Review Under Disputed Circumstances
9. Appeals of a Board of Review Decision

New Case Study–Based Conference for Experienced Advancement Volunteers and Professionals

Save the dates: June 16–22, Philmont Training Center

If you are an experienced volunteer advancement administrator, consider taking your game to the next level this June at the Philmont Advancement Issues and Solutions conference. Offered for the first time, this new case study–based conference is designed for unit, district, and council advancement coordinators, chairs, committee members, and staff advisors. If that’s you, start making plans now to take advantage of this opportunity to share ideas with other committed advancement administrators at Scouting’s premier destination—Philmont Scout Ranch.

Conference participants will not only learn about the latest updates on advancement issues, but more important, they will analyze, discuss, and solve case studies similar to those regularly dealt with by the national Advancement Team and Committee and the Eagle Issues Task Force. The result will be a better understanding of the effective use of the Guide to Advancement and also the confidence to handle difficult issues at the council level. To register, log on to MyScouting.org and select the “Event Registration” tab.

Mechanics of Advancement Conference Set for Philmont in August

The Philmont Training Center will also host the Mechanics of Advancement course for unit, district, and council volunteers and professionals August 4–10. Conference attendees will gain a more in-depth understanding of the essentials of advancement and an appreciation for the rationale behind the policies and procedures governing it. Presentations will come from members of the national Advancement Committee and its advisory panel, and group discussions will focus on effective ways to resolve the related issues and challenges that arise. The revised 2013 editions of the Guide to Advancement and the Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook will be featured and covered in detail.

This course is also a prime opportunity to share the beautiful Philmont Scout Ranch with your family and new Scouting friends from across America. Register now at www.MyScouting.org.

On Increasing Advancement

Initiating Discussion on Best Practices

In just about any group formed with a common cause, there will be members who achieve a level of excellence. It might be because they were blessed with an off-the-chart IQ, but more often it’s because they have taken the time to learn from others about what works best. Success in Scouting requires an understanding of policies and procedures such as those outlined in the Guide to Advancement, but that understanding simply provides a strong foundation. It is the active exchange of ideas and best practices that makes the biggest difference.

Advancement committees with the strength to initiate the exchange of best practices will always have the most potential to generate significant increases in the rate of advancement. Here is how that can work at each level:

Regional volunteers responsible for advancement should set up regular conference calls among their counterparts in BSA areas, and see that a list of council advancement chairs is maintained to facilitate exchanges down the line. Besides reports on rates of advancement, these calls should include discussions and subsequent emails about what is being done in the areas and councils to support increases in advancement.

Area volunteers responsible for advancement should also establish conference calls for the same purposes and facilitate best methods discussions and email exchanges between councils. They should also encourage councils to similarly support the exchange among districts.
Council advancement chairs who have not heard from their counterparts in the region or area should find out who these individuals are and ask for assistance in discovering the names and contact information for their neighboring council advancement chairs. Discussions with volunteers at the region, area, and council level will almost always uncover best methods or trigger ideas that will lead to furthering advancement across council boundaries. The most important responsibility for council advancement chairs, however, is to build strength in the council advancement committee so it can reach out and support exchanges among the districts and encourage district advancement chairs to reach out to all unit advancement coordinators.

District advancement chairs, similarly, share in that most important responsibility of building committee strength. The district advancement committee should strive for achieving at least the capacity to reach out to unit advancement coordinators and to provide them training and support to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices.

Unit advancement coordinators can generate idea exchanges as well. Unit leaders and their assistants should contribute to the process. Seeking the opinions and thoughts of other unit committee members and parents will also be helpful. But let’s not forget the youth. Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Venturers, and Sea Scouts should be quizzed for their thoughts on advancement and how to fold it into a strong unit program. Forums such as the patrol leaders’ council and boards of review can provide a wealth of information.

**2013 Boy Scout Requirements Book, No. 33216, Released**

The advancement program of the Boy Scouts of America is supported by a set of requirements subject to ongoing review by the national Advancement Committee and periodic changes to provide the best experiences for Scouts. The requirements handbook (Boy Scout Requirements, No. 33216) is updated annually to incorporate all the revisions from the previous year. Here are some of the major changes that became effective on Jan. 1, 2013:

- Second class—3e and 3f—Use of camping stoves/fires. Scouts will explain and demonstrate building, lighting, and extinguishing a wood fire, and also explain and demonstrate the use of a lightweight stove or propane stove and describe safety procedures.
- Current nutrition requirements and references are updated in Second Class 3g and First Class 4a.
- Star and Life position of responsibility requirements are to be fulfilled in the Scout’s home unit, not provisional units such as for a jamboree.

The Guide to Advancement, in topic 4.0.0.1, explains advancement procedures for options when Scouts must use the new requirements or may continue with previous requirements.

Many minor updates made to merit badge requirements in 2012 also are reflected in the new Boy Scout Requirements book, including the following:

- Astronomy (3b, 9)
- Automotive Maintenance (1, 8d)
- Bird Study (7b)
- Chess (3)
- Citizenship in the Community (3a)
- Communication (1a, 1b)
- Composite Materials (1)
- Dog Care (10)
- Emergency Preparedness (2b)
- Fire Safety (7c)
- Fishing (1)
- Gardening (1, 3, 6)
- Hiking (5, 6)
- Home Repairs (1, 6b)
- Kayaking (All-new merit badge)
- Law (11)
- Oceanography (8b)
- Orienteering (6c)
- Photography (3)
- Safety (6, 7)
- Search and Rescue (All-new merit badge)
- Wilderness Survival (1)
- Wood Carving (1)

A unit committee that is aware of the latest requirements and when they apply will be able to provide the best counseling and direction to Scouts as they work toward their advancement goals. In the same way, keeping up to date on requirements will allow the unit committee to suggest activities that accomplish advancement during troop outings and activities. Toward that end, topic 3.0.0.3, item 12, in the Guide to Advancement states it is the responsibility of the unit to maintain a library of advancement literature, in particular the current edition of Boy Scout Requirements.
What’s the Procedure?

Council Summer Camp Merit Badge Program (Part 2)

The December 2012/January 2013 issue of Advancement News presented part 1 on this topic. Here are a few additional tips for a council advancement committee to consider in organizing and administering a successful summer camp merit badge program.

Developing and training the camp merit badge counselors. This is perhaps more critical to the success of a camp merit badge program than any other consideration. If there is a shortfall here, the entire effort can suffer, but success produces enthusiastic Scouts and a positive experience.

The camp merit badge counselors, including noncounselor guides and instructors, need thorough grounding on the purposes of merit badges. Sessions must be interesting, challenging, and fun. “Classes,” as such, should be avoided in favor of experiential learning, which provides for better retention than lecturing.

Camp merit badge counselors and their assistants will be operating in a group setting, which can offer opportunities for interactive discussions and group activities. But every Scout must actually and personally fulfill all the requirements. If a requirement says “show” or “demonstrate,” that is what every Scout must do.

The merit badge counselors and assistants must also understand the purpose of each requirement so they can counsel and coach each Scout to successful completion. An excellent example of this is Swimming merit badge requirement 5. It states that each Scout is to swim 150 yards, demonstrating strength and proper form in a specific set of swimming strokes. The counseling staff understands that this requirement isn’t so much about “endurance” as it is about providing a sufficient swim distance in which the Scout can demonstrate proficiency in each of the required strokes “in good form” and “in a strong manner.”

Merit badge counselors must also understand they can impart knowledge and skills “beyond the requirements” so long as, in the end, the Scout is expected to complete the requirements only as they are written.

Producing knowledgeable, skillful Scouts. There are no shortcuts, alternatives, or substitutes for completing all the requirements as written. The key is knowledgeable, caring, Scout-focused counseling. Every counselor needs a work plan for the time the Scouts will be in camp. Counselors may develop such plans under the supervision of the camp’s program director and camp director.

The work plans must consider the facilities, weather conditions, equipment available, and a host of other factors depending on the camp and local circumstances. Some Scouts may need extra help or support; others will sail through without a hitch. Some may become discouraged or have difficulty with a particular skill. Some may have minor or major learning disabilities. Others may have physical challenges that, while not debilitating, may require extra effort. Factors like these are why attention to each Scout as an individual is so critical to success.

Regardless of the challenges, only those who fulfill all the requirements are to be approved for merit badges. Those who are not able to complete the requirements, for whatever reason, are issued partials.

Oversight. A Scout camp program should be neither a laid-back experience nor a “merit badge factory.” The entire Scouting year has led up to it. Youth can use what they’ve already learned, and then learn more in a fun and challenging environment. Members of the council advancement committee will want to make the time to visit over the camp season to see how well the process is working and to consider enhancements for the future.

The four fundamental questions a council advancement committee will want to ask the camping committee, camp director, and program director at the end of the camp season are: (1) What worked as we’d planned? (2) What didn’t work? (3) What do we want to change or drop? (4) What do we want to add? This will help produce the finest summer camp merit badge program a council can offer and, through evaluation, help it continue to improve to attract and interest more Scouts.

Eagle Scout Issues
Proposal Approval Process Allows Quick-Response Eagle Projects

After recent tragedies caused by nature and by humans, there has been an outpouring of support for communities affected before, during, and afterward. A quick Google search provides pages and pages of links about packs and troops providing assistance, from fundraisers to clothing and food collections, providing warm meals, and helping set up a Red Cross shelter. Activities and projects such as those covered provide lessons for our Scouts in citizenship, character, and personal fitness. Boy Scouts giving service during and after a tragedy clearly demonstrates Scouts in action, and we applaud them all.
In the wake of such disasters, however, the question arises, “Can an Eagle Scout service project be put into place soon enough to make a difference?” The answer is a resounding “Yes!” Over the past few years, the National Council has revised the Eagle Scout service project process so it can be handled efficiently—especially in times of need. Prior to these changes, time-sensitive projects could likely have been held up in a final plan approval process until it was too late for them to be of help in times of urgent need.

Councils can be of service to all Eagle Scout candidates by fully implementing the new procedures for proposal approval as covered in the Guide to Advancement, topic 9.0.2.0, rather than the high level of detail reminiscent of the previous final plan. In reviewing projects that must be conducted within a short time to help victims of disasters and tragedies, districts and councils should fully support Scouts who want to make an immediate difference in their community. Where these procedures are properly implemented and the local volunteers have an understanding that a project is time-sensitive, it is possible for the selection of a project and beneficiary, the preparation of a proposal, and the approvals to all take place in a matter of a few weeks or even a few days.

Following the correct procedures for approval of Eagle Scout service projects places the responsibility for the final plan as a matter between the Scout and the beneficiary, while still ensuring the execution of reasonable projects that match BSA intent. Approval of a project that must be planned and conducted quickly in response to a tragedy is not just a possibility—it is achievable.

**Improved Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook Released**

The enhanced Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook has arrived! The new workbook was recently posted on the BSA website and provides added functionality for the Eagle Scout candidate. The candidate now has the ability to insert pictures (JPG/JPEG, GIF, TIF, and PNG formats) and add captions to these pictures. Expandable text boxes have also been included along with the ability to add rows to project phases, materials, supplies, tools, jobs, and hazards. Before you download the new workbook, however, be sure you have the most recent version of Adobe Acrobat reader. The new functionality may not work in older versions.

Please send your comments and suggestions on how we may further improve your Scout’s Eagle experience to advancement.team@scouting.org. Your recommendations may be included in a workbook revision planned for this spring.

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**The Eagle Scout Challenge**

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Often, troops present an Eagle Scout challenge as part of an Eagle Scout rank presentation packet. In some units, a verbal challenge is also offered as part of the ceremony, which might include lighting candles while a speaker reads each part of the text. There are a few versions of the challenge that have been used through the years. Here is one we have found.

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**Eagle Scout Challenge**

The foremost responsibility of an Eagle Scout is to live with **honor**. An Eagle Scout, honor is the foundation of all character. He knows that “A Scout is trustworthy” is the very first point of the Scout Law for a good reason. An Eagle Scout lives honorably, not only because honor is important to him but because of the vital significance of the example he sets for other Scouts. Living honorably reflects credit on his home, his place of worship, his troop, and his community. May the **white** of the Eagle badge remind you to always live with honor.

The second obligation of an Eagle Scout is loyalty. A Scout is true to his family, Scout leaders, friends, school, community, and nation. His **loyalty** to his troop and brother Scouts makes him pitch in and carry his share of the load. All of these help to build the loyalty that means devotion to community, to country, to one’s own ideals, and to God. Let the **blue** of the Eagle badge always inspire your loyalty.

The third obligation of an Eagle Scout is to be **courageous**. Courage has always been a quality by which people measure themselves and others. To a Scout, bravery means not only the courage to face danger, but also the determination to stand up for what is right. Trusting in God, with faith in his fellow citizens, he looks forward to each day, seeking his share of the world’s work to do. Let the red of the Eagle badge remind you always of courage.

The fourth obligation of an Eagle Scout is to be **cheerful**. To remind the Eagle Scout to always wear a smile, the **red, white, and blue** ribbon is attached to the scroll of the Second Class Scout rank, with its ends turned up as in a smile.

Another critical responsibility of an Eagle Scout is **service**. The Eagle Scout extends a helping hand to those who still toil up Scouting’s trail, just as others helped him in his climb. The performance of the daily Good Turn takes on a new meaning when he enters an adult life of continuing service to others. The Eagle stands as protector of the weak and helpless. He aids and comforts the unfortunate and the oppressed. He upholds the rights of others while defending his own. He will always “Be Prepared” to put forth his best.
You deserve tremendous credit for having achieved Scouting’s highest rank. But wear your award with humility, ever mindful that the Eagle Scout is looked up to as an example. May the Scout Oath and the Scout Law be your guides for tomorrow and into the future.

A suitable-for-printing rendition of this challenge may be found at: http://www.scouting.org/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/resources.aspx.

**Merit Badges—Enhancing Our Youths’ Competitive Edge**

**Involving the Community in Merit Badge Experiences**

Readers may notice the title for this feature in Advancement News is slightly different, reflecting the introduction from the Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force of a new slogan: “Enhancing our youths’ competitive edge through merit badges.” The purpose of the feature, however, will continue to be that of providing the latest information on new merit badges as well as updates to the current merit badge library.

The merit badge program affects individual Scouts for a lifetime and can extend beyond the individual, to families and communities. When the community is involved, such as in hosting a merit badge–related event, a wider audience can be involved, while offering a larger experience for each participant. It’s a win for everyone.

For example, a local bank may decide to host a Personal Management merit badge clinic for the Scouts in your town. This can turn into a great opportunity if promotion is also directed at and open to non-Scouts and information about local Scout units is made available. You never know, some boys may decide to join Scouting after a great learning experience—one they might not otherwise have been exposed to.

**Merit Badge Revisions—An Ongoing Process**

The merit badge library is growing all the time. Long-established badges are getting “face-lifts,” and new topics are being introduced at the fastest pace in our history. Soon Scouts will be exposed to mountain biking as an option within the Cycling merit badge; the Computers merit badge will expand to cover digital technologies; and Cooking—to be Eagle-required once again—will stress more than ever the importance of good nutrition and developing healthy eating habits.

There are also new merit badges in the works. Badges such as Programming, Game Design, and Sustainability—which will become an option to the Eagle-required Environmental Science merit badge later this year—will continue to meet the interests and concerns of today’s youth.

A national webinar recently conducted discussed all of these issues. If you would like to see the information provided, please feel free to download the PowerPoint presentation at www.scouting.org/Marketing/webinars/webinars_2012.aspx. It is found under the topic of “New Merit Badges.”

You are encouraged to write in with any concerns or comments dealing with any merit badge to merit.badge@scouting.org. You may also suggest topics for new badges at the same email address.

**Merit Badge Midway at Jamboree Needs You!**

The 2013 National Scout Jamboree will provide youth an opportunity to experience several new merit badges in the once-in-a-lifetime jamboree adventure. You can be a part of that adventure. You can be a part of the excitement by serving as a member of the national jamboree staff. You may be the person who opens the door to a Scout’s future.

- Game Design
- Chess
- Search and Rescue
- Welding
- Sustainability

Visit the 2013 National Scout Jamboree website for more information about registering for the national jamboree as a merit badge staff member. Go to https://summit.scouting.org/en/Jamboree2013/Pages/default.aspx.

Do it today—be a part of something great!
**Special Necessities**

**Registering Scouts With Special Needs**

Youth members with severe physical disabilities and youth and adults with developmental or cognitive challenges are able to be “registered beyond the age of eligibility” in the BSA. This allows them to work through the advancement program at a pace appropriate to their condition. The steps to do this are relatively easy, and you will find them outlined in section 10 of the *Guide to Advancement*.

A collaboration of parents, Scout leaders, and qualified health professionals can complete the information that is required to be submitted to the local council for approval. This team should have a good understanding of the Scout’s abilities/disabilities and how their ability to complete requirements for advancement by the age of 18 would be affected. The information submitted will help the council make a proper assessment, so preparers need to be sure to include as much as possible to help them make a fair decision.

Once approval is granted, the Scout executive or a designee will send a letter to the Scout’s parent or guardian, as well as to the unit leader or committee chair. A copy of this letter is then retained in the unit’s registration file for as long as this member remains registered.

It is suggested that any Scout who qualifies should be registered this way as soon as possible so they may begin working on advancement shortly after joining. The advancement program is challenging, but many members with disabilities have found ways to succeed. Providing them extra time to work on requirements and merit badges, when approved in advance, has proven to be very helpful for these youth.

**Cub Scout Angle**

**Presenting Advancement Recognition**

Generally speaking, a Cub Scout should advance one rank per year (after earning Bobcat, which all youth must earn). That rank is the one appropriate for his grade (or age) and does not involve going “back” to work on a previous rank that he may have missed.

In some packs, the badges of rank are presented at an annual blue and gold event, but that is not required. Some youth may earn the badge earlier in the year and should be recognized at that time. However, no youth should be recognized until he has fully completed his badge requirements—regardless of when the rest of his den has completed them.

Presentation of the earned rank is important, and the recognition ceremony for each one should be special and serve to inspire others to advance. Badges are awarded at a pack meeting or event, where the entire pack—including parents—can see and applaud the accomplishments. Packs should conduct a meaningful ceremony for each rank. A good source of ideas is *Ceremonies for Cub Scout Dens and Packs*, No. 33212, and possibly at your district roundtable.

**From the Field**

**Superstorm Sandy Leaves an Impression**

Our thoughts continue to be with those who are still recovering from Superstorm Sandy, which devastated many areas in the Northeast Region. As usual, Scouts mobilized to help those in need, and continue to help in many ways with donations, supplies, materials, and other resources. Many Scout camps were severely damaged, and Scouts were asked to help clean up. This is where this story from the field begins.

I am a den leader and my son is an active Bear Cub Scout. In order to continue to engage him and his large den, I have used the many advancement and other awards available. When my son was a Tiger Cub, our first family camp weekend was at a camp that, post-Sandy, required significant cleanup. So, when the camp asked, my son and I went to help. We spent the day moving brush piles, smaller logs, and similar things that a Bear Cub Scout can do.

When we got back to the car for the ride home, my son asked, “Do I get a badge for this?” Knowing what he meant and that many Cub Scout activities result in a reward, I said “No,” but that “we helped out to benefit all kids who use the camp like you.” He then replied, “You know helping others is better than any badge. Thanks, Dad.” It was at that point that I knew he got it . . . advancement is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and that helping others was the reason we were there.

—J.G. from New Jersey

**Hear It First on Twitter**

If you want the news first, follow the national Advancement Team on Twitter. Topics cover the FAQs received at the national office, clarifications on policies and procedures, news on changes, and best practices in advancement.

If you already have a Twitter account, follow us at @AdvBSA or BSA Advancement Team. If you don’t have an account, it’s time to take the plunge. It’s a quick and easy process to set one up at www.Twitter.com. To limit incoming emails (tweets), you can select the Advancement Team as the only account you want to follow.
What Do You Think?
Survey for February 2013

Advancement Educational Opportunities
The national Advancement Committee seeks your input regarding attendance and registration for national training opportunities in advancement. Completing the survey should take about eight minutes. Just click on the link below to begin. Thanks in advance for your time and feedback.
http://scouting.us.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3pl9eU1TQAR0Ed

From the Archives
Correction to June/July 2012 Advancement News
Topic 8.0.3.0 in the Guide to Advancement provides procedures for organizing and conducting the Eagle Scout board of review. The second bullet in that topic states “If conducted at the unit level, at least one district or council representative must serve as a member.” The June/July 2012 Advancement News article outlining the Eagle Scout board of review procedures stated “At least one member of an Eagle Scout board of review must be a representative of the district or council advancement committee.” The two statements are close in wording but have different meanings. Advancement News regrets this error and reminds all Scouters that the policy and procedures in the Guide to Advancement will always take precedence, that is, unless the News specifically states that what is written in an article represents a change to the Guide to Advancement.

A Peek Ahead
Here is a glimpse of what we are working on for the next issue of Advancement News, which will be released in March. As always, actual content may vary somewhat based on a number of considerations, especially to accommodate “late-breaking news” of immediate importance to our subscribers.

Topics Planned for March

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators: Review of Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling; Philmont Training Center Opportunities
On Increasing Advancement: Parent Orientations
Cub Scout Angle: STEM and Cub Scout Advancement
Advancement Committee Mechanics: Organization of the Advancement Committee
From the Guide to Advancement: Managing Risk in Eagle Scout Service Projects

What Do You Think?: Merit Badge Processes

Managing Subscriptions to Advancement News
This issue of Advancement News has been distributed through a commercial service, which saves Scouting dollars. You may subscribe or unsubscribe, etc., as indicated on the cover email message from Constant Contact, or you may follow the instructions below.

Advancement News is designed for council and district advancement chairs, advancement staff advisors, and Eagle processors. However, any Scouting volunteer or professional may subscribe.

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