

Advancement News

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Previous issues available at: www.scouting.org/scoutsource/GuideToAdvancement/Advancement_News.aspx

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Two Opportunities at Philmont: June 10–16 and July 29–August 4

The Mechanics of Advancement courses at the Philmont Training Center in June and July represent the premier opportunity for advancement training where the whole family can be involved. Visit www.philmonttrainingcenter.org to learn more.

Registration is first-come, first-served, and space is limited. To register, go to www.myscouting.org and choose the “Events Registration” tab. The courses begin with check-in at Philmont on Sunday afternoon, June 10 or July 29, 2012, and conclude on Saturday after breakfast. Housing is in large, two-person wall tents with wooden or concrete floors, electric lights, an electrical outlet, wardrobe, and two twin-sized beds with mattresses. Each “tent city” has restrooms, hot showers, and family shower houses. Cots and cribs are available. Wednesday afternoon is devoted to free time to enjoy local attractions. The \$495 course fee includes meals, dormitory housing, sheets, towels, and course materials. There are additional fees for spouses and family members, depending on the activities in which they choose to participate.

Course Description: The Mechanics of Advancement

Advancement is a key indicator of a successful unit. Learn how to enhance the program for your Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Venturers, and Sea Scouts by increasing your knowledge of the BSA’s procedures governing advancement. This conference—designed for unit, district, and council-level volunteers and professional Scouters—will connect participants to the essentials of advancement, steer them toward a wealth of advancement resources available on www.scouting.org, and engage them through group discussions on effective ways to resolve advancement issues and challenges. The new *Guide to Advancement* and revised *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook* will be featured and covered in detail.

Advancement Team Now on Twitter

The national Advancement Team is now on Twitter to send short messages to those interested. Topics will cover the FAQs received at the national office, clarifications on policies and procedures, and best practices in advancement.

If you already have a Twitter account, follow us “@AdvBSA” or “BSA Advancement Team.” If you don’t, it’s quick and easy to set one up at www.Twitter.com. To limit incoming emails, you can select the Advancement Team as the only account you want to follow.

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On Increasing Advancement

Inspirational Ceremonies—Recognition and Inspiration

A lack of advancement in some units may be due to a lack of inspiration. It might be because unit leadership is not making the big fuss over their achievements that the Scouts would like to see. Ceremonies and courts of honor give units an opportunity to recognize the achievers and at the same time inspire even more accomplishment from the others.

Mike Huneke, a Baltimore Area Council Eagle Scout, sings a beautiful ballad, "The Eagle on His Chest." In the first part, he tells of a Scout receiving his Eagle Scout Award. In the second part, he tells of the younger Scouts inspired by watching the older boy's court of honor.

His plans are already made.
Someday he will stand upon a stage.
And with his mother and father by his side,
He'll take an oath with pride,
Say the words just like the rest,
And then they'll pin an Eagle on his chest.

And all the boys will watch them call his name,
And to them, he will never be the same.
His words will inspire;
Fill them with desire.
A hero stands before the rest
Because he wears an Eagle on his chest.

Michael J. Huneke, *Broad Creek Memories*, 2003; produced by Blue Jay Productions Inc. Quoted with permission.

This song poetically illustrates the dual value of courts of honor and ceremonies in our advancement program. The Scout who is advancing is recognized for his achievements and receives the positive reinforcement that can increase his Scouting activity and help retain him in the troop. Then units can build traditions around these ceremonies so they serve as antecedents to further advancement by the youth who witness them. Awards ceremonies and courts of honor are also opportunities for presenters to challenge all the others to advance. Leaders need to be explicit when this is done. It isn't a time for subtlety.

Furthermore, the myth that awards can be presented only once is simply unfounded. For instance, in Cub Scouting, the den chief can review everyone's advancement and mark it on a wall chart as a part of each den meeting. The award then can be presented in a ceremony that is part of each pack meeting. The boy may be recognized once again at the annual blue and gold banquet.

In Boy Scouting, achievement in a rank advancement or merit badge can be recognized at the meeting where he submits his approved blue card or passes his board of review. The next meeting should have a ceremony where he receives the badge. At the quarterly court of honor his accomplishments are recognized again with an inspirational ceremony. Recognitions also can be made at parents' night at camp, at religious services during Scouting Anniversary week, and so forth.

Advancement recognition in Venturing and Sea Scouts should be handled in the same way, with members recognized at the meeting where they earn an award or pass a crew review, for example. Then they can be recognized more formally at a special gathering or at a bridge of honor in Sea Scouts.

Courts of honor and ceremonies show how we value youth achievements. They inspire everyone to actively advance. They help bind our youth members to active participation in the programs. The positive reinforcement, thus delivered, increases their tenure and provides us with a greater opportunity to develop their character and boost their confidence. Isn't this what we're all about?

About Advancement News

Follow the national Advancement Team on Twitter!

BSA Advancement Team, @AdvBSA

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America national Advancement Team and the national Advancement Committee. Its intent is to support and clarify procedures found in the *Guide to Advancement*, announce various changes and updates in advancement, and to assist advancement committees in making decisions that can help increase the rate of advancement. The plan is to distribute *Advancement News* monthly, but we're flexible. It will go out when there is something important to say. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at advancement.team@scouting.org. Districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication.

Managing Subscriptions to *Advancement News*

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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The Cub Scout Angle

Arrow of Light, Last Stop Before Boy Scouts



The Webelos badge and Arrow of Light Award prepare Webelos Scouts for their adventures in Boy Scouting. Boys earning these awards will have completed most of the Boy Scout joining (Scout badge) and Tenderfoot requirements. This gives them a head start over new Scouts who did not participate in Cub Scouting or who did not achieve the Arrow of Light Award.

It has been well documented that achieving First Class within a year of joining, and then attending summer camp soon after, helps keep youth in the program and on the advancement trail.

A comparison of requirements for these Cub Scout recognitions and the requirements in Boy Scouting shows that nearly half of the joining requirements and Tenderfoot requirements are covered while working on the Webelos badge and Arrow of Light Award. Most of the other requirements are included in the Athlete and Naturalist activity badges and in optional parts of the Outdoorsman activity badge. A wise Webelos den leader will encourage the completion of these badges.

It is important to note that though work done as a Webelos Scout encompasses many Boy Scout requirements, this does not necessarily mean these requirements are automatically signed off upon joining a troop. The four steps in Boy Scout advancement still apply (see the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 4.2.1.0). It may be, however, that the first step, “the Scout learns,” has already occurred. But “testing” should still take place—even for the Scout badge joining requirements.

District and council advancement chairs and committee members can assist Webelos den leaders in understanding the importance of looking at the Boy Scout rank requirements as well as the Webelos badge and Arrow of Light requirements. Consider covering this at Cub Scout roundtables and pow wows, universities of Scouting, or similar events. A jump start on any advancement trail is an effective encouragement for Scouts.

Advancement Committee Mechanics

Increasing Advancement Committee Size

Increasing the size and function of council and district advancement committees will reap benefits to both adults and our youth members. Successful committees are making the effort to find additional interested and engaged members. The November 2011 issue of *Advancement News* suggested looking, generally, at units as the source of new people. Here are a few more specific approaches to identifying the individuals who may be invited to serve.

The first question is, “Where do you look?”

1. Look for retiring Cubmasters, Scoutmasters, and unit committee chairs. They have seen the benefits of advancement and understand the process from a unit perspective.
2. Check training attendance lists and rosters from the district. These are people who have been trained in the program and may be ready for district or council involvement. If they remain active in their units, their contribution can be scaled down to what they can handle, and you will have the advantage of the perspectives from their current positions.
3. Approach helpers at Cub Scout day camp, camporees, and other district functions. These are all individuals with a demonstrated interest in the Scouting program.
4. Use your BSA resources. Your council may provide a link to a local list of BSA alumni who were gathered during the 100th Anniversary Celebration, for example, or who recently have joined a Scouting alumni group. Your council also can help you check its Eagle Scout registry.

Once you have identified the prospects to approach, recruit with a personal touch. Be prepared with specifics on what you want them to do. Don’t forget to provide thoughts on how you think they are suited for specific tasks. Talk to them in person or in a personal phone call. For busy people, it’s very easy to say “No” to an email.

Consider inviting volunteers for help with one event or activity. Start them out slowly. That activity may be a district Eagle board of review or assistance with a section at an advancement training session. Once they have been successful, approach them soon with the next opportunity. It is this sort of constant attention to cultivating new members that will help your committee thrive, grow, and succeed.

From the Guide to Advancement

The *Guide to Advancement* is now available in an indexed online version, in addition to the downloadable PDF copy. For the web version, go to www.scouting.org/scoutsource/GuideToAdvancement.aspx.

For the PDF, go to <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/resources.aspx>. Note that the *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook*, the Eagle Scout Rank Application, and many other resources also can be found there.

Meaningful District Merit Badge Counselor List, Part 1

To best support an active functioning merit badge program, the first step is to create a comprehensive, meaningful, and up-to-date district merit badge counselor list.

If you want to provide a quality merit badge experience for Scouts, the idea is not to have the Scoutmasters or their assistants counsel for every badge. The goal should be to establish a list with counselors for every badge—to offer the “complete” Scouting program in your service area. Thus, if any of your troops, teams, patrols, or individual Scouts want to work on a particular badge, they have the opportunity to learn from someone with the specific skills and education related to the subject matter. You get the idea. Start with a goal.

One way to reach that goal is to include every merit badge on your merit badge counselor form. Volunteers can use this form to indicate whether they want to help any Scout in the district, or to counsel only those associated with a specific unit. This need not be a long form—it should take only a minute or two to complete. On the form, give the prospective counselor the additional option to simply volunteer as a “guest speaker.”

A guest speaker is someone who is willing to attend a troop meeting where another registered merit badge counselor is present to share his or her expertise with the Scouts. Serving as a guest speaker is an opportunity for a fun experience and the sharing of a passion with the next generation. This gives new volunteers a way to quickly involve themselves. After they have gotten their feet wet and are comfortable with the program—and you are comfortable with them—they may want to register as full-fledged counselors and take Youth Protection training.

Remember, in the capacity as a guest speaker they are not merit badge counselors, and a merit badge counselor must be there to sign for completion and ensure that BSA Youth Protection policies are followed. For more information see topic 7.0.1.3 in the *Guide to Advancement*. Presentations by guest speakers at unit meetings are a wonderful addition to our program. The Scouts have a higher-quality experience working with diverse individuals who are genuinely knowledgeable and passionate about their topics.

In part 2, we will concentrate on recruiting volunteers to fill your merit badge counselor list.

Eagle Issues

Eagle Scout Service Project Coaches

Over the years, units, districts, and councils have had various volunteers fulfill the role of an Eagle Scout service project coach; though they may have used other titles such as advisor, mentor, tutor, counselor, advocate, and so forth. The *Guide to Advancement* “institutionalizes” the project coach’s role to provide encouragement and support, while helping the Scout understand the requirements and expectations for successfully completing his project. The coach, however, is not the project manager, and he or she uses the Boy Scouting program method of positive adult association, not authority, to help the candidate make wise decisions.

It is highly recommended that every Eagle Scout candidate have a coach. More than likely this is the first time that a Scout has attempted a project as involved as the Eagle Scout service project. Some may be fully capable of proceeding on their own without the benefit of a coach, but most will find the advice and counsel useful and educational.

The optimal time for providing the coach is when the proposal is approved. At that point a Scout can be advised that in a few days he will receive a telephone call from an adult who has agreed to assist him. Since the Eagle Scout candidate has promised that he read the entire *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook*, we may assume he understands he isn’t required to work with the coach if he doesn’t want to. Once a Scout receives approval for his project proposal he is certainly allowed to strike out on his own without coaching, but it behooves us to do what we can to help him make the right decision in this regard.

The council decides who may serve as project coaches and how they are selected or provided to the individual Eagle Scout candidates. Criteria to consider include the ability to work with youth, knowledge and understanding of the requirements and expectations for an Eagle Scout service project, and knowledge and experience with the applicable provisions of the *Guide to Advancement*. But in all cases the coach must be a registered member of the BSA (in any position) and have a current BSA Youth Protection certification.

Note that the Eagle Scout service project coach's most important responsibility is to help Scouts create a final project plan that will lead to a successful project. Consult topic 9.0.2.0 of the *Guide to Advancement* for more information.

What's the Procedure?

Unit-Level Boards of Review

A board of review, or bridge of review for Sea Scouts, held at any level, should be an experience to treasure for both the Scout and the board members. It is there where the sum of a Scout's efforts to date is brought into focus, along with his feelings about the meaning of the lessons learned, and his expectations for the future. The atmosphere should be relaxed, supportive, and friendly. Boards of review for Tenderfoot through Life, and Eagle Palms, are conducted by the unit, while Eagle Scout boards may be held at the unit, district, or council level, depending on the procedures determined by the council advancement committee.

When a Scout believes he has completed the requirements for any rank or Eagle Palm, it is up to the unit leader and committee to assure a board of review is held. A Scout cannot be denied this opportunity (see *Guide to Advancement*, topic 8.0.0.2). The board must consist of three to six members, none of whom can be the unit leader, or parent or guardian, of the Scout (8.0.0.3). It is preferred the candidate appear in full field uniform, but if this is impractical for whatever reason, he should be clean and neat in his appearance and dressed appropriately according to his means. He may not be rejected solely for reasons related to uniforming, as long as he is dressed according to *Guide to Advancement* topic 8.0.0.4.

The unit leader may introduce the candidate and may remain in the room, but only to observe, not participate, unless called upon. Similarly, parents and guardians may not be in attendance in any capacity except in rare circumstances (8.0.1.0).

A board of review is not a retest or an "examination." Rather, questions should be designed to reveal the broader experience of learning, and how Scouting has helped the candidate live the Scout Oath and Scout Law in his daily life (8.0.1.1–8.0.1.2). Careful attention to a Scout's answers can help provide valuable insight into the successes or shortcomings of the unit's program (8.0.1.3). Then members of the board must agree unanimously to approve awarding a rank or Palm (8.0.1.4). If there is not a unanimous vote for approval, the Scout is informed of the reason, instructed in the appeal process, and if there is time before his 18th birthday, told what he can do to improve (8.0.1.5 and 8.0.4.0).

Finally, though we are looking to ensure that a Scout did truly do what he was supposed to do, we should be concerned also with the quality of the journey. The unit board of review should be subtly probing to see if the unit's program and direction has met the Scout's expectations, encouraging him to go on to the next rank or Palm, and trying to see if he really understands how to apply the Scout Law and Scout Oath to his life.

For more information on boards of review, see the *Guide to Advancement*, section 8, and for Sea Scout bridges of review, see section 4, topics 4.4.2.0–4.4.2.8. Watch for future articles on thoughts about holding district and council boards of review.

Venturing Perspective

Venturing Bronze Substitutions

Of the five Venturing Bronze awards, three—Arts and Hobbies, Sports, and Religious Life—include the statement "Activities or projects that are more available in your area may be substituted with your Advisor's approval for activities shown above." The Outdoor and Sea Scout Bronze awards do not include this option.

Topic 4.3.1.1.1 in the *Guide to Advancement* states, "Venturing is dynamic with built-in flexibility at many levels," and acknowledges limited substitutions for Bronze Award requirements. Venturing leaders are referred to the *Venturer/Ranger Handbook*, No. 33494, and the *Venturing Leader Manual*, No. 34655, for more details. Neither the requirements nor the *Guide to Advancement* specify a process for the substitutions. Instead, the language stipulates the decision-making authority rests with the Advisor.

This is confirmed in topic 10.2.3.2, "Working Toward Venturing Awards," where the crew Advisor's authority to make adjustments is again referenced. Substitutions

should be approved in advance, and then Venturers may carry out the requirements for the Advisor to sign off upon completion. For Bronze awards there is no additional review or approval.

What requirements may need substitution? They might be minor in nature. The Religious Life Bronze Award, for example, includes requirements such as serving as a Sunday school teacher or assistant, serving in a youth group leadership role, and meeting with his religious leader. Some Venturers may worship in a setting that does not facilitate these requirements as written. A possible substitution might include service in a different capacity, or meeting with some other representative of the Venturer's faith beliefs.

Substitutions also might enable a crew to explore its specific interests as part of Arts and Hobbies. The website Central Region Venturing provides a number of program-driven substitutions at http://crventuring.org/Links/Arts_and_Hobbies_Links/. These include examples for aviation, music, sailing, theater, fine arts, and computers, among others. Reviewing these examples demonstrates both the careful thought put into crafting alternative requirements, as well as the diverse interests the Venturing Bronze Award can serve.

Merit Badges—What's New?

Kayaking Merit Badge Release Scheduled for May

Next month, the Kayaking merit badge is scheduled for release. At that time the requirements will be available online and the pamphlet will be distributed to Scout shops everywhere.



As many council camps are planning to include kayaking in their summer program, it is appropriate that troops identify boys who will want to earn the merit badge. When the pamphlet is available next month, it may help to review the requirements and have an informational session with interested Scouts and parents or guardians to identify the planning and other preparation helpful in advance of the camp experience.

Will your council be offering the Kayaking merit badge at camp? Council camp directors and program directors currently have access to the critical information needed for preplanning. Check today to see if your camp is anticipating offering this exciting newest merit badge. Then prepare your Scouts for a great new merit badge adventure.

Be Prepared—The next new merit badge to be released will be Search and Rescue.

Merit Badge Feedback Welcome

Scouts learn best through the patrol method. They learn how to lead and develop a sense of "ownership" in our boy-run program. It is our intention for Scouts to feel the same sense of ownership with our merit badges. What they think truly matters. Scouts (and their merit badge counselors) are encouraged to share their successes and suggestions by sending comments to merit.badge@scouting.org.

What Do You Think?

Survey for April 2012

Advancement Literature and Resources

This month's survey seeks your input regarding BSA advancement literature and other resources available online and in print. The national Advancement Committee is undertaking a review of these resources and would like your opinions as we consider improving, modifying, or deleting them. The estimated time to complete this survey is approximately seven minutes.

Note that anonymous responses are not accepted for this survey. This is because of the importance the national Advancement Team places on the ability to communicate with survey respondents should more information be needed about their answers. Please click on the link below. We want to know what you think!

<https://bsa2.allegiancetech.com/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=KN79BX>

A Peek Ahead

Watch this regular feature for a glimpse of what is slated for our next issue. Please understand, however, that the actual articles may vary somewhat based on a number of internal considerations.

Topics Planned for May

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators:

Last chance for the June Philmont session

On Increasing Advancement: Exploring advancement committee responsibilities in supporting outdoor programs

The Cub Scout Angle: What is the "end of the year" for Cub Scout advancement?

Advancement Committee Mechanics: First article in a series detailing the jobs of suggested advancement committee members

From the *Guide to Advancement*: Meaningful District Merit Badge Counselor List (Part 2): Recruiting merit badge counselors

Eagle Issues: Eagle Scout service project fundraising

What's the Procedure? Boards of review from the district and council perspective

Special Necessities: New form for approving alternative merit badges for the Eagle Scout rank

What Do You Think? Examining how to fulfill the need for education in BSA advancement