

Advancement News

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Prepared. For Life.™

About Advancement News

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 it 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.

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Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Learn More About the *Guide to Advancement* (And spend a week at Philmont Scout Ranch, June 10–16 OR July 29–Aug. 4, 2012; see course description, next page)

The Philmont Training Center is nestled in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northeastern New Mexico, near Cimarron. Rich in history and natural beauty, Philmont offers exciting educational experiences for the entire family. PTC has served as the national training center of the Boy Scouts of America since 1950. In addition to hosting educational conferences, the training center also provides opportunities for families to join their Scouters and enjoy a wide range of family programs, making the PTC experience one of a kind. Spouses and youth have the opportunity to participate in hikes, tours, handcrafts, and other outdoor activities.

Space is limited, and registration is first-come, first-served. To register, go to www.myscouting.org, and choose the "Events Registration" tab. The courses begin with check-in Sunday afternoon, June 10 or July 29, 2012, and conclude 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.

To learn more about the advancement seminar or other PTC conferences and the family programs, please visit www.philmonttrainingcenter.org.

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.

On Increasing Advancement

Occasionally we run across material written by council volunteers that does more to explain the Boy Scouts of America's advancement program than any of us at the national level have been able to create. From time to time we will run articles prepared by these gifted supporters who are more closely connected with the Scouts, and their parents and leaders, than the writers and editors for *Advancement News*. The following article is by Darnall Daley, who, at the time he wrote it, was council commissioner for the Hawk Mountain Council in Pennsylvania.

Guardian of the Gate

By F. Darnall Daley Jr.*

Some of you appear to be standing guard at the gate. Like good guards you are not letting anyone pass who does not have the correct password. When someone appears at the gate who does not have the correct password, you send them away. The treasure that you believe you are guarding is the SACRED ADVANCEMENT REQUIREMENTS. You believe that you must guard the gate to make sure that no boy advances who has not only met the requirements but who has not met the requirements 110%. Your watchword is, "We've gotten soft on the Boy Scout advancement."

The problem is that you have gotten your orders wrong. You are guarding the wrong side of the gate. The treasure is not behind the gate but in front of it. The treasure is the character of the boys in our care. Your duty is not to prevent boys from passing through but to make sure as many boys as possible **do** pass through.

Advancement is a method, a tool if you will, that we use in Scouting. It is not an end in itself. The purpose of the advancement system is to build a boy's confidence and self-esteem. A boy learns something new, he is tested in that skill, he is reviewed, and he is given advancement. Whenever possible the test should be a natural part of the unit's program. For example, if the requirement is to cook a meal, the test should come when it's time to eat at a regular unit outing. Remember that we are not authorized to either add to or subtract from any requirement. The review is to be a reflection on a boy's experience in Scouting, not a retest. The advancement recognition must come as soon after the review as possible.

Some of you may have heard that advancement recognition can only be received once. I assure you that is not true. Recognition can be made many times and as often as possible. Advancement is to be positive reinforcement for a boy's achievements. If done properly it will encourage a boy toward even more advancement and toward greater confidence in himself.

So get out in front of the gate where lies the treasure. Guard it no more. Become an advocate for our Scouts and provide the leadership that will help them through the gate. The world will be a better place tomorrow.

*Used with permission. Reprinted from *The Commissioner's Corner: A Collection of Inspiring Essays*, ©2007 by F. Darnall Daley Jr. Mr. Daley currently serves as the advancement chair for Area 6 of the Northeast Region. To order a copy of his book, visit www.DarnallDaley.com.

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The Cub Scout Angle

Who Is Akela?

And What Role Do Parents Play in Cub Scout Advancement?

Akela is a character in Rudyard Kipling's stories, *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), that were turned into animated films by Disney (*The Jungle Book* in 1967 and *The Jungle Book 2* in 2003). In the stories and animated films, Akela (pronounced Ah-KAY-la) is the leader of the pack of wolves and presides over the pack's council meetings. In Cub Scouts, Akela is a title of respect used for a Cub Scout leader and, in many cases, the Cub Scout's parent.

As a youth begins in Cub Scouting, parents (or adult partners) should act as Akela and sign off in the boy's handbook for the Bobcat trail and Tiger Cub achievements. The den leader then approves as progress is recorded in the den's advancement record. This is done for two reasons: to foster a sense of involvement and participation among parents of Cub Scouts, and to have the youngest Cub Scouts work early on with a parent or trusted adult partner. Advancement becomes a learning process between the parent and child. Cub Scouting cannot be a "drop off" activity when parents serve in this role.

As a Cub Scout matures, for Wolf, Bear, Webelos and Arrow of Light advancement, den leaders take the lead in approving requirements. Their assistants and also parents who help at meetings may be asked to play the role of Akela. Parents may be asked to lead den meetings based on the skills and hobbies that interest them, and on the requirements needed for rank advancement. This is all outlined in the meeting plans in the *Den & Pack Meeting Resource Guide*, No. 34409. In addition, parents sign for requirements that, according to meeting plans and instructions in the handbooks, take place at home.

This change in the role for Cub Scout parents allows them to take greater roles in the pack by serving as assistant den leaders, pack committee members, or in other positions, and thus they assist in building advancement opportunities into unit programming.

Advancement Committee Mechanics

Sources for the Recruitment of District Advancement Committee Members

In the October and November issues of *Advancement News*, we presented articles on how the membership of a council or district advancement committee might look. These articles discussed the needs for large "healthy" committees and even suggested a 12-person (minimum) membership list for a council advancement committee. A reference to topics 3.0.0.0–3.0.0.4 in the *Guide to Advancement* was also cited to help readers further learn about establishing these committees. But what about makeup of the district advancement committee, and how might you go about recruiting the diversity of volunteers for the team?

The question then arises, "Where do districts look to recruit the array of talent needed for their advancement committee?" The first place to start the search would be where advancement is successfully occurring: in the units with the highest rates of advancement. Those monthly advancement reports from the council advancement committee will really help. If districts were to rank their packs and troops by advancement earned per Scout, they might identify not only where to find "best practices" ideas but also identify the outstanding unit volunteers who make this happen and who might also be a good fit for a district committee assignment.

Another tip is to monitor the record of Tour Plans filed with the council. A little research here will point out those units with above-average programs that have calendars filled with high adventure treks, a high level of participation at council events, etc. This undoubtedly leads to higher advancement numbers. These units may be a source of quality advancement committee prospects.

Outside of the unit there are a number of other resources for advancement committee recruitment. Savvy roundtable commissioners and unit commissioners can always have an eye out for and an ear tuned in for that undiscovered assistant Scoutmaster or den leader who exhibits a talent for the advancement process and mission. Veteran Eagle Scouts, merit badge counselors who express an interest in doing more, and former summer camp staffers all are good prospects. Utilizing the approach outlined in *Friendstorming On Tour*, No. 510-003, has been proven to be effective, as well. And finally, parents. Don't forget the parents. Many just have to be asked to help.

From the Guide to Advancement

First Class in a Year, Star in Two

It has been established time and again, that the more Scouts advance, the longer they stay. And the longer they stay, the greater our impact. For this reason, the new *Guide to Advancement* in topic 3.0.0.3, "Unit Advancement Responsibilities," challenges troops to "Establish practices that will bring each new Boy Scout to First Class rank within a year of joining, and then to Star rank the following year." Then in topic 4.2.1.0, "Four Steps in Scout Advancement," it says, "A Scout advances from Tenderfoot to Eagle by doing things with his patrol and troop, with his leaders, and on his own. Well-delivered programming will take boys to First Class in their first year of membership." It explains that advancement is a simple matter when integrated with a troop's program.

In other words, troop leaders—youth and adult—who plan activities with an eye toward the potential for advancement are going to see Scouts advance more rapidly. As a result, units will see an increase in the tenure of their membership. This is not to say that every activity is an "advancement mill" solely for the purpose of advancement. But we're all about fun learning experiences, right? So why not plan fun learning experiences that also contribute to advancement? With this approach, taking kids to First Class in a year is a reasonable and not uncommon accomplishment.

Star rank by the second year is possible as well. Many Scouts will earn a few merit badges at summer camp during their first year, so they will have already progressed. It then becomes a matter of planning for positions of responsibility, putting Scouts together with merit badge counselors, and encouraging boys toward a productive second year of summer camp.

It is important to note that though the *Guide to Advancement* lists the establishment of practices that will bring each new Boy Scout to First Class within a year, it also states that the list of committee responsibilities "is not all-inclusive, but typical." These are not required tasks, but rather a set of recommended practices that have been assembled from suggestions presented by volunteers from across the country. In so far as they are used, these practices will likely lead to the efficient and effective administration of advancement and an increase in the number of youth who earn ranks, and thus extend their involvement in the Boy Scouts of America.

Mandated Procedures and Recommended Practices

The new *Guide to Advancement* clearly identifies mandated procedures with words such as "must" and "shall." Where such language is used, no council, committee, district, unit, or individual has the authority to deviate from the procedures covered without the written permission of the national Advancement Team. Recommended best practices are offered using words like "should," while other options and guidelines are indicated with terms such as "may" or "can."

An example of the use of "should" appears in section 9, "The Eagle Scout Rank," under topic 9.0.1.5, "Submit to Council Service Center":

If possible, everything [the Eagle Scout Rank Application and attachments] should be hand-delivered. Otherwise it should be sent by registered or certified mail.

Since "should" is used in both sentences, this method of submitting the application is a recommended practice; it is not mandatory. If a council is willing to accept faxed or scanned documents, it may do so.

Eagle Issues

Current Records Prevents Future Issues

The importance of retaining membership and advancement records is confirmed every time the Eagle Issues Task Force is presented with a case where a former member who completed his Eagle requirements long ago never received his credentials. The task force must examine the evidence and determine whether he can be presented his award. Unfortunately, many have not kept the records necessary to prove their cases.

Retaining accurate records is everyone's responsibility. As a Scout completes the requirements for his next badge, his unit should keep records of his progress. Scouts, too, should be encouraged to maintain evidence of their accomplishments. They will need it if they later seek to replace a badge or certificate of rank.

Today's key to retaining good advancement records lies not in a wall chart displayed in the meeting room, but accurate and prompt reporting of all advancements to the council service center. The Internet Advancement system is the mechanized method used by the BSA to track all advancements. It allows a unit representative to enter advancement awards, print advancement reports, and verify rosters. These features aid in documenting a member's eligibility for the next rank or award as well

as provide a document acceptable for transferring from one unit to another. In all cases, a printed Advancement Report must be presented to your Scout shop before any advancement insignia can be purchased.

To learn more, consult the *Guide to Advancement*.

Merit Badges—What's New?

New Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force Reviews 40 Merit Badge Pamphlets

In just a few short months, the Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force has reviewed approximately one-third of the entire merit badge library. All merit badges are divided into six groups, each lead by a volunteer member of the task force. The review process can be quite extensive. In the long run, it will result in a more comprehensive, interesting, and fun merit badge experience for our Scouts.

Each badge is examined by experts in that field, most of whom are Scouting volunteers, and their comments and suggestions are discussed with their group leader. Often expertise from other national teams or task forces is sought. This is especially important where risk-related safety issues must be resolved, or where we have internal subject matter experts, such as those on the BSA Aquatics Task Force. The process helps assure both requirements and content remain consistent with all of the programs and ideals of Scouting.

When group leaders are satisfied with the updates, they prepare summaries for each pamphlet and report on them during the monthly Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force teleconferences. The task force leadership team takes one final look at each pamphlet before updates are submitted to the national Advancement Committee for approval. In some cases, where changes to essential content or to the original purpose or intent of the merit badge becomes necessary, the task force or the Advancement Committee may call upon the Research and Program Innovation Department at the national office or the national Program Content Committee to process the revision. In either case, once approved, updated pamphlets are forwarded to the BSA Media Studio publishers for final editing before going into production.

The Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force is committed to keeping the information in the merit badge pamphlet library current, relevant, and helpful to Scouts so they can earn more merit badges. All this, while having a great time.

What's the Procedure?

Addressing Positions of Responsibility

When a youth is appointed or elected to a position of responsibility, the unit should provide him with guidance as to what is expected so there will be a strong chance for success. This may be done in a variety of ways—for example, using position descriptions found in adult leader and or youth handbooks or those already designed by the unit, or providing assistance and coaching from a unit adult to help Scouts develop their own descriptions that provide reasonable challenges. A unit may also allow Scouts to do this without any help. In any of these scenarios if the youth makes a reasonable effort to fulfill the duties described, the requirement should be considered fulfilled. If unit leadership, however, provides very little or no guidance, it is inappropriate to surprise the youth after six months, for example, that he has not completed his position of responsibility requirement. This practice does not help youth grow and produces conflict in the unit.

To avoid this situation, *Guide to Advancement* topic 4.2.3.4.4 also specifically addresses the issue of "Meeting the Requirements in the Absence of Unit Expectations." There are valid reasons why many units may choose not to have pre-existing written position descriptions that Scouts must meet. There is, however, an expectation that adult leaders will work with boys to help them to succeed. The topic referenced above says, "...AN adult leader [thus not necessarily THE adult unit leader], or the Scout, or both, work out the responsibilities to fulfill." The key is that in some way responsibilities are determined ahead of time, either by the Scout on his own or with help from an assistant Scoutmaster, for example.

Remember, the youth must actually do *something* and should be held accountable if expectations are established and coaching provided, but still little or nothing occurs. This is clearly defined in topic 4.2.3.4.5. However, the failure of unit leadership to clarify, assist, and support cannot be held against a boy who did what he was left to assume was OK to do!

Consult the *Guide to Advancement*, section 4, topics 4.2.3.4–4.2.3.4.6, for further detail and clarification.

Special Necessities

Guidance for Eagle Scout Boards of Review for Scouts With Developmental Disabilities

Scouts with special needs have usually worked hard to meet the requirements that enable them to sit for an Eagle Scout board of review. It is critically important that we do all we can to make the experience a positive one—just as we would for any Scout.

Advancement is an individual experience, and all Eagle Scout candidates are expected to meet the stated requirements. However, in so far as we want Scouts with special needs to meet all of the requirements, we can and should exercise some level of responsible flexibility when it comes to evaluating performance, as provided for in section 10 of the *Guide to Advancement*.

For young men with developmental disabilities, for example, it is permissible to allow the parents and unit leader to take a different role in the board of review. They know this Scout the best, and they can help by prompting him, and they can assist the board by rephrasing questions so the candidate can better understand and respond. They can also bear witness to his work on requirements and his Scout spirit.

It would also be wise for an Eagle board of review chair to reach out in advance to the unit and the Scout's parents or caregiver. The more that can be done to learn about the candidate and his abilities, the easier it will be to create a positive, meaningful, and memorable experience.

This sort of approach, and the avoidance of "one size fits all" boards of review, can result in not only a productive outcome for the Scout, but in an incredible experience for the review board members, unit leadership, and parents. It can leave them recharged and energized, and renew the dedication and devotion that our service involving Scouts with special needs almost always brings.

What Do You Think?

Survey for February 2012

Initial Evaluation of the *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook*

This month's survey seeks an initial evaluation of the content of the new *Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook*. The national Advancement Team understands there are a number of weaknesses in the electronic format for the online fillable pdf version, but rather than investing resources in addressing them, we are working with the Information Delivery Group at the BSA national office to create an entirely new interactive workbook that should provide significantly improved functionality. Thus at this time, we would like your thoughts on content only.

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=YD5V2G>