Opportunities for Advancement Administrators

Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators at Sea Base

Next January, when it is cold and snowy in many parts of the country, the Florida National High Adventure Sea Base will host the Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators. Scheduled for January 21–26, the CEAA will be the first-ever attempt at providing a forum where experienced council and district advancement volunteers and professionals can come together to review and evaluate the new educational materials produced this year by the national Advancement Committee. Participants will also learn about the most recent changes and updates to advancement procedures and take home copies of the new materials. The week will close with conference attendees assisting in the first stages of creating a number of new presentations that will be released later in the year.

Registration information can be found at www.Scouting.org/training/adult.aspx. Applications are now being accepted, so be sure to secure your spot for this groundbreaking opportunity. We look forward to seeing you in the Florida Keys in January!

P.S. Leave your snow shovels at home.
On Increasing Advancement

Advancement News Archive
Now Features Index

Advancement News is designed to assist with increasing advancement among Scouting’s youth and to provide support for those who administer advancement in units, districts, and councils.

To make this resource even more useful and supportive to Scouters, past editions have been archived and are available at www.scouting.org/GuideToAdvancement/Advancement_News.aspx. Recently, however, an index was created to make it easier to find specific articles. For example, anyone with a general interest in merit badges may now browse a list of all past News article titles and then open the issues in which specific articles are found. One can also use a web browser’s “Find” function to locate a key word or phrase to uncover a topic when the name of the article is unknown. (Hint: type in the word “badge” and see what you find.)

At the BSA National Annual Meeting last May, members of the national Advancement Committee made a presentation featuring the Guide to Advancement 2011 and other interesting advancement developments during the past year. A video of the presentation is also available at the Advancement News archive.

Advancement Committee Mechanics

Advancement Committee Position Descriptions

For the past year Advancement News has been running a series of articles describing the responsibilities of 12 specialized council advancement committee positions that support not only the specific duties defined in section 3 of the Guide to Advancement, but also quality advancement experiences across all Scouting programs.

Previous issues have discussed the duties of the district advancement coordinator, volunteerism specialist, advancement promotions specialist, advancement training and events coordinator, camping committee and outdoors program liaison, and records keeper/statistician. This month we look at two more vital positions involved with Internet Advancement and merit badges.

Internet Advancement Specialist

Internet Advancement is a key tool for units, districts, and councils. It provides a central source for individual advancement records for the unit, important information for commissioners to use in evaluating program health and unit needs, and a database for statistical analysis at the local and national levels. Using it also assures that advancement recorded will count toward the Journey to Excellence.

Besides promoting the use of Internet Advancement, the IA specialist ensures all units are able to access it, use it efficiently, and record youth achievement in a timely manner. The IA specialist also provides training materials or presentations and assists the advancement committee records keeper with statistical information. Similarly, the specialist may support the efforts of other volunteers, ranging from unit advancement coordinators to commissioners and council or district leadership, as they work to increase the rate of advancement.

Merit Badge Chair

The merit badge chair addresses the many components of a robust and successful merit badge program. First and foremost, he or she ensures enough merit badge counselors are recruited and that they take Youth Protection training and properly register annually with the BSA, using form No. 34405. The chair also sees that units are using the services of approved and registered counselors as described in topic 7.0.1.1 of the Guide to Advancement. The merit badge chair assists with the approval of merit badge counselors according to local council practices and should:

- Provide training for counselors.
- Distribute copies of A Guide for Merit Badge Counseling, No. 34532, to those who need them.
- Advise counselors on changes to applicable BSA policies and procedures.
- Remind counselors to consult the Guide to Safe Scouting as it applies to their work.

Finally, the merit badge chair may serve as a key contact when questions arise from unit leaders about related procedures and concerns.
Advancement in the Den

Since the publication of the Den & Pack Meeting Resource Guide, No. 34409, Cub Scout advancement now generally occurs in den meetings using rank requirements and electives outlined in the complete den meeting plans for Tiger Cubs through Arrow of Light. To be most effective, the Guide needs to be reviewed during a pack’s annual planning conference to ensure den leaders develop meeting plans that will allow den members time to achieve the next rank by the desired date.

The numerical order of the den meeting plans does not need to be strictly followed, so long as den leaders account for accomplishments that build one upon another from meeting to meeting. Den leaders take the lead in approving requirements, perhaps with help from assistants and parents who attend meetings. Convenient as the plans may be, not all Cub Scout advancement can be completed at the meetings; thus parents or guardians may approve some requirements at home according to den plans and instructions in the boys’ handbooks. For example, Wolf Achievement 11 (Duty to God) and Bear Achievements 1 and 2 (God) are examples of requirements that many packs ask families to complete at home, especially when there are boys from different faith traditions involved. If arranged and okayed by the den leaders, parents may also sign for requirements completed at home if their Cub Scouts have missed den meetings.

Finally, leaders should remember that successful pack and den programs include field trips, day trips, and outdoor experiences rich in advancement opportunities. These will provide the variety necessary to retain youth, and the fun and excitement Cub Scouts will not experience in a classroom.

Awards and Recognition

Cyber Chip Update

The Boy Scouts of America recently introduced the Cyber Chip to help Scouting families and volunteers keep youth safe while online. With the new school year now underway for many students, October is a good time to invite Scouts to work on this award. A video about the Cyber Chip is available at: www.scouting.org/cyberchip.aspx.

The specific award requirements for all grade levels may be found at www.scouting.org/cyberchip.aspx. This site also provides additional materials ranging from hints and activities geared for unit leaders to points of emphasis that are appropriate for districts and councils, along with activities to promote cyber safety and the award.

Web Conference on New Merit Badges

Search and Rescue, Kayaking, Welding, Chess, and more are new merit badge topics of vital interest to volunteers and BSA staff members across the country. To provide the latest news on these badges and what may be coming next, you are invited to take part in an online training session (“webinar”) scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 30, 2012. Participants may choose from two opportunities: 8:30–10:00 a.m. or 2:30–4:00 p.m. (both Central Time.)

Connect to the free webinar through this link:
https://connect9.uc.att.com/service32/meet/?ExEventID=88591406

TO CONNECT WITH YOUR TELEPHONE ONLY (no computer):
• Toll-free telephone (in USA): 877-810-9415
• Caller-paid telephone number: 636-651-3185
• Blackberry toll-free telephone: 877-810-9415, extension 8591406#
  (When prompted, enter the meeting access code: 8591406#)

To prepare in advance for the conference (for all devices), connect to https://connect9.uc.att.com/service32/Prepare

To view supported operating systems and devices, go to http://www.uc.att.com/support/SupportedDevices.html
The Venturing Perspective

How Councils and Districts Can Promote Venturing Advancement

Venturing advancement can help prepare young men and women for the future, and thus have a tremendous impact on their lives. Ultimately, earning the Venturing awards will increase a crew’s retention rate as its performance and overall strength improve. Here are a few methods councils or districts may employ to promote character development and Venturing advancement at the same time.

1. Inform
Many Venturers and crew leaders do not even know about the specific awards that are available. Visit www.scouting.org/venturing to gain a better understanding, and then share what you learn with others who need to know.

2. University of Scouting
Include training at Universities of Scouting or similar programs to show Advisors how to administer Venturing advancement.

3. Recognize Silver Award recipients
Include Silver Award recipients at Eagle Scout recognition dinners or other similarly visible and appropriate events such as council recognition dinners.

4. Publicize awards
Send news releases to local media, and feature award recipients in the council website and newsletter.

5. Silver Award scholarships
As feasible, initiate a program of scholarships for Silver Award recipients, and consider whether local Eagle Scout scholarship opportunities can be opened to them.

6. Summer camp
Offer a Venturing week at summer camp, or organize a separate stand-alone program. Consider Venturing awards requirements when planning camp programs, and explain awards opportunities to participants who may be unfamiliar with Venturing advancement.

7. Commissioner service
Provide Venturing advancement training for unit commissioners so they can provide service to their crews that may result in strong rates of awards achievement.

Eagle Issues

Granting the Eagle Scout Rank to Adults

The national Advancement Team receives numerous petitions every year requesting the Eagle Scout rank be granted to an adult. Generally, these requests fall into two categories: former Scouts who received the award but whose achievement was not reported to the National Council, and those who are said to have completed the requirements, but for whatever reasons did not receive the recognition as a youth.

Before submission to the national Advancement Team, each request must be researched locally by a team of volunteers who look for evidence that all the requirements in effect at the time were actually completed. The national Eagle Issues Task Force makes the final determination in these cases, based on what can be proven—nothing more, nothing less. Hearsay evidence may help substantiate a case, but it is not acceptable as proof. Documentation is necessary and can include, for example, unit or council records, newspaper stories, programs or photos from a court of honor, rank and merit badge certificates (“blue cards”), or signed and dated handbooks or Progress Toward Rank cards. All the evidence, together, must present a compelling case that the Eagle rank was earned. Photographs of merit badge sashes or even the sashes themselves (which can be obtained through the Internet) are not accepted unless there is evidence that ties a sash to the petitioner.

The documentation, along with a Belated Eagle Scout Application, No. 512-076, is submitted to the national Advancement Team. A decision is normally returned within a few weeks to the council Scout executive.

If a request is denied, it does not indicate that the person is unworthy of the Eagle Scout rank, or even that he did not fulfill the requirements. It means only the proof submitted was insufficient.

See the Guide to Advancement, section 8.0.3.1, bullet No. 3, for more details.
From the National Advancement Committee

Celebrating One Year

October marks not one, but two national milestones in advancement service. The current national Advancement Committee was organized just 12 months ago, and this is your first year anniversary issue of Advancement News!

Prior to October 2011, the advancement function was covered by the national Youth Development Committee. But with the impending rollout at the time of the all-new Guide to Advancement, it was determined that a separate volunteer advancement committee should be formed once again. This was seen as necessary to support the implementation of the many procedural changes and clarifications included in the new Guide, and to provide a higher level of assistance to councils and districts.

Much has been accomplished since the committee’s charter was approved. Twelve committee members were recruited from across the country, each representing a special area of concern. There are no members at large. Then in order to strengthen cooperation with the other national volunteers who have program responsibilities, two additional members were included from the Program Content and Youth Development committees. An advisory panel of more than 100 volunteers from across the country and from all program levels has also been organized to provide opinions and assistance to the national Advancement Committee members with various projects.

Here are just a few highlights of the committee’s accomplishments over the last year:

• The Webinars and Education Task Force was created to design instructional modules on a variety of topics that can be used by individuals or in group training sessions. They run from less than an hour to full-day or half-day seminars. Many of these products are in the final stages of development or testing and will be available over the next several months. Approximately 30 volunteers have been involved in these efforts.

• October marks the ninth issue of Advancement News, the official electronic newsletter of the national Advancement Team. There are now a dozen volunteer writers and editors on the News team, and more than 3,100 subscribers.

• Ten opinion surveys have been conducted, providing a tremendous volume of valuable data to the national Advancement Committee.

• A Twitter account was established that has approximately 500 followers. Around 70 tweets have been sent out, most of which have provided real-time answers to popular questions and misconceptions.

• A Merit Badge Maintenance Task Force was approved at this time last year, and in just one year it has grown to 60 members. The task force is reviewing all of the merit badge pamphlets to update requirements and content as necessary. As these pamphlets come up for printing, changes from the task force will be included.

• The Eagle Issues Task Force, which handles appeals to the national Advancement Team, was tripled in size from five to 15 members to provide a quicker turnaround for these sensitive cases.

• Two volunteer task forces were organized to review and revise the Guide to Advancement and Eagle Scout Service Project Workbook. Their work has been completed and submitted to the national Advancement Team for editing. Release is planned for later in the first quarter of 2013.

• Other advancement-related forms, web pages, and publications have been reviewed and are being updated in Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and special needs.

What Do You Think?

Survey for October 2012

Presenting Merit Badge “Fairs” or “Clinics”

This month’s survey seeks information and comments related to presentation of merit badges in primarily group environments, such as unit, district, or council-sponsored merit badge fairs, clinics, midways, colleges, etc., and also similar events organized by individual Scouters, private citizens, or various organizations or businesses. Your opinions will be important as the national Advancement Committee considers the procedures and guidelines related to these merit badge opportunities.

Note: Anonymous responses are not accepted for any of the Advancement News surveys. This is because of the importance the national Advancement Team places on the ability to communicate with survey respondents, should more information be needed to consider their answers. We want to know what you think!

Completing the survey should take about 10 to 20 minutes, depending on your level of knowledge about merit badge fairs and clinics. Just click on the link below to begin. Thank you for your time and input.

http://scouting.us.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_3K3OBt8zZbyypn
A Peek Ahead

Here is a glimpse of what we are working on for the next issue of Advancement News. 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 November

Opportunities for Advancement Administrators: Conference on Education for Advancement Administrators at Sea Base, 2013 Advancement Conferences Planned for Philmont Training Center

On Increasing Advancement: Using BSA Statistics

The Cub Scout Angle: The Role of the Pack Committee

Advancement Committee Mechanics: Eagle Scout Issues Coordinator, Special Needs Chair

Merit Badges: What’s New?: Summary of Merit Badge Requirement Changes, The Digitalization of the Merit Badge Pamphlet Library

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.

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