



Commissioner Newsletter

Your Single, Best Resource.

January 19, 2026 Edition

“To play a wrong note is insignificant; to play without passion is inexcusable.” — Ludwig van Beethoven

On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we honor a leader whose life and legacy reflect values deeply aligned with Scouting America. Dr. King was also a Scouting alumnus, and his life exemplified the ideals of service, courage, and leadership rooted in character. Through his commitment to justice, nonviolence, and community, he showed how one person, guided by strong principles, can inspire positive change and help build a better world.

For Scouts, Dr. King’s message is a reminder that leadership begins with service and respect for others. His call to stand up for what is right, to help those in need, and to work together across differences echoes the Scout Oath and Law. On this day, Scouts are encouraged not only to remember Dr. King’s words, but to honor his legacy through action by serving their communities, practicing kindness, and striving each day to live with integrity and compassion.

Commissioner Newsletter eBlast Survey

The Commissioner Newsletter eBlast is the most read newsletter in Scouting America produced entirely by volunteers. Volunteers are often stretched thin and do not always have the time or energy to track updates across emails, newsletters, and social media, especially when it is not always clear which sources are official. Missing important information can be a real concern.

The goal of the eBlast is to serve as the single, best resource for unit leaders by delivering timely, reliable updates in one place. Please take a few minutes to share your feedback and help ensure the newsletter continues to improve and better meet your needs. Access the survey [here](#).

New Scouts BSA Unified Handbook

The new Scouts BSA Unified Handbook is now available. This optional resource was developed in direct response to feedback from leaders, youth, and units seeking a single, unified handbook. It does not replace the current 14th Edition and includes no program changes, as all requirements and materials remain the same. The content is fully consistent, with refreshed photos that better represent all youth. The handbook is available to order now [here](#), and a Braille version is also available.

Indian Lore Merit Badge Now American Indian Culture Merit Badge

As part of Scouts BSA's routine Merit Badge updates, the "Indian Lore" Merit Badge has become "American Indian Culture" Merit Badge, and a new badge design has been made available. The curriculum and requirements remain unchanged and continue to offer valuable information for Scouts. Learn about the badge [here](#).

Reminder: Commissioner Impact Session, January 24

The Winter Commissioner Impact Session, titled Navigating Success: Commissioner Guiding Units Forward, will take place in Tampa Bay, Florida, on Saturday, January 24, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Greater Tampa Bay Area Council's Lewis Hill III Service Center, located at 13228 N. Central Ave, Tampa, Florida 33612. Optional activities include a welcome reception on Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. and a Sunday morning visit to the TECO Manatee Viewing Center at 10:00 a.m.

This session is designed to bring commissioners together with the National Commissioner Service Team and fellow volunteers to collaborate and explore new ways to increase their impact on Scouting. Participants will focus on helping every unit grow, retain members, and thrive. The conference fee is \$45 and includes morning refreshments, lunch, materials, and recognition. Travel and lodging are not included. Learn more [here](#) and register [here](#).

Reminder: Safeguarding Policies in Exploring Webinar, January 27

On Tuesday, January 27 at 8:00 p.m. ET, a webinar will clarify how 18- and 19-year-old Explorers, while subject to the same criminal background checks and safeguarding training as adult advisors, are not considered advisors and do not count toward two-deep leadership requirements. The session will examine how their legal adult status affects participation policies and interactions with younger Explorers. Featuring an interactive conversation with Glen Pounder, Chief Safeguarding Officer for Scouting America, the session will emphasize real-world questions and issues faced by units in the field, with time dedicated largely to participant Q&A. Register to attend [here](#).

Reminder: Commissioner Week at Philmont Training Center, June 7 – 13

Join a community of passionate commissioners at the Philmont Training Center the week of June 7 – 13. Expand your skills, explore new ideas, and connect with like-minded leaders while experiencing the magic of Philmont. Learn more and register [here](#).

Do You Follow Us on Facebook or Instagram?

Join the [Commissioners of Scout America's Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#) and help spread the word about Scouting by liking and sharing posts. Engage those whom you serve by being where they go for information.

The "S" in NCST is Service

The National Commissioner Service Team (NCST) exists to serve commissioners. Learn who are the members of the 2025-26 team are and what they do [here](#).

Ask A Commissioner

Q. I am the unit commissioner for a pack and also for a troop that is linked through a shared charter organization. Since COVID, only about half of the AOL Scouts are bridging to the troop. How can I address in my role as commissioner?

A. As a unit commissioner, I would coach the Cub leader to focus on reassurance, clarity, and low-pressure exposure. Reluctant families usually are not opposed to Scouting itself. They are uncertain about time, safety, culture, or whether their child will fit.

Start by reframing the transition. Emphasize that moving from a pack to a troop is not a permanent commitment. Families are simply giving their child a chance to try something new with skills they already have. Present it as a test drive, not a decision for the next seven years.

Highlight what stays familiar. Many parents imagine Scouts BSA as a huge leap. Remind them that the values, uniforms, advancement, and outdoor focus all build directly on what their child already knows. The Cub Scout did not age out of Scouting. They leveled up.

Address the common worries directly:

- Time. Troops often meet more frequently than Cub packs, but parents are not expected to attend every meeting.
- Safety. Youth protection, trained leaders, and age-appropriate activities continue, just with more responsibility given to the youth.
- Academics and sports. Scouts BSA is flexible. Many successful Scouts are also athletes, musicians, and busy students.
- Adult involvement. Parents can step back more. This is often a relief once it is explained clearly.

Let youth be the ambassadors. Nothing sells a troop better than seeing confident, happy Scouts who used to be in the same pack (except maybe bacon). Arrange for a few former Cub Scouts to visit a pack meeting in uniform and talk briefly about what they like best. Keep it short and genuine.

Create a gentle on ramp. Encourage troops to offer:

- A crossover friendly campout or day activity
- A few meetings where visiting Scouts can participate without uniforms or fees

- A clear first 90 days plan so families know what to expect

Focus on growth, not rank. Parents sometimes worry about advancement pressure. Emphasize character, independence, leadership, and confidence. Share stories about shy Cub Scouts who found their voice, learned to lead, or discovered strengths they did not know they had.

Avoid overselling Eagle. Eagle is meaningful, but for hesitant families it can feel overwhelming. Keep the message centered on fun, friendships, and life skills. If Eagle comes up, present it as a possibility, not an expectation. Remember, the word Eagle does not show up in our vision, mission, and aims.

Equip Cub leaders with a simple message. Something like, “Your child already succeeded in Cub Scouting. Scouts BSA is the next adventure. Try it for a few months and see how it fits.”

Finally, respect a no. Families are more likely to say yes later if they feel respected now. A positive exit from Cub Scouting leaves the door open for a return. Don’t make “no” a “never” by being pushy.

Your role as commissioner is to help leaders stay calm, positive, and youth focused. When families see confidence and consistency from adults, hesitation often fades on its own.

You have questions? Commissioners have answers!

Reach out by email: commissionerserviceteam@scouting.org



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