



# Commissioner Newsletter

*Your Single, Best Resource.*

**January 5, 2026 Edition**

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.” — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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Welcome to 2026! As a valued commissioner in Scouting America, your dedication to supporting volunteers and guiding units does not go unnoticed. Your commitment helps ensure that every Scout experiences a high-quality program that builds skills, character, and leadership. Thank you for the time, energy, and care you put into mentoring leaders, solving challenges, and strengthening the Scouting movement. Your efforts make a lasting difference in the lives of youth and adult leaders alike, and we look forward to another year of growth, impact, and success together.

## **Impact365 Webinar, January 8**

A webinar will be held on Thursday, January 8 at 8 PM ET to introduce Impact365, Scouting America’s new national service initiative. The session will highlight opportunities to activate around Scouting’s partnership with America250, explore ways to support a national day of service, and share additional engagement strategies. Attendees will gain valuable insights to support council planning conferences and guide year-long planning efforts. Register [here](#).

## **Scouting for Everyone Forum, January 16 - 17**

Scouting for Everyone, a hands-on inclusion forum, will take place on January 16 - 17 at the Greater Los Angeles Area Council Cushman Watt Scout Center. The event offers practical strategies for embracing diversity, removing barriers, and ensuring every young person and family feels seen, heard, and valued. Attendees will hear inspiring stories from diverse Scouting communities, gain actionable tools, and learn how to strengthen Units and Councils through inclusion. The cost is \$100 per person and includes meals, materials, a neckerchief, and a patch. [Here](#) is the link to register for the forum.

## **MLK Day of Service, January 19**

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service is January 19. Across Scouting America, units are planning service projects that reflect the values Dr. King championed. Scouts will take part in community cleanups, support local shelters and food programs, assist service organizations, and look for thoughtful ways to lift up neighbors who need a hand. It will be a

"Day On, Not a Day Off," and a chance for young people to show what service in action looks like.

Dr. King's connection to Scouting began in his youth when he was a member of Troop 151 in Atlanta. His time in Scouting helped nurture a spirit of leadership and community responsibility that would later define his work for justice and equality.

As we look ahead to MLK Day 2026, we encourage every unit to plan a project that reflects the heart of Dr. King's legacy. By serving with purpose, Scouts will honor his message and continue the work of building stronger and more caring communities.

The MLK Day of Service emblem is available [here](#) or in local Scouting America retail outlets.

### **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](#).

### **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](#).

### **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](#).

## **Scouting's Commitment to Neutrality**

Scouting has thrived for over a century because families trust it is about youth—never politics. To maintain that trust, all activities, communications, and uniforms must remain strictly apolitical. Personal civic engagement is encouraged, but always off duty, out of uniform, and separate from Scouting branding. Read more [here](#).

## **New Range and Target Activities Manual**

The National Range and Target Activities Committee has released an updated Range and Target Activities Manual, which will take effect on January 1. This revised manual reflects updates to current practices, clarifies guidance based on frequently asked questions, and incorporates changes intended to better support councils and local programs. The updated manual can be accessed [here](#). For additional questions, please contact [outdoorprograms@scouting.org](mailto:outdoorprograms@scouting.org)

## **National Venturing Committee Webinar**

The National Venturing Committee hosted a webinar recently to discuss updates to the Ranger Award and other upcoming program rollouts. A video of the webinar is now available [here](#). Please share with your Venturing Staff Advisor and Venturing volunteers.

## **Scouts BSA Advancement Updates**

The planned 2026 Scouts BSA advancement updates are now available [here](#) for review. These updates will take effect on January 1, 2026, so now is the time to familiarize yourself with the changes. The Scouts BSA Advancement Committee has made thoughtful updates to over 80 merit badges based on feedback from Scout leaders, subject matter experts, and current trends in technology, safety, and outdoor education. These changes reflect a commitment to keeping Scouting relevant and meaningful for today's youth.

## **New Scouts BSA Test Lab Released – Psychology**

A new badge has been added to the Scouts BSA test lab - Psychology. This badge invites Scouts on an engaging journey to understand how psychology influences everyday life and leadership. They will learn about well-known psychologists and their contributions, create and perform a skit that shows psychology in action, and explore mental health, resilience, and emotional well-being. They will also track their own activities and emotions to better understand how they shape their daily life. Learn more [here](#).

## **Family Life Merit Badge Digital Resource Guide Now Available**

A new digital resource guide for the Family Life Merit Badge is now available, with the Hiking Merit Badge guide coming soon. Digital resource guides serve as companions to merit badge pamphlets and are designed to support Scouts by offering additional materials that enhance the learning experience. Find digital resource guides [here](#).

## **Scouting America – America250 Partnership Announced**

Scouting America has joined forces with America250, the official U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, in a dynamic new partnership designed to inspire and empower young people as we commemorate 250 years of American history. Throughout the year, Scouts and their families will explore our nation's story, engage in impactful community projects, and reflect on the principles that have shaped our country. Read the press release [here](#).

## **Commissioner Tools - Updated Council Dashboard and Reports Layout**

The following new items are available in Commissioner Tools:

- Updated Council Dashboard reflecting the changes released earlier this year in the District Dashboard, showing data and trends council-wide.
- Updated report layout, moving older reports related to simple and detailed assessments, contact statistics, and unit service plans to a collapsible section labeled "Archived Reports". Some report names and descriptions will also be updated.
- New At-a-Glance report presenting a summary of units with connections in the last year, units with 0-2 metrics, unrenewed units, volunteer SYT statistics, and Commissioner training. Refer to the tutorial [here](#) on this new report.

## **Commissioner Orientation – Welcome to Unit Service**

This orientation will help all new commissioners (regardless of their position) become acquainted with the culture of unit service and guide them through their first steps in preparing for their new role. There is a 10-minute [video](#) and [guide](#).

## **New Commissioner Moment**

Commissioner position-specific online training is currently being updated and is expected to be available in the first quarter of 2026. In the meantime, "Commissioner Moment Special Edition #4 – Commissioner Training Essentials" has been created as a bridge while we transition to address changes in our approach to unit service and align with the current commissioner position-specific instructor-led trainings. This Commissioner Moment is located [here](#).

## **Cub Scout Roundtable Resources**

Cub Scout Roundtable is a valuable opportunity for Cub Scout leaders to come together, share ideas, and learn about local events and activities that support their packs. Roundtables can be offered at the district or council level and may be held in person, virtually, or through a hybrid model. They can take place monthly or quarterly, giving councils and districts the flexibility to create a format that maximizes participation and meets local needs.

To further support Cub Scout Roundtables, the National Cub Scouting Committee has developed a library of Cub Scout Roundtable videos. These short, engaging videos—each 8 to

10 minutes long—focus on a specific topic and are designed to spark conversation. Each video concludes with time for discussion and sharing, helping leaders learn from one another and bring new ideas back to their packs. Access the videos [here](#).

### **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](#).

### **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.

### **How Can We Help You?**

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](#).

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### **Ask A Commissioner**

Q. The committee chair of the unit I serve is frustrated because he cannot get parents to volunteer as members of the committee. What should we do?

A. A unit commissioner can play a big part in helping encourage parents to step into committee roles, especially when families are used to dropping off their Scouts and leaving. Here are practical ways a commissioner can support the committee chair.

Build relationships - Spend a little time getting to know parents at meetings or events. When parents feel noticed and welcome, they are more open to being asked to help. You have to earn the right to be heard.

Promote small entry points - Parents often avoid volunteering because they fear a big commitment. Encourage the committee chair to offer very small tasks first, such as helping with one event or serving on a short project team. Once parents feel successful, they become more willing to take on a committee role.

Explain the purpose of the committee - Many parents do not understand how the committee supports the unit. The commissioner can help the committee chair give a clear and simple explanation of how the committee enables leaders to focus on the youth program.

Speak to parents directly - Sometimes parents respond better when the message comes from someone outside the unit. A commissioner can briefly share why parent involvement matters and how easy it is to contribute.

Highlight the benefit to their children - Parents are more willing to help when they understand that their participation strengthens their own Scout's experience. The commissioner can reinforce this point in conversations and at unit gatherings.

Recognize volunteers - Make sure the unit thanks committee members and celebrates their contributions. When parents see others appreciated for small jobs, they are more likely to want to be part of it. Reward the behaviors that you want to see engrained in the unit culture.

Attend a committee meeting - By attending a meeting, the commissioner can offer encouragement, share best practices, and help the chair present a clear plan for recruiting new members.

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### **You have questions? Commissioners have answers!**

Reach out by email: [commissionerserviceteam@scouting.org](mailto:commissionerserviceteam@scouting.org)

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