



Commissioner Newsletter

Your Single, Best Resource.

July 20, 2026 Edition

“A good leader is like bacon: they add value, bring people together, and make the whole team better.” – Anon.

Commissioners Connections and Impact Weekend, August 7 - 9

Join fellow Scouting leaders August 7 through 9 at Camp Big Timber in Elgin, Illinois, for the Three Fires Council Commissioner Connections Weekend, featuring the Summer National Commissioner Impact Session on Saturday, August 8.

Whether you attend for the day or spend the entire weekend, you'll have the opportunity to:

- Connect with commissioners and leaders from across the region
- Learn from members of the National Commissioner Service Team
- Share ideas and proven practices that strengthen units
- Explore topics like the Commissioner Trail Map, membership, retention, Roundtable, and using data to better serve Scouts
- Enjoy the fellowship and beauty of Camp Big Timber

This is more than a training event. It's a chance to build relationships, exchange ideas, and return home with new energy and practical tools to better serve your units. Register [here](#).

You Have Leads!

As of the most recent report, there are more than 4,500 open leads and more than 545 pending applications awaiting follow-up in the online registration system. Each lead represents a family interested in learning more about Scouting, and each pending application is an excited new youth member who has already paid to join and is just waiting for unit approval.

If you haven't already checked the leads and pending applications, make sure your volunteers and teams review this information and take action to help welcome more youth and families into Scouting.

2026 National Exploring Live Hour (Monthly)

The National Exploring Live Hour is a monthly Zoom video conference that will help engage and equip Exploring volunteers and professionals to grow, support, and learn more about Exploring. Each month, the National Exploring Live Hour will be led by our National Exploring Program Chair and the National Director of Exploring.

The live hours will include sharing best practices and ideas from within our councils, highlighting successful growth campaigns, and inspiring new ideas through various trainings. This will also offer an opportunity for local councils to collaborate with territory and national counterparts to generate innovative solutions to real-life Exploring challenges.

National Exploring Live Hour Schedule (all meeting times are 1 PM Central):

August 12, September 9, October 14, November 11, December 9

Register for each of the National Exploring Live Hour ZOOM presentations [here](#).

National Jewish Committee on Scouting is Focused on New Unit Creation

Since April, Scouting America and the National Jewish Committee on Scouting have partnered to launch more than five new Scouting unit locations. These new unit launches represent progress toward an ambitious goal set by the two organizations to start 100 new units in the next year.

This development could not have been accomplished without the tireless efforts of the volunteer committee members, whose dedicated leadership is making a real difference for Jewish youth, families, and communities every single day. We are grateful for this thriving partnership and look forward to the launch of more Scout units in the second half of 2026 and beyond.

Learn more about the National Jewish Committee on Scouting [here](#).

Sign Up Now to Attend a Scoutconnect Webinar

Scouting America's Technology Group is hosting webinars this summer to update Scouters on changes to the technology tools available today. Scoutconnect is the project name and will include changes to BeAScout, Online Registration, and in the future, My.Scouting and Scoutbook+.

"Technology Update – Scoutconnect, what is changing this fall?" will be offered on Monday, July 20th, and Thursday, August 13th, at 8:00 PM (Eastern).

[Monday July 20th 8:00 PM \(Eastern\)](#)

[Thursday August 13th 8:00 PM \(Eastern\)](#)

Follow Us On Social Media

Access news as it breaks by following the Commissioners of Scout America's [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#) and help spread the word about Scouting by liking and sharing posts.

Ask a Commissioner

Q: My council has tried several times to get a Sea Scout Ship started. We can't seem to grow membership to have a sustainable unit. Why is that and what can we do about it?

A. Sea Scout leaders often face a unique set of membership growth challenges because the program has a smaller footprint and a more specialized identity compared with other Scouting programs. The biggest challenges typically include:

Limited awareness of Sea Scouting

Many youth and families simply do not know Sea Scouting exists. While Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA have broad recognition, Sea Scouts can be misunderstood as only a sailing program or as something available only near the coast.

Finding the right audience

Sea Scouts is designed for older youth, ages 14 through 20, which means leaders are competing with many other activities: sports, jobs, school clubs, youth organizations, and social commitments. Reaching teens at the right time and through the right channels can be difficult.

Recruiting beyond traditional Scouting

Many Sea Scout ships rely heavily on Scouts BSA crossover for new members. While crossover is valuable, sustainable growth often requires reaching teens who have never been involved in Scouting.

Volunteer capacity and leadership burnout

Running a Sea Scout ship often requires significant effort from adult leaders. Recruiting youth, planning activities, maintaining equipment, fundraising, and managing advancement can become overwhelming when a small group of volunteers carries the workload.

Creating a consistent recruitment pipeline

Unlike Cub Scouts, which has a natural annual recruitment rhythm, Sea Scout recruitment can feel less predictable. Leaders may struggle to create a repeatable process for attracting new members every year rather than relying on occasional word-of-mouth referrals.

Communicating the value of the program

Sea Scouting offers leadership development, adventure, career exploration, service, and lifelong skills. However, leaders sometimes struggle to communicate that value in a way that resonates with today's teens and parents. A message focused only on boats or sailing may unintentionally limit interest.

Keeping youth engaged long-term

Recruiting new members is only part of the challenge. Retaining youth through high school, college transitions, jobs, and other activities requires strong youth-led programs, meaningful experiences, and opportunities for leadership.

Lack of visibility in the community

Many Sea Scout ships operate quietly and may not have a strong presence at community events, schools, or online. Without consistent storytelling and visibility, potential members may never discover the program.

Equipment, facilities, and cost concerns

Some communities assume Sea Scouting requires expensive boats or waterfront access. Leaders may struggle with perceptions about cost, even though successful ships use many different program models, including paddling, STEM, emergency response, maritime careers, and outdoor adventure.

Helping youth invite their friends

The strongest recruitment tool is often current youth members. Some ships struggle to create a culture where Scouts feel confident inviting friends and sharing their experiences.

So, a strong membership growth strategy for Sea Scout leaders focuses on three areas:

1. Increase awareness that answers the question "What is Sea Scouting and why should a teen care?"
2. Expand recruiting sources to include schools, community partners, older youth organizations, and non-Scouting families
3. Create a memorable youth-led experience that members naturally want to share

The biggest mindset shift is moving from "finding Scouts who might like Sea Scouting" to "showing more teens why Sea Scouting is an opportunity they did not know they were missing."

You have questions? Commissioners have answers!

Reach out by email: commissionersserviceteam@scouting.org



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