



Commissioner Newsletter

Your Single, Best Resource.

May 11, 2026 Edition

“Because what we all find, I’m sure, is there’s not time to “work,” and you confuse going to meetings with the work.” – Bob Jordan, Southwest Airlines

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, so it’s worth highlighting the long-term impact youth programs can have on well-being.

Research continues to show that participation in organizations like Scouting America can play a meaningful role in mental health development. A large longitudinal study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* found that individuals who participated in scouting or guiding had significantly better mental health outcomes in adulthood, including a lower likelihood of anxiety and mood disorders.

More recent research reinforces why that impact exists. A 2024 study in *Brain Sciences* found that scouting helps strengthen self-efficacy, or a person’s belief in their ability to handle challenges, and improves how individuals cope with stress.

Together, these findings point to something important. The value of scouting goes far beyond outdoor activities or skill-building. It creates an environment where young people build confidence, develop resilience, form strong social connections, and learn how to navigate adversity, all of which are closely tied to long-term mental health.

At a time when mental health is a growing concern for so many families, it’s worth recognizing the role that positive, structured programs can play. The impact may not always be immediate, but the research shows it is real, measurable, and lasting.

Read more in [this study](#) and [this study](#). And, share what you learn.

May 17, Membership Mixer

With the next school year just a few months away, the groundwork for a strong fall recruitment season begins now. The May 2026 Mixer will highlight what packs, districts, and councils can do today to be fully prepared. Lisa Wylie, former chair of the national Cub Scouting Committee, will share practical, ready-to-use strategies designed to build momentum and help welcome new Scouts this fall. A small investment of time and preparation now can lead to meaningful results later. Participate in the Mixer on May 17 at 8:00 PM ET by registering [here](#).

New Resource: Thriving Units – A Pathway to Stabilize and Sustain New and Struggling Units

[This new guide](#) provides a clear, practical framework for how commissioners and district volunteers can support units from day one through the critical first 30, 60, and 90 days, and beyond. Focused on long-term success, the guide outlines proven approaches to help units become stable, sustainable, and effective in delivering a strong program that keeps youth engaged and supports their leaders. Rather than prescribing who delivers support, the guide focuses on what support is needed, giving districts the flexibility to meet units where they are and provide meaningful, consistent assistance.

Local Council Marketing Playbook

This fall, Scouting America is rolling out a national campaign to build awareness and spark interest among families nationwide.

To support this effort at the local level, the [Fall Local Council Marketing Playbook](#) provides practical tools: ready-to-use messaging, outreach ideas, and implementation guidance designed to flex to the needs of each community. With a strong national push and locally tailored execution, we can turn awareness into meaningful engagement and drive membership growth this season.

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

Join 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 [here](#). Already registered? Then reach out and invite your Scouting friends.

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. This week, the National Annual Meeting is taking place in Dallas. We'll share news from the meeting throughout the week on social media.

We Are Here to 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](#). Look for an updated team after the National Annual Meeting. We are restructuring to be serve our stakeholders.

Ask A Commissioner

Q. We have recently had a Scout with special needs join the troop, and I am looking for guidance on how to handle camping, advancement requirements, and general activities. The Scout is very smart but struggles with communication, memorization, and some motor skills. What advice or experiences can you share that could help our youth and adult leaders support them effectively?

A. Great question, and you're already on the right track by asking it early. I've worked with several units in similar situations, and the biggest takeaway is this: the goal is not to "fit the Scout into the program," but to deliver the program in a fun way that works for that Scout while still maintaining the integrity of the Scouting experience.

Start with a simple conversation, not assumptions. Before changing anything, sit down with the parents or guardians. Ask what works, what doesn't, and what specific challenges show up in group settings, outdoors, and under stress. Many families already have strategies that transfer directly to Scouting. You'll save a lot of trial and error by listening first.

Also ask the Scout, in whatever way they can communicate. Even limited input helps build trust.

Camping is often where challenges show up most clearly, but also where growth happens fastest. Keep structure predictable. Share the schedule ahead of time, even something as simple as "wake up, breakfast, hike, lunch, free time, dinner, campfire." Visual schedules can help if communication is a struggle.

Break tasks into smaller steps. Instead of "set up your tent," guide with steps like "lay out the footprint," "insert poles," and so on. This helps with both motor skills and confidence.

Have a fallback plan. If a full weekend is too much at first, consider a one-night camp or even a daytime outdoor activity that builds toward overnight success. Depending on the situation, it might be appropriate to have a parent or guardian present.

When it comes to advancement and requirements, Scouting allows flexibility here, but it needs to be done thoughtfully. Focus on the intent of the requirement. If memorization is a barrier, ask yourself what the requirement is really teaching. For example, is it about recall, or understanding and application?

Use alternative methods when appropriate. A Scout who struggles to recite something might demonstrate it, explain it in their own words, or show understanding through action.

Document and communicate. If you make accommodations, keep the committee and parents aligned so expectations are clear and consistent.

If needed, look into formal advancement flexibility. There are established pathways for Scouts with special needs that allow modified requirements while preserving standards.

For meetings and activities, this is where small adjustments make a big difference. Keep instructions short and concrete. Long explanations lose Scouts who struggle with processing or communication. Use demonstration over explanation. Show first, then have them try. The EDGE method is the go-to tool.

Build in movement. Scouts with motor or processing challenges often do better when they are actively engaged rather than sitting and listening.

Create roles that play to strengths. If the Scout is very smart, give them problem-solving tasks, planning input, or jobs that use that strength, even if physical execution is harder.

And, support the youth leaders. Your Patrol Leaders Council (PLC) is key. Coach them privately. Help them understand that leadership means adapting to help every Scout succeed, not lowering expectations. Give them specific tools like assigning buddies, checking in quietly, and giving clear instructions. Remind them that patience is part of leadership, not an extra.

If motor skills are a concern, pay closer attention during activities like hiking, cooking, or tool use. This doesn't mean exclusion. It means supervision, coaching, and sometimes modifying how the activity is done. Safety is number one.

Progress may look different for this Scout, and that's okay. Success might be staying the full campout, completing a task independently, or communicating more clearly over time. The patrol noticing and supporting that progress is just as important as the advancement itself.

In my experience, units that do this well don't create a separate experience. They create a culture where Scouts naturally help each other succeed. When that happens, the entire troop gets stronger, not just the Scout with special needs.

You'll find a lot of what you need to get started [here](#); I highly recommend looking over the Inclusion Toolbox. I refer to it often.

And, thank you for being a leader who believes that Scouting is for all.

You have questions? Commissioners have answers!

Reach out by email: commissionerserviceteam@scouting.org



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