



National Commissioner's Corner at 2017 Jamboree

By Roma Bishop and Floyd Hatch

The 2017 National Scout Jamboree was held at the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve in Glen Jean, West Virginia, July 19–28. The National Commissioner's Corner was located near the BSA Key 3 Encampment in Legacy Village.



History and Objectives: In mid-2016, the 10th national commissioner, Charles Dahlquist, was inspired to pursue a new exhibit for the national jamboree. He envisioned a place that could be a home to all things commissioner—a welcoming and hospitable area where interactive discussion could take place among commissioners old and new to Scouting; an area of training in the basics of commissioner effectiveness; and an area that would appeal to youth and adults to help them better understand commissioner service. Scouting's commissioners from any level would be invited to gather in this area to be instructed, edified, and welcomed. The need to train our nation's commissioners was clear. The concern was creating a booth with enough solid training and activity to attract commissioners attending the jamboree with the understanding that many were leading youth troops and crews or had volunteered for jamboree staff positions and would have limited time off. It was decided the exhibit would be called the National Commissioner's Corner.

Targeted Audience: Because a national jamboree is “all about the boys,” there was also a desire to incorporate a fun learning activity whereby Scouts could learn about commissioner service, an area of Scouting they may not have even known existed. There was also a desire to have support and some training for those adults serving in a commissioner role both at the jamboree and in their home units. Since both youth and adult Scouts and Scouters love patches, awards, and handouts, the idea took shape for numerous trading cards, displays, training opportunities, and a new award, the Daniel Carter Beard Recognition (Dan Beard award), which could be earned at the jamboree by youth and adults.

Steering Committee: The steering committee for the Commissioner's Corner consisted of Charles Dahlquist, national commissioner; Floyd Hatch, chair; Wayne Bishop, assistant chair; Rockie Dustin, assistant chair and artistic director; Roma Bishop, communications; Wendy Everhart, assistant to the commissioner; and Jill Sorensen, assistant to the chair. Gary Dollar and his wife, Laura, headed the bolo tie exhibit and training area. Rick Hillenbrand oversaw the commissioner training staff and IT education.

Additional Staff: Staffing for all or part of the jamboree included Ronda Archibald, Allison Day, Barry Dickerson, Janel Durfee, Rick Durfee, Ron Hathaway, Dan Horne, Nancy Tiffany, Steve Tumblin, and Jim Watts. Rick Hillenbrand, IT liaison, also recruited part-time well-trained commissioners to help staff the Commissioner Tools area, using more than 30 individuals in two- to four-hour shifts. Members of the National Commissioner Support Staff were invaluable, including Ellie Morrison, National Commissioner Service chair, and Kevin Baker, Larry Chase, Kandra Dickerson, and Darlene Sprague.

Guest Presentations: Critical commissioner topics were addressed by knowledgeable speakers in presentations throughout the week, along with the opportunity to meet key people. Our speakers were well-prepared and addressed topics that were relevant and interesting. For the most part, presenters used audience-driven presentations and took individual questions. The events were publicized well through the Jamboree app. Many participants arrived after the start (due to long walks and bus rides), but the speakers would stay after and answer questions. The attendees were well-fed and gained information that they could take home. We had 15 to 30 attendees in each session. These sessions were:

- Commissioner Tools—Rick Hillenbrand (presented three times)
- Meet Your National Commissioner—with Charles Dahlquist
- Keys to Effective Training—Larry Chase
- National Commissioner's Welcome Reception—with Charles Dahlquist
- Meet the National Commissioner and Chief Scout Executive—with Charles Dahlquist and Mike Surbaugh
- Introduction to Commissioner Service—Jeff Bostwick
- Effective Detailed Assessments—Kevin Baker
- What Should I Expect From My Commissioner?—Ellie Morrison
- Commissioner Service for LDS Units—Mark Francis
- Commissioner Service for Explorer Posts—Tim Anderson





Communication and Publicity: Commissioner Dahlquist reached out to the National Commissioner Support Staff, seeking their help with training in IT tools and links to resources, unit growth, administering contacts, on-time charter renewal, and many other related subjects. Committee member Rick Hillenbrand stepped forward to chair this group and recruited volunteers to train in this capacity. Rick and Roma Bishop created a staff schedule, contacted speakers, summarized available links to needed data, and researched teaching materials that would benefit attendees. They worked with Andrew Miller, who put everything we wanted on the jamboree app, including the schedule, the presenters and their topic, introductions of the presenters, and information about the sessions. Arrangements were made for “push notifications” so that each night the app gave users a notice of what was happening the next day in the Commissioner’s Corner if they had put it as one of their Interest Groups. This daily communication to jamboree commissioners kept all of them informed. Russ Hunsaker, jamboree operations director, reported that the Commissioner’s Corner had the highest communication response of all jamboree venues. We believe this communication was vital in the visibility and high attendance at our site.

Displays and Awards: Rockie Dustin was key in the design and production of all the displays. The large depictions of Daniel Carter Beard—along with his history and his signs and symbols—complemented the handouts, trading cards, and requirements to earn the award. It was fun to watch Scouts pick the symbols off the large display or the 8½ x 11" key. The Dan Beard award was a useful tool for introducing young Scouts and even mature Scouters to commissioner science via the history of Daniel Carter Beard and his role as the BSA’s first commissioner. Most adults who came to the Commissioner’s Corner for training or just to visit also took the time to earn the award. Experienced commissioners were not challenged by the requirements regarding commissioner service, but they did enjoy solving the puzzle with decoder keys and learning historical facts about Beard.



Wall-sized fabric displays featured the keys to becoming an effective commissioner and listed the tools that are available to help in this function. They were well-received, informative, and colorful and contributed to the atmosphere and purpose of the tent.



Having the Dollars on-site with their wood carving of bolo ties and the presentations and challenge to Scouts was a huge drawing card for the Commissioner’s Corner. For many Scouts, this interaction can be a life-changing experience. It was especially helpful to have a separate tent for Gary and Laura’s display and training. This area also served as a great overflow area for people working on the Dan Beard award.



Summary: About 150 adult commissioners attended the National Commissioner’s Welcome Reception. The entire 20-by-40-foot tent was filled with attendees and many stood outside of both doors. This was another occasion where a larger tent would have made a big difference.

Approximately 500 commissioners toured the tent, met with members of the IT training force for specific topical training, and took the time to earn the Dan Beard award. Each of these attendees was encouraged to train at least 10 commissioners when they returned to their home councils and districts. This would result in training an additional 5,000 commissioners throughout the BSA. Approximately 2,400 adults and youth studied the requirements of the Daniel Carter Beard Recognition and returned after accomplishing 30 minutes of “jamboree service” to receive the dogtag-style award.

Bolo tie carvers Gary and Laura Dollar estimate more than 5,000 individuals visited their tent, which delivered strong discussions on Scouting’s principles. The Dollars awarded 2,100 jamboree-themed bolo ties to the youth who had been the most diligent in their effort to live the Scout Oath and Law and meet with them. The tremendous value of this experience cannot be overstated.

Roma Bishop served as communications chair and Floyd Hatch was the chair of the steering committee for the Commissioner’s Corner at the 2017 jamboree.

Roma lives in the San Francisco Bay Area Council, and Floyd lives in the Great Salt Lake Council.

