

Summer 2019

# THE COMMISSIONER

A PUBLICATION FOR COMMISSIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS



[www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners)

## National Commissioner's Minute

*The only thing wrong with commissioners is that there are not enough of them.*

I'm not sure that truer words have ever been spoken regarding commissioner service, especially in light of the new Scouts BSA troops that are being established. Between February 1 and June 1, 2019, over 2,500 new Scouts BSA troops were chartered. And more are being chartered every day.

It is an exciting time to be part of such growth and opportunity. But it also presents a responsibility for us to recruit many, many more individuals into the commissioner corps.

There is a certain magic that occurs in Scouting—when an individual goes from being a member of the BSA to being a Scout. Unit leaders see this with the youth they work with. Commissioners see it too as we work with unit leaders and watch them blossom and see their units grow and thrive.

This is what we are looking for in a commissioner—someone of character who will support unit leaders and help them go from being a member of the BSA to being a Scouter.

Look around you. We don't necessarily need someone with a lot of Scouting experience—we teach Scouting to kids every day of the week. *Surely* we can teach it to adults. We are looking for men and women of character who want to light the fire of Scouting in others—particularly unit leaders.

Join me in reaching out and offering that opportunity to the men and women of character we know.



**Ellie Morrison**  
National Commissioner  
[esmorrison@sbcglobal.net](mailto:esmorrison@sbcglobal.net)



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# Assess, Plan, Act

It's a simple process: Identify strengths and needs, develop SMART goals, and do the work needed to achieve them. **Every** commissioner who uses that process will be more effective. Your National Commissioner Service Team used it during its annual planning conference in June.

It should be no surprise that our single greatest need is recruiting an adequate number of trained, engaged commissioners. This need has three major drivers:

- A disturbing trend: a continuing decline in unit commissioners (year to date, only one area in one region has an increase)
- An exciting development: a year- to-date increase of over 2,500 new Scouts BSA troops
- Great opportunities: Sea Scout ships and Exploring posts and clubs serve youth too, and need the same support commissioners provide to packs, troops, and crews

The entire team will be supporting efforts to recruit, train, and engage unit commissioners. Our regions, areas, councils, and districts can jump-start that process by assessing, planning, and acting. An inadequate number of unit commissioners too often results from not having a clear understanding of current needs and developing a plan to address them.

Other opportunities were identified, including:

- Strengthening and expanding commissioner training
- Expanding communications
- Providing timely information about developments in all program areas (Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouts, and Exploring)
- Increasing access to actionable information and awareness of the capabilities of applications available to commissioners and unit leaders
- Strengthening our approach to starting and sustaining units
- Increasing the bench strength and diversity of the team

We'll continue our *simple and unified* approach to unit service: eliminating anything that distracts commissioners from focusing on supporting unit growth and retention, contacting units, linking unit needs to resources, timely charter renewals, supporting unit leaders, and aligning our efforts with the BSA Game Plan.

"Simple" doesn't necessarily mean "easy." Commissioners need tools and techniques that enable them to work effectively and efficiently; eliminating distractions helps. Building effective relationships with unit leaders and collaboratively assessing, planning, and acting to strengthen units are some of the most rewarding endeavors available to volunteers in Scouting, but it often isn't "easy"; work that provides the greatest rewards seldom is.

On the uptrail ...



Larry Chase  
National Commissioner Service Chair  
[lhc@chasehome.net](mailto:lhc@chasehome.net)



# Commissioning: Celebration and Commitment



The two photos on this page generated chatter when they appeared recently on our social media channels. One captures the commissioning of your National Commissioner Service Team at Philmont's Rayado Ridge site; the other captures the commissioning of all commissioner conference participants at the conclusion of Commissioners Week at Philmont Training Center in June.

Some of the comments suggested that commissioning commissioners isn't common practice today. That's ironic; it's also a lost opportunity.

While there are many definitions of "commission," they share common threads: a "commission" is an authorization to act; an act of entrusting or giving authority; an appointment or assignment to a task or function.

In Scouting, only professional staff members and commissioners are eligible to be commissioned. Just as the wreath of service is a unique design element of their badges of office, commissioning is a unique opportunity for individuals in those positions to publicly commit to providing service in Scouting and to celebrate that commitment.

Commissioners are recruited and commit to serve one year at a time; a commissioning ceremony is a great opportunity to publicly formalize and celebrate their commitment. Your

National Commissioner Service Team's planning cycle runs from June 1 through the following May 31. Completion of its recent annual planning conference offered an opportunity for team members to formalize their commitment to their goals for the coming year.

In recent years we've commissioned participants at the conclusion of national commissioner conferences. Feedback from those participants has consistently indicated that ceremony is one of the most meaningful moments of their conference experience, perhaps because it is an opportunity for them to commit to what they've learned and to celebrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills that will enable them to serve units more effectively.

For commissioners who are renewing their commitment to serve, a review of achievements over the past year and plans for the year to come (Assess – Plan – Act) provides great preparation for a commissioning ceremony. The ceremony provides an opportunity to renew their commitment publicly and to celebrate it publicly, too.

Commitment and recognition are an important part of Scouting. To find out how to conduct commissioning ceremonies, go to [www.scouting.org/commissioners/recognition/commission/](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners/recognition/commission/).



# Communication and Commissioner Recruitment

## What is the best communication channel for recruiting commissioners?

- Roundtable, College of Commissioner Science, and other event announcements?—Nope
- Emails?—That might work, but there are better options out there.
- Phone calls—This works.
- Face-to-face? —This is the big winner.

## What is the message you want to communicate to the candidate?

I think the message can be simplified to this: You want your prospect to understand why you feel they would make a good commissioner considering the responsibilities and requirements of the role.

## How do you communicate this message?

You cannot tell the person they would make a great commissioner unless you have listened, and listening only occurs in a meaningful conversation. So make the time for a meaningful conversation. That conversation should help you determine:

- Do they have a good attitude?
- Will they be a good fit?
- What obstacles are in the way of them joining the team?

Listening is the most important part of communication when recruiting. I've got great news for you: Commissioners are good listeners!

As we look to grow the pool of commissioner candidates, some of them will not have a Scouting background and others will have limited knowledge. When you encounter this issue, remember that we can train for knowledge.

But what do you do when you don't hear the information you feel you need to in order to determine if you should make the ask? You should pose questions. A meaningful conversation is a dialogue. Can this dialogue be done in one meeting? Sometimes yes; sometimes no. In any case, don't make the ask unless you feel confident that you can answer this question: Why would this person be a good commissioner?



*Mike Moegenburg  
National Commissioner Service  
Marketing and Communications Chair  
[mikemoegenburg@yahoo.com](mailto:mikemoegenburg@yahoo.com)*



# The Place to Go for Current Information

There are many websites that contain Scouting information. But not all of them are up to date. Many sites out there have old and outdated information. In 2010, the National Commissioner Service Team began to simplify the role of the commissioner and wanted all commissioners to be unified in delivering unit service to units across the country and overseas to our BSA councils.

Since that time, the Commissioners website has undergone updates to ensure that the latest information is available to commissioners. We have seen the national BSA website ([www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)) get an overhaul as well. The web team at the BSA has been weeding out old links that are no longer needed, including links to old commissioner pages.

The National Commissioner Service Team encourages all commissioners to use the Commissioners website as the main source of information for commissioner service. The web address is [www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners). Be sure to take a look at the Commissioner Manuals and Resources page that now contains all the information that was previously printed in manuals. The printed manuals are now obsolete (though many Scout shops still have them for sale).

If you are familiar with the Commissioners website, you may have noticed a new page called Your National Service Team. It is designed to provide information about what the National Commissioner Service Team has been working on. Most recently the materials used at the National Annual Meeting in May were posted so those who attended did not have to take copious notes and those who could not attend had the most up-to-date information. Be sure to view the Notes pane in the PowerPoint presentation to get all the details. Soon we will be posting information on the planning session we held at Philmont Training Center in June.

So the bottom line is: Use the Commissioners website ([www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners)) for the most up-to-date information. Using other sites may have you doing tasks we have eliminated from commissioner service.



*Darlene Sprague*  
*National Commissioner Service*  
*Resources Chair*  
[darsprague@roadrunner.com](mailto:darsprague@roadrunner.com)



# Commissioner College Schedule

The College of Commissioner Science program is a great way to get additional training. The Commissioners website provides a listing of colleges of commissioner science that we receive information about.

Please check the list, found on the [Commissioner Training page](#), if you would like to experience a college outside of your area or if your council does not currently run a college.

Note: To have your council's college listed, please send information to Darlene Sprague at [darsprague@roadrunner.com](mailto:darsprague@roadrunner.com).

## Questions and Answers

**Question:** Where can I find information on Scoutbook? I realize I will not be able to get in unless my unit grants me access, but is there information available?

**Answer:** You may go to [www.scoutbook.com](http://www.scoutbook.com). Once you are on that page, you will see the statement "More Scoutbook and Internet Advancement help is here" near the top. Click "here" on the page to see the information sections.

**Question:** What is JIRA?

**Answer:** JIRA is the BSA Service Desk. It is still in development but highly functional. Go to <https://membercare.scouting.org>. You will need to establish an account, using your email address as your username. This is the fastest way to get your problem solved.



# Using Technology to Recruit Commissioners

We all have skills, but we don't all have the same skills. Personally, I've never been able to start a fire with a bow and drill. I'm more technically minded, so when it comes to fire starting, I really think a 9-volt battery and some fine steel wool provide a good alternative to matches. The same thing applies to recruiting people. Some of us are really good at "making the sale" and "closing the deal" but not so good at finding prospects, while some of us can really see the potential in an individual but are not so good at "making the sale." With those thoughts in mind when we developed Commissioner Tools, we included the ability to suggest a commissioner prospect as a part of the "Unit Priorities and Details" section of the detailed assessment.

For those not familiar with the process of proposing a commissioner using the detailed assessment, take a look at the following image. There are three pieces of information that you can fill in for the candidate: 1) First name and last name; 2) phone number (you select whether it is a home, work, or mobile number); and 3) email address. Once you have submitted the detailed assessment, you have completed this part of the recruitment process; it is now up to an administrative commissioner to take the information that you have submitted and follow up.



In the April update to Commissioner Tools, we added a new report titled "Commissioner Recruitment." The report is very straightforward; you select the organization level you are interested in (council, district, etc.) and the date range and then run the report. The output can be viewed on-screen or exported to a CSV file so it can be manipulated using a spreadsheet.



**Rick Hillenbrand**  
National Commissioner Service  
Commissioner Technology Chair  
[rick\\_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu](mailto:rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu)

In a review of entries made using the capability to suggest a commissioner candidate in a detailed assessment, here are some best practices to make this function more useful:

- If you don't have a candidate, leave the fields blank. Entering "none," "n/a," "none known," or something similar is of no value. Detailed assessments without any data in these fields will not be included in the report. By including text such as "none," these null value inputs get included in the report.
- Enter only the data requested in the data fields and in the format requested.

Being a commissioner can be one of the most rewarding volunteer positions you can ever fill. Additionally, at times being a commissioner can challenge your skills and abilities, such as how to turn a "no" into a "yes." When we recruit commissioners, one of the tasks that helps achieve the "yes" is to understand what motivates an individual. When you come across that person who thrives on a challenge, perhaps the question to be asked is, "Are you tough enough to be a commissioner?"



# Who Needs Technology to Recruit Commissioners?

Sometimes unplugging from technology feels good. Perhaps we want to take a quiet walk in the woods to see what wildlife might cross our path. At other times, technology can actually SLOW progress, especially when we devote lots of time trying to “get it perfect” using a computer or doing simple things like looking up a phone number (although I have to admit that it has been years since I got a phone book).

So, what NON-tech or LOW-tech methods can we use to recruit commissioners? In years past, many experienced Scouters would regularly—perhaps once a year—review old unit rosters looking for potential commissioner candidates. The extremely low-tech approach would be to gather saved unit rosters from prior years. (I was taught that these unit rosters were called “field sheets,” but that term may have been very local.) When I was a unit commissioner, my district executive would annually provide a set of field sheets to each commissioner for each unit served, and an entire set for every unit for the district chair and district commissioner. For new commissioners, and those who do not have an archive of old unit rosters, we need a slightly less low-tech approach: You can get a historical unit roster version of the same report run in ScoutNET by a professional such as your district executive or registrar. See the sample unit report, report #0105 run on July 8, 2019, for the same timeframe in 2016.

Once you have these old rosters, you can then either by yourself or with a group of key district leaders, “mine” the rosters looking for former leaders who are not currently registered as a unit leader. This process has been around for decades and has many names; currently the BSA uses a process similar to this as a part of Friendstorming. I liked turning the event into a semi-social activity, done with some food and beverages.

This article is not intended to be an exhaustive list of ideas on recruiting commissioners, such as: look through the Rotary Club roster, or walk through unit campsites during the program time of a camporee seeking adults back in camp with little to do. But I would be remiss if I did not mention one final and very lucrative source of commissioner candidates that requires a minimal amount of individual technological proficiency: a National Eagle Scout Association (NESA) member roster. At the time of this writing, the NESA database was undergoing an upgrade (<https://nesa.org/database-upgrade-update/>), so to get a NESA roster to mine, you will have to work through your council, which would have to reach out to [NESA@scouting.org](mailto:NESA@scouting.org) or [BSAalumni@scouting.org](mailto:BSAalumni@scouting.org), whereupon lists would be generated and provided.

Report #: 0105 v6.10  
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Page 1 of 11

Roster

Troop 0688

District: Troop 24 Old Dominion R  
 County: Fairfax  
 Term: 12  
 Expire Date: 12/31/2016

Code 026 Executive Officer  
 Methodist Church  
 (703)

100% Boys Life Y  
 Top Leader Trained Y  
 Tenure 368 Months

Meeting Place: Church  
 Frequency: MONDAY  
 Boys' Life: Term: 12  
 Begin Date: 03/01/2016  
 End Date: 02/28/2017

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Position Name	YPT Status	Person ID	Address	Stat	B/L Sub	Birth (mm/dd)	Sex	Phone
Scoutmaster			1000 ...	R	N	05/86	M	H (703)
Youth Protect.(Y01) Completed Date: 05/23/2018 Committee Member			1000 ...	R	N	01/04	F	H (703)
Youth Protect.(Y01) Completed Date: 06/12/2016 Assistant Scoutmaster			1000 ...	R	N	01/19	M	H (703)
Youth Protect.(Y01) Completed Date: 04/12/2019 Committee Member			1000 ...	R	N	09/29	M	H (703)
Youth Protect.(Y01) Completed Date: 09/10/2016 Committee Member			1000 ...	R	N	10/81	F	H (703)



# Casting a Wider Net

We all know the challenge: recruiting enough commissioners so that every unit leader can realize and experience the friendship of a unit-serving commissioner.

Recently, we've recommended "recruiting for character and training for skill." That's important; it increases the number of candidates available. So does recruiting a variety of volunteers who are under-represented in our commissioner corps today: women, younger volunteers, and volunteers who reflect the communities our units serve. There is a simple concept fundamental to recruiting commissioners: *Anyone* with a servant's heart who represents the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law and reflects the communities our units serve is a candidate for unit service; we can train willing volunteers who meet that standard to serve units.

The communities our units serve are diverse and our volunteers increasingly so. Our commissioner corps is not. Recruiting commissioners representative of the communities our units serve increases our ability to achieve great commissioner fit: a unit commissioner who creates a relationship with unit leaders based on respect, trust, candor, and objectivity.

Companies face the same challenge and are taking a broader approach to recruiting to build sustainable teams and maximize expertise, innovation, and impact. Recruiting talent and succession planning are essential to their future success. *Every* employee has the potential to bring value to the organization; *every* volunteer has the potential to bring value to Scouting.

There is a great article from Bryan on Scouting (July 5, 2019) that speaks to this: "[Historically young Silver Antelope recipient says Scouting values all voices.](#)" Its key points include:

- Scouting is the great equalizer.
- It's about passion.
- Labels like age are irrelevant.

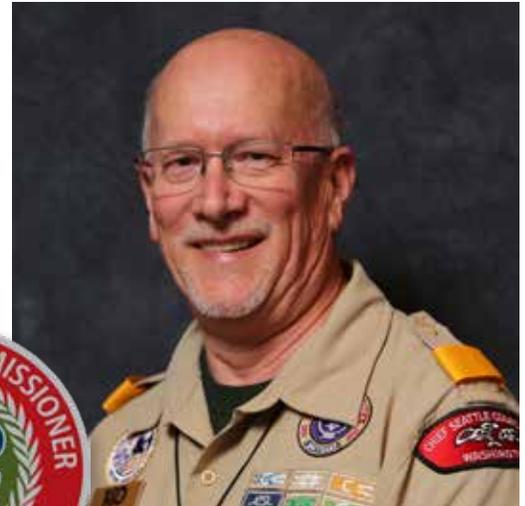
## Recruiting Commissioners Can Be a Challenge

Putting together a plan to recruit new commissioners can be a challenge, but it's a most worthwhile challenge! The reward is the outcome from acting on the challenge.

A plan emphasizes commitment. We need commissioners who are engaged and who are committed to being a friend to the unit to help ensure that "Every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience."

Begin by determining your strengths and needs. An effective plan starts with an assessment of where you are and where you want to be.

1. Know your units.
  - a. Run reports that help assess unit health in Commissioner Tools.
  - b. Include district operations when possible (including professional staff).
  - c. Discuss the results with your commissioner cabinet.



*Kevin Baker*  
National Commissioner Service  
Recruitment and Retention Chair  
[tubacaz@hotmail.com](mailto:tubacaz@hotmail.com)

- Make the connections.
- Recruit more women. (Amanda Vogt says, "The solution is simple: Ask.")

How do we recruit the commissioners needed to ensure every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience? Identify volunteers with a servant's heart who represent the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law and reflect the communities our units serve; then just ask.

Read the article. It's great!

2. Identify at risk vs. strong units.
  - a. Possible "at risk" units are new units, particularly Scouts BSA all-girl troops that were started with minimal or less than minimal youth and leadership.
  - b. Pay attention to Cub Scout units in general, which are the lifeblood of Scouting.
  - c. Focus to ensure we don't lose units that can be saved.
3. Triage. Assess priorities based on known commissioner resources.
4. Reassign or repurpose commissioners as needed. We know we don't have enough commissioners, but we likely have strong commissioners who can help focus on units needing service.
5. Implement a plan to recruit new commissioners (simultaneous effort).



Utilize the tools that are available to you now to help identify candidates for unit service. Updates on current tools such as Friendstorming are in the works. Also, you are not limited to this being a council-driven initiative. Friendstorming can and should be used at the district level. And remember—it's not about the list you create; it's about what you do with the list that matters.

Think about barriers and solutions: What are they? What are you asking a new commissioner to do?

Look for candidates of good character who have a servant heart and understand and accept the commitment needed.

Recruit for character—train for skill. We can teach a new commissioner what he or she needs to know to fulfill the responsibilities of the role. Tenure might be desirable but is **not** required. Age is not an issue either. It's about "fit"—"commissioner fit."

When you make a plan, be sure to develop SMART goals:

- **Specific:** What are your recruiting objectives?
- **Measurable:** How many and when based on current needs and projections? What skills sets are needed?
- **Action-oriented:** Friendstorm – "shop" = compelling ask. Who will ask? What will be asked? When? Where? Define the commitment—one year at a time—and get an agreement. Onboarding and training will be needed.
- **Realistic:** Deal with barriers. Ensure the best distribution of resources based on current need. Keep prospect lists manageable.
- **Time- and Resource-based:** Set dates for checkpoints to assess progress. Where do you want to be in 30 days? 60 days? 90 days? 180 days? This time next year?

**Assess – Plan – Act**

## Let Them Experience the Friendship of a Commissioner

My hope is that every unit leader can realize and experience the friendship of a unit-serving commissioner.

Of all the roles a unit-serving commissioner has, the most important one is being a "friend" to the unit. There is only one council service to a unit that is constant, and that is the friendly, personal help given by a unit commissioner. An engaged unit commissioner provides the continuity that is so important to unit success and sustainability.

Please take another look at our newsletters over the last year or so. Your National Commissioner Service Team is working hard to address the critical issue we face—recruiting more unit-serving commissioners. Some reports point to a continuing decline in unit commissioners. Looking into that further suggests that some councils are reviewing their rosters of commissioners and finding that some are not engaged, are no longer active, and have been dropped. Some may just need a meaningful conversation and perhaps a nudge to encourage them to re-engage. Clearly, declining numbers are not good, regardless. We need more

commissioners; as Ellie says at the beginning of her article, "The only thing wrong with commissioners is that there are not enough of them."

Here are some comments heard at Philmont Training Center in June:

- It's easier not to do things, especially the hard things.
- Visiting units that are struggling is one of the hard things.
- Being a friend to a unit can't happen if you don't have a relationship with the unit leadership.
- There is no friendship with someone you don't know. Seems logical, for sure, but absolutely speaks to the notion that a commissioner must be seen as a friend to the unit.



# Now That You Have Recruited a New Commissioner, What's Next?

There is a clear need to recruit more commissioners to serve our units. There is also a clear need to ensure that the new commissioners are equipped to serve. Your service team has created and maintains position-specific basic training to help you equip your new commissioners to serve.

The availability of basic training should be a part of the recruitment discussion. One of the first questions a potential new commissioner will ask is, "How do I do my job?" Basic training will help answer that question.

The basic training curriculum is delivered in either an online or an instructor-led format. Basic training has four modules:

- Acclimation
- Before the First Meeting
- First 30 Days
- Within 90 Days

New commissioners should be encouraged to complete the basic training for their position as soon as possible.

One of the hallmarks of the basic training curriculum is the onboarding process. This process is built around a new commissioner being partnered with a more experienced commissioner and the pair working together to complete a series of defined tasks related to the role. If properly implemented at the local level, this can give the new commissioner the confidence needed to fulfill his or her responsibilities of serving the unit, district, or council.

To learn more about the basic training resources, go to [www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/basic-training/](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/basic-training/).



*John Cherry*  
*National Commissioner Service*  
*Commissioner Development Chair*  
[jcherry628@aol.com](mailto:jcherry628@aol.com)

## Applying Technology Conference at Florida Sea Base in January

Registration is open for a new conference for commissioners, Applying Technology in Unit Service, to be held January 12–18, 2020, at Florida Sea Base Conference Center.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the suite of tools available to commissioners including Commissioner Tools, Member Manager, Training Manager, Online Registration, Online Charter Renewal, Scoutbook, and more. Participants will have extensive engagement with Commissioner Tools in a hands-on learning environment. This will be an opportunity to provide

meaningful feedback on the technology and will allow participants to expand their networks of Scouters to enable broadening the use of technology. This conference will have extensive use of presentation, guided discussion, and hands-on experiential learning.

To register for this conference and to learn more about other national training opportunities, go to: [www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/).



# Commissioners Week 2019 a Great Experience

We typically describe Commissioners Week as:

- A mountaintop training conference with a top-flight faculty
- The inspiring ambience of a big sky sunset over a working ranch in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains
- Family programs for all age groups from infant through adult so the whole family benefits
- Recreation and personal time in an area rich in history and natural beauty
- A week of Scouting fellowship

Seventy-five commissioners (and many family members), along with faculty members, the National Commissioner Service Team, and the national commissioner were able to experience this June 9–15. This year we had five commissioners from Scouts Australia in attendance, which added to the experience.

Six conferences covering a broad range of topics were conducted:

- Strengthening Council Unit Service
- Strengthening District Unit Service
- Strengthening Unit Service
- Second Century Service
- Recruiting and Engaging Commissioners
- Starting, Sustaining, and Growing Units

Here is what commissioners had to say about “the best thing that happened at the conference”:

- “The course content was excellent, beginning to end. The opportunity to meet national/regional commissioners and the commissioner service team was a real plus; it built a sense of participation, collegiality, and belonging at the national level.”
- “Great faculty and class members who all promoted good information being shared to enhance commissioner service.”
- “Networking and opportunity to share/discuss best practices. Fellowship and linking resources/knowledge/experience amongst the new commissioner friends will be helpful.”
- “Developed both recruiting and retention plans to take home. Presentations from many of the national commissioner staff.”
- “I learned so much! But my favorite thing was all the new connections I made in Scouting—around the world! It was great to have Scouts Australia represented; they really added a ton to my course! I also enjoyed our field trip to Rocky Mountain Scout Camp. It was nice to get out of the classroom for an afternoon.”
- “Interactions with my classmates and instructors.”

Planning is already underway for Commissioners Week 2020! Save the date—June 7–13, 2020—and start planning your adventure!



## 2019 Impact Session Schedule

The following impact sessions are scheduled for the remainder of 2019:

### Applying Technology in Unit Service

August 23–25

Central Region, Crossroads of America Council, Indianapolis, Indiana

### Delivering a Great College of Commissioner Science

October 4–6

Southern Region, Sam Houston Area Council, Houston, Texas

### Recruiting and Engaging Commissioners

November 1–3

Northeast Region, Cradle of Liberty Council, Wayne, Pennsylvania

To register for these sessions and to learn more about other national training opportunities, go to: [www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/national/).

Planning is already underway for 2020 impact sessions. There will be one impact session in each region.



# Recruiting Commissioners for a New Unit

We can never have too many commissioners, which means commissioners should always be recruiting; that is, looking for volunteers who will make great commissioners or who will serve on the district committee. It's especially important to have a new-unit commissioner when starting a new unit.

New-unit commissioners are the go-to person for new units. They must be willing to uphold the promise of the BSA that every member of the new unit will have a great Scouting experience. New-unit commissioners are dedicated to only one unit, taking pride in the creation of the new unit and watching it grow. The new-unit commissioner will need to give this unit extra service.

Where do we find new-unit commissioners? A new-unit commissioner can be a seasoned commissioner. When we recruit new-unit commissioners, what do we look for and where do we find them? All candidates for commissioner service need to have a "servant heart."

The new-unit commissioner will work with the district executive and new-unit organizer (a member of the district membership team) to start a new unit. Starting a new unit requires a long-term commitment—36 months—by the new-unit commissioner to ensure the success and growth of the unit.

We must be able to give an accurate description of what a new-unit commissioner does. What are the expectations, time commitments, training, and tasks performed by the new-unit commissioner? The selection of a committed new-unit commissioner is essential to the success of the new unit.

A seasoned commissioner will be better equipped with the knowledge, tools, and district committee resources to provide the support needed for a new unit. It is the role of the district commissioner to evaluate and ask members of the commissioner team to become a new-unit commissioner.

A new-unit commissioner can also be a volunteer who is 21 years old and an Eagle Scout, a former camp staff member, or an Arrowman who would be mentored by an experienced commissioner, an assistant district commissioner, or the district commissioner.

Recruitment of commissioners is always ongoing. It is a conversation with a parent at a meeting or someone you run into at the store. I always wear my Scouting smile and follow up with a note or set up a meeting for coffee. Remember—we can never have enough commissioners.

The [Unit Performance Guide](#) is a valuable resource for the new-unit commissioner.



**Sue Simmons**  
*National Commissioner Service*  
*Starting and Sustaining Units Chair*  
[susan.simmons1@comcast.net](mailto:susan.simmons1@comcast.net)



# Finding a New Generation of Commissioners

The BSA's National Annual Meeting took place this year at the Gaylord Rockies in Aurora, Colorado. Over a thousand Scouters from all over the United States participated in the meeting. I was attending NAM for my third time, but this was my first time as a member of the National Commissioner Service Team. I got to sit in on many of the national program meetings—from Cub Scouting to Sea Scouts—including side meetings with various subcommittees. I also attended commissioner-specific sessions and had discussions with individuals from districts and councils up to the area and regional levels.

There was one consistent message coming out of all these meetings: **There are not enough commissioners out there, and we need more now!**

The reasons varied with each of the different programs as well as with various regions and areas. For instance, some programs are dealing with attrition as the current staff is aging out, and successors are slow to come by. For others, it's a matter of new-unit growth outnumbering the available commissioners. The exciting addition of girl troops across the country is a perfect example of this. Also, there is simply the need to grow more units in a council, which requires more commissioners in place to support them.

The population pool to fill this gap starts with **Scouters who are currently serving in BSA programs**. Many of these leaders have invested a significant part of themselves in program and youth service. They are familiar with the organization within their district or council. Even though some have kids who are ready to age out, these leaders may still have a passion to continue as Scouters and to experience greater adventures in a larger context of the BSA.

Finding that next generation of commissioners usually entails three elements: **Ask, Educate, and Encourage**. Sitting down and having a one-on-one conversation with a candidate will lead



**Steve Lee**  
National Commissioner Service  
Program Chair  
[stevel0923@gmail.com](mailto:stevel0923@gmail.com)

to greater success in recruitment than sending email blasts to the general audience. Educating is usually required because the candidate has limited knowledge of the role and duties of a commissioner. Moreover, encouragement is often needed to address the “Why me?” or “Are you sure I am the right person?” questions that everyone asks.

An important reminder: **We are hiring for character and training for skills!** We are looking for those with a servant's heart who exemplify the **Scout Law of being friendly, courteous, and kind**.

## BSA Program Updates for the Commissioner Corps

The following information reflects the latest updates within each of the BSA programs. To help our commissioners stay on top of the latest in news, training opportunities, and program updates in order to serve their unit leadership, *The Commissioner* will provide regular updates from national program committees. In cases where BSA programs have their own update website, we will point you to those sites.

### Sea Scouts

- In 2018, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary formally partnered with Sea Scouts BSA. The memorandum of agreement outlined five purposes, the first of which is to enhance the common goals of promoting recreational boating safety throughout the United States. Additionally, the partnership aims to strengthen ties between the two organizations. Sea Scouts, both youth and adult, are accepted as associate members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association with a pathway to full auxiliary membership. [Coast Guard Auxiliary](#)

- Introduction to On-the-Water Leader Skills (IOWLS) and Advanced On-Water Leader Skills (AOWLS) training courses are now available for councils to organize and run. IOWLS provides adult leaders an introduction to resources and on-the-water skills they need to assist Sea Scouts in achieving the Apprentice and Ordinary ranks. AOWLS models how adult leaders can step back from the helm, set performance expectations for the youth in their unit, and safely conduct an effective Sea Scout program underway. [Adult Training](#)
- New marketing resources for councils and unit leaders are available online. Marketing materials with logos, open house fliers, online resources, and more are available in the [Marketing Toolbox](#) to recruit new Sea Scouts.
- New Sea Scout monthly webinars can be found at the [Sea Scouts Facebook page](#). The purpose of the group is to promote the Sea Scouting program and Sea Scouts for young men and women from ages 14 to 21. The Sea



Scouts website has moved to the BSA website at [Sea Scouts Program](#). Additional information is available at [SeaScout.org](#).

## Venturing

- The National Venturing Officers' Association consists of the national Venturing president, national Venturing vice president, four regional Venturing presidents, and their respective Advisors. These individuals are direct resources who know the councils and areas close to you, can answer any questions about Venturing, and can point you in the right direction for additional resources, events, and training opportunities. [Meet Your Officer](#)
- [VenturingFest 2020](#), the third national gathering of Venturers at the Summit Bechtel Reserve, is scheduled for June 28 to July 3! VenturingFest—an experience unlike any other—is a special Scouting event at the Summit that's open to registered Venturers, Scouts, and adult leaders. This six-day high-adventure festival invites participants to explore the best the Summit has to offer. We're talking rock climbing, skateboarding, BMX biking, water sports, shooting sports, zip lines, challenge courses, and so much more! As if the adrenaline-pumping activities weren't enough, festival-goers will also get to jam out to concerts and meet new friends in Venturing at the event. What more could a Venturer want?
- On select occasions national VOA officers or Advisors may be available to attend Venturing events in order to inspire others, present trainings, lead discussions, act as keynote speakers, or explain opportunities available in Venturing throughout the nation. If you would like a national officer or Advisor to attend your council, area, or region event, please visit [National Representation](#).
- The [Venturing Alumni Network](#), a Venturing alumni affinity group, has been formed. Operated by a subcommittee of the National Venturing Committee, and supported by the Boy Scouts of America, Venturing, and the Scouting Alumni and Friends, the group's purposed is to service and support the alumni of the Venturing program, help them find purpose, empower them to reconnect and reengage, and retain all those positively impacted by the Venturing program.
- A [Venturing commissioner conference](#) will be offered at the Florida Sea Base January 19–25, 2020. Focus on how commissioners, council Venturing volunteers, and council

professionals can support Venturing crews and Venturing officers' associations. Using the new Venturing roundtable guides, ALPS program support guides and Venturing advancement, participants will gain new enthusiasm and a new toolbox full of ways to help grow and support local units.

## Cub Scouts

- Preview adventures were introduced at the National Annual Meeting. These are Cub Scouting activities that are in the experimental phase. They are a way for our Cub Scouts to test an adventure before we commit to including it in the Cub Scout handbooks. We want to see what works and what does not work, and make updates along the way. We want to know what our boys and girls doing the adventures think before making them a permanent part of our program. Check out preview adventures at [Preview Adventures](#).
- Online Cub Scout training has been updated with topic-specific modules with videos of various lengths, none lasting more than 12 minutes. The modules were designed with today's parents in mind and can be completed on any device. Separate tracks have been set up for den leaders, Cubmasters, committee members, and committee chairs. Redundant content has been eliminated. Check it out at the BSA Learn Center.
- Digital Cub Scout lesson plans complete with examples will launch in August. These step-by-step instructions and handbook references were created in response to parents asking for help in running the program. They are part of Scoutbook.

## Scouts BSA

- Scouts BSA maintains its own webpage with the latest updates: [Scouts BSA Updates](#).

## National Disability Awareness

- The most recent brochure for working with Scouts with special needs and disabilities is available from the BSA website. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- The BSA Disability Awareness Committee maintains a separate webpage of its own with recent updates: [Disability Awareness](#).



# Exploring—Did You Know ...

- Exploring is a hands-on career education program for young men and women in clubs (sixth to eighth grade) and posts (ages 14 to 20) with the goal of helping them make more informed decisions about career opportunities and plan for their work lives?
- There are more similarities than differences between Exploring and Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouting?
- Exploring, which was the first BSA program to welcome young women into its ranks in 1971, was a traditional BSA program until 1998?
- Exploring then became a part of Learning for Life, a BSA affiliate program, to enable more companies, local/county/state/national governmental agencies and departments, labor unions, etc., to sponsor Exploring units (because the BSA's "Declaration of Religious Principles" membership requirement was a barrier to them)?
- Exploring members are included with other BSA programs in our calculation of units and members?
- Exploring members attend—and support—district and council events such as camporees?
- Unit commissioners don't need to register with Exploring to serve clubs and posts?
- Unit commissioners use the same tools and techniques to serve all units?
- You can learn more about Exploring by completing the Servicing Exploring Units module available to commissioners in the BSA Learn Center?
- Even more information about Exploring is available at [www.exploring.org](http://www.exploring.org)?

Exploring is a program offered to serve youth in a specific way—hands-on career education. Like Cub Scouting, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scouts, it has some unique program

## Posts and Clubs Need Service, Too

We face the same challenge in supporting *all* Scouting units (packs, troops, crews, ships, and Exploring posts and clubs): We don't have enough unit commissioners and Exploring service team members to serve them. Some council and district commissioners have recognized the need to support Exploring posts and clubs and have assigned unit commissioners from their limited resources. That's great, but it's the exception, not the rule. As you'll see in other articles in this issue, we're going to work at changing that in the coming year.

Members of your service team will be working with national Exploring leadership to develop new approaches to recruiting unit commissioners and Exploring service team members to serve posts and clubs. We'll need help in doing that: local



*Craig Martin*  
*National Commissioner Service*  
*Exploring Chair*  
[bruin1967@aol.com](mailto:bruin1967@aol.com)

elements and uses some unique language. But at its core, like those other programs, it's a program that develops youth into productive members of our communities. And like those other programs, the leaders of its posts and clubs need the support an engaged commissioner can provide to help them grow and thrive.

*All* commissioners make meaningful contacts, build effective plans, and ensure a great Scouting experience. Great Scouting experiences *can* be provided by packs, troops, crews, ships, clubs, and posts. Commissioners help ensure they *will* be.

councils that would be willing to pilot new approaches and individuals who would be willing to support your service team as recruiting subject matter experts. If you have skills and experience in recruiting volunteers, please contact me ([bruin1967@aol.com](mailto:bruin1967@aol.com)) or Kevin Baker ([tubacaz@hotmail.com](mailto:tubacaz@hotmail.com)).

We'll keep you updated on our progress in future issues.

Every member should have a great Scouting experience, whether they are in a pack, troop, crew, ship, or Exploring post or club. Commissioners do that; serving units is some of the most rewarding work in Scouting. Working together over the coming year, we'll build the team to provide the support those units—and the youth they serve—deserve.



# New Scoutbook Features for Den Leaders Available

Scoutbook is making it easier than ever to prepare for den meetings and ensure consistent program delivery through new features for den leaders! These tools streamline content and

advancement processes so den leaders can focus on making Scouting come to life for Cub Scouts. Get the details on these exciting new features by clicking [here](#).



# Regional and Area Commissioners

Updated August 2019

Central Regional Commissioner Mike Weber <a href="mailto:mfweber112@comcast.net">mfweber112@comcast.net</a>	Southern Regional Commissioner Gail Plucker <a href="mailto:tenniseemom@comcast.net">tenniseemom@comcast.net</a>	Western Regional Commissioner Del Bishop <a href="mailto:dbishopjr67@comcast.net">dbishopjr67@comcast.net</a>	Northeast Regional Commissioner Linda Baker <a href="mailto:lalbaker@aol.com">lalbaker@aol.com</a>
Area 1 Commissioner Greg Nygren <a href="mailto:nygren5154@gmail.com">nygren5154@gmail.com</a>	Area 1 Commissioner Diogo Tavares <a href="mailto:diogo.pf.tavares@gmail.com">diogo.pf.tavares@gmail.com</a>	Area 1 Commissioner Dave Murphy <a href="mailto:murphy@pcinv.com">murphy@pcinv.com</a>	Area 1 Commissioner Craig Donais <a href="mailto:craig.donais@nhscouter.com">craig.donais@nhscouter.com</a>
Area 2 Commissioner Dick Northrup <a href="mailto:northrup@cass.net">northrup@cass.net</a>	Area 2 Commissioner Matt Walker <a href="mailto:mmwalker51@gmail.com">mmwalker51@gmail.com</a>	Area 2 Commissioner Richard P. Trentman <a href="mailto:commissioner@area2wr.com">commissioner@area2wr.com</a>	Area 2 Commissioner Sal Ciampo <a href="mailto:spciampo@aol.com">spciampo@aol.com</a>
Area 3 Commissioner Carm Walgamott <a href="mailto:walgamott@aol.com">walgamott@aol.com</a>	Area 3 Commissioner Steve Allen <a href="mailto:sallen98@austin.rr.com">sallen98@austin.rr.com</a>	Area 3 Commissioner Judd Stiff <a href="mailto:jstiff@pacbell.net">jstiff@pacbell.net</a>	Area 3 Commissioner Darlene Kihlberg <a href="mailto:dmkihlberg@gmail.com">dmkihlberg@gmail.com</a>
Area 4 Commissioner Bruce C. Boyle <a href="mailto:bcb51@aol.com">bcb51@aol.com</a>	Area 4 Commissioner Jim Thielen <a href="mailto:scouts@lamb-thielen.com">scouts@lamb-thielen.com</a>	Area 4 Commissioner Rick TerBorch <a href="mailto:rterborch@earthlink.net">rterborch@earthlink.net</a>	Area 4 Commissioner Russ Devore <a href="mailto:rbdevore@yahoo.com">rbdevore@yahoo.com</a>
Area 5 Commissioner Scott Erikson <a href="mailto:eriksonS@aol.com">eriksonS@aol.com</a>	Area 5 Commissioner James Blake <a href="mailto:jblake@clemsun.edu">jblake@clemsun.edu</a>	Area 6 Commissioner Jeffrey S. Bostwick <a href="mailto:bostwick.jeffrey@gmail.com">bostwick.jeffrey@gmail.com</a>	Area 5 Commissioner Steve Perrone <a href="mailto:sperrone@ppciga.org">sperrone@ppciga.org</a>
Area 6 Commissioner Jon Kerr <a href="mailto:jon.kerr817@gmail.com">jon.kerr817@gmail.com</a>	Area 6 Commissioner Bill Greisner <a href="mailto:wagiii@windstream.net">wagiii@windstream.net</a>		Area 6 Commissioner Dave Short <a href="mailto:drshortwb@gmail.com">drshortwb@gmail.com</a>
Area 7 Commissioner Jean Guzzetta <a href="mailto:jean.guzzetta@aurora.org">jean.guzzetta@aurora.org</a>	Area 7 Commissioner Tom Carter <a href="mailto:TCarterlds@yahoo.com">TCarterlds@yahoo.com</a>		
	Area 8 Commissioner Robert L. Spinks <a href="mailto:bspinks@okcu.edu">bspinks@okcu.edu</a>		
	Area 9 Commissioner Jennifer Abbey <a href="mailto:jen.abbey1@gmail.com">jen.abbey1@gmail.com</a>		



# National Commissioner Service Team

Kevin Baker	Recruitment and Retention Chair	<a href="mailto:tubacaz@hotmail.com">tubacaz@hotmail.com</a>	Woodinville, WA
Gary Carroll	Staff Advisor	<a href="mailto:gary.carroll@scouting.org">gary.carroll@scouting.org</a>	Irving, TX
Larry Chase	National Commissioner Service Chair	<a href="mailto:lhc@chasehome.net">lhc@chasehome.net</a>	Atlanta, GA
John Cherry	Commissioner Development Chair	<a href="mailto:jcherry628@aol.com">jcherry628@aol.com</a>	Atlanta, GA
Rick Hillenbrand	Commissioner Technology Chair	<a href="mailto:rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu">rick_hillenbrand@alum.mit.edu</a>	Romney, WV
Steven Lee	Program Chair	<a href="mailto:stevel0923@gmail.com">stevel0923@gmail.com</a>	San Diego, CA
Craig Martin	Exploring Chair	<a href="mailto:Bruin1967@aol.com">Bruin1967@aol.com</a>	Colorado Springs, CO
Mike Moegenburg	Marketing and Communications Chair	<a href="mailto:mikemoegenburg@yahoo.com">mikemoegenburg@yahoo.com</a>	Sheboygan, WI
Ellie Morrison	National Commissioner	<a href="mailto:esmorrison@sbcglobal.net">esmorrison@sbcglobal.net</a>	Waco, TX
Susan Simmons	Starting and Sustaining Units Chair	<a href="mailto:susan.simmons1@comcast.net">susan.simmons1@comcast.net</a>	Chicago, IL
Darlene Sprague	Resources Chair	<a href="mailto:darsprague@roadrunner.com">darsprague@roadrunner.com</a>	Niagara Falls, NY



# JTE Key Performance Indicators

The Journey to Excellence Key Performance Indicators from July 2019 can be accessed [here](#).

## Coming Events

### 2019

#### August 23–25

Commissioner Impact Session: Applying Technology in Unit Service

Central Region, Crossroads of America Council, Indianapolis, Indiana

Click [here](#) for information and registration.

#### October 4–6

Commissioner Impact Session: Delivering a Great College of Commissioner Science

Southern Region, Sam Houston Area Council, Houston, Texas

Click [here](#) for information and registration.

#### November 1–3

Commissioner Impact Session: Recruiting and Engaging Commissioners

Northeast Region, Cradle of Liberty Council, Wayne, Pennsylvania

Click [here](#) for information and registration.

### 2020

#### January 12–18

Applying Technology in Unit Service Conference  
Florida Sea Base Conference Center

Click [here](#) for information.

#### May 20–22

National Annual Meeting and National Executive Board and Committee Meetings

Gaylord National, National Harbor, Maryland

#### June 7–13

Commissioners Week

Philmont Training Center

