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A Simple and Unified Approach Will Focus Our Unit Service Efforts

By Scott Sorrels, National Commissioner Service Chair

Sometimes simpler is better. In this age of new technology and new initiatives, it is sometimes appropriate to step back and look at the forest. Earlier this year, the National Commissioner Service Task Force met and focused on where we have been as a commissioner corps and, more importantly, what we can do to make the duties of unit commissioners and the administrative commissioners who support them both easier and more fulfilling. The theme we kept coming back to is the need to make the expectations that we have for our volunteers more manageable and easier to achieve, as well as the need to carry that same message throughout our commissioner service support resources. Stated another way, we need a simple and unified approach to supporting the commissioner corps.

The retention mission statement given above captures the important elements needed to be effective in improving retention. Tico Perez, our national commissioner, has long challenged us to own retention, and we have seen an increase in retention due to your efforts. It is a lot easier to improve and keep a unit than it is to start a new one. The statement proposes that we deploy an adequate number of trained unit commissioners. We ended 2011 hitting a record of more than 30,000 unit commissioners and our best unit-to-commissioner ratio ever at 3.7. In terms of training, you will find information throughout this newsletter about new training materials, including an exciting revision of basic training and a complete rewrite of the College of Commissioner Science syllabus. The new syllabus will allow us to have a uniform curriculum fully supported by Web-based materials for each course.

The concept of linkage is critical to our execution mission. In the best of worlds, the unit commissioner is a link to the subject matter experts and resources who reside at the district committee level. Where those subject matter experts do not yet exist, our commissioners should support the efforts of the district Key 3 to recruit and deploy the right resource specialists. A new pilot project by the Western Region focuses on that linkage, and we look forward to learning from their efforts. There can be little doubt that we need to strengthen our district operations in order to increase unit and youth retention.



Retention Mission Statement

The retention mission of the commissioner corps is best achieved by providing an adequate number of trained unit commissioners who provide a link to district committee resources in support of a quality unit program.

We should strive to make the functions of unit commissioner as simple as possible. It is also supposed to be fun. During our analysis, the task force identified various job descriptions with at least 38 different tasks that we ask of a unit commissioner. That is hardly a simple job description. Put more simply, the BSA needs for our unit commissioners to focus on the following four primary areas:

- **Supporting unit growth in the Journey to Excellence criteria:** JTE measures performance characteristics that unlock the door to a successful unit. We should analyze the unit's program and identify JTE areas where help is needed to move the unit to a higher level of JTE success.
- **Linking district committee resources to the unit:** We should support the district committee's delivery of a "catalog of services" to support the specific JTE elements needed for a particular unit's health and success.
- **Visiting units and logging the visits into the Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS):** Our core task remains visiting the unit. UVTS input feeds critical information to the district committee to help link resources to the unit.
- **Supporting on-time charter renewal:** The commissioner's focus is the retention of the unit, though we should be especially mindful of supporting new youth membership efforts as we move more toward a volunteer-led, professionally guided approach to increasing membership.



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In the coming months, the task force will “tear the covers off” of our printed and online resources and will move forward in support of a simple and unified message that is consistent across our platforms. Although some materials and resources are dated and will go away, other materials that are complex and inconsistent will be unified in their approach. All of these new or revised materials will be readily available on the commissioner website.

We welcome your thoughts on how we can further enhance a simple and unified approach to serving our units.



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