

FEBRUARY – DEN CHIEFS

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LEE: Welcome to ScoutCast for February. I'm Lee Shaw, Team Lead of National Alliance with *Scouting Magazine's* famous blogger, Bryan Wendell.

BRYAN: This month is all about Den Chiefs and why your Scouts or Venturers should consider becoming one.

LEE: So, stay tuned – it starts right now.

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LEE: And joining us for this discussion is John Duncan. John has served in a variety of unit, district, and council positions since 2001 in the Northeast Illinois Council. He presently serves as a Council Commissioner. In addition, John serves as the National Chairman of the Boy Scouts Experience Task Force. You may remember that he almost – I said almost – made us weep during his interview last year on the Scoutmasters' Minute. Welcome to back to ScoutCast, John.

JOHN: Thank you so much. It's great to be back.

LEE: Yeah. Hey, listen, no crying this time, okay? So, John, as we get right into the Den Chiefs conversation, what is the purpose of a Den Chief?

JOHN: The purpose of a Den Chief is to help Cub Scouts in achieving the purpose of those Cub Scouting. There are three key ones that apply. They are near-age examples of friendly service, they aid in fun and adventure and in sportsmanship and fitness, but most importantly they have a key role in getting Cub Scouts excited about preparation for Boy Scouts. And the last one really is sort of a textbook answer, that the, the last one is really the important one. They get them excited. They connect with them in a way that adults don't connect with Cub Scouts. Cub Scouts are much more excited about working with a 13 or 14 or 15-year-old than they are somebody like me who is quite a bit older than that. We won't say how much. *(Lee laughs.)*

BRYAN: Yeah. Having that age difference reduced is really essential. Speaking of ages, is there a certain age to become a Den Chief? How are you eligible to be one?

JOHN: There is not an age requirement to be a Den Chief. As a matter of a best practice we do recommend that someone who is serving as a Den Chief be separated from the boys that they are serving by at least three to four years so that they are visibly and emotionally separated. They're not one of the Cub Scouts. There is some distance between them and something that inspires the Cub Scouts doing something that they can become. If they're too close in age then it doesn't work out as well, but we recognize that every situation is different and sometimes that's what needs to happen so that's a best practice, not a hard requirement.

BRYAN: John, from a 30,000-foot level though, you need to be a registered Boy Scout or Venturer to be a Den Chief, is that right? You can't be like a Webelos 2 or something and be a Den Chief for a Tiger Den, for example.

JOHN: That, that is almost exactly correct. You do need to be a registered member of a Boy Scout Troop or a Venturing Crew or, don't forget, a Sea Scout Ship.

BRYAN: Absolutely, okay.

LEE: John, how often does a Den Chief meet with the den?

JOHN: A Den Chief would typically meet with the den whenever the den meets. They participate in the den meetings of the den. So, typically around nation, most dens meet two to three times a month in addition to their pack meeting. A Den Chief may also meet with a den during their pack meeting on some occasions, or participate with them in other activities as arranged. It's really at the discretion of the Den Chief and the Den Leader how often the Den Chief will participate and to what extent in what activities.

BRYAN: John, could a female Venturer or female Sea Scout or after 2019, once girls are eligible to join a Boy Scout age program, could these young women be a Den Chief?

JOHN: Absolutely. This is not a change as part of anything around our efforts to better serve families in Scouting. Females in Venturing or Sea Scouts today can be Den Chiefs and that has been true. The purpose is still the same but it's a little bit different if you have a female Venturer who's helping a Cub Scout get excited about the prospect of becoming a Boy Scout. That purpose is still the same even though the Den Chief is a Venturer or a Sea Scout. But there's no reason in the world that a female Venturer or Sea Scout can't participate in that role and provide that service to the youth.

LEE: John, you talked about the age and also talked about the program in which the individual needs to be registered in, but do the Den Chiefs have to have earned a certain rank in order to be so?

JOHN: For Boy Scouts there's not a hard rank requirement to serve as a Den Chief and, again, here we recognize that every situation is different. For a troop that's struggling with membership you may stretch the boundary a little bit more as to who might be a Den Chief. As a best practice we do recommend that a Boy Scout who is going to serve as a Den Chief have at least achieved the rank of First Class. This gives the Den Chief a solid base of experiences that he's already had as a Boy Scout that he can talk about to help get those Cub Scouts excited about becoming Boy Scouts: some campouts he's gone on, some service projects he's worked on, some other activities that that Den Chief may have participated in. If he doesn't have that experience it's a little bit difficult as, to what he might speak from, how he might get those Cub Scouts excited, so having that experience really helps a lot, but again that's a best practice, not a hard requirement. For Sea Scouts and for Venturers, they have some separate

requirements which I'm not quite as qualified to speak to but they're out there and I would refer you back to the Sea Scout and Venturing manuals.

BRYAN: Is there special training for Den Chiefs?

JOHN: There absolutely is special training for Den Chiefs and they're actually in the process right now of revising that training. One of the questions that we have gotten from the field a couple of times is from Den Leaders. We do a pretty good job of providing that specialized training for the Den Chiefs but we don't really include right now in the training for Den Leaders how to use a Den Chief, and so we're actually in the midst of writing an update for that training module that will include Den Leaders on how to effectively use a Den Chief.

LEE: Oh, that's good to know. Can the position of Den Chief be credited to position of responsibility for rank advancement? Is that something they can use?

JOHN: Absolutely. For Boy Scouts, that Den Chief is one of the leadership positions that counts towards a Star, Life and Eagle ranks. As boys get older it's a great one to provide a slightly different perspective on leadership from most of the other leadership positions. They get a chance to see how much they themselves have progressed from when they may have started their own Scouting experience.

BRYAN: Now, how do we recognize a Den Chief, I mean, visibly? Is there something that a Den Chief wears on the uniform so we can tell that's a Den Chief we're looking at?

JOHN: Certainly. There's a Den Chief Badge of Office like there is for all of the youth leadership positions for Senior Patrol Leaders and Patrol Leaders, but in addition for Den Chiefs there is a Den Chief Cord, a blue and yellow one for Den Chiefs who are serving Wolf or Bear Dens and one that includes a third strand of red for Den Chiefs who are serving a Webelos Den.

BRYAN: And then about resources where people can get more information about Den Chiefs, where would you point people, John, to learn more about this important role within a pack and troop's relationship?

JOHN: The single best resource, there is a separate Den Chief Handbook specifically designed for Den Chiefs. It not only has information about how to carry out the role but it also has a wide variety of program resources, songs and skits and games, things that a Den Chief can actually use in the context of a den meeting or an activity and planning for those activities or how to have some fun with the Cub Scouts. It also contains requirements for the Den Chief Service Award which is an award that can only be earned by a Den Chief. It defines a standard of excellence for Den Chiefs in carrying out their role over a full year of service. which is a red, white and blue braid goes over their shoulder as well and may be worn even when they are no longer a Den Chief in recognition of the service that they provide and the excellence with which they served.

LEE: You talked about maybe the most important aspect of being a Den Chief is enthusiasm, making sure that that individual is excited about what's going on and how they can relate to the Cub Scouts themselves, and that's why you mentioned the age difference being important, so they can have those life experiences that they could share there with them. So at least for the Boy Scout piece you said First Class is where they need to be and certainly to be able to have the opportunity for that kind of leadership development to take on those responsibilities for acquiring rank advancements, but I was wondering if there is any other things that you'd like to share with our audience as it relates to Den Chiefs?

JOHN: This is one of the most exciting and engaging tools that we have to get Cub Scouts into Boy Scouts, to bridge that gap. Den Chiefs present a unique way to reach Cub Scout-aged youth. Young people are constantly being led by adults, Cub Scout-aged youth especially. That's all they get. Very rarely do they have the opportunity to be led by an older young person who has been trained to do that. A Den Chief can get Cub Scout-aged youth excited about their future as a Boy Scout, about summer camp and high adventure opportunities, Northern Tier or Sea Base or the Summit. He can get them excited in a way that is much more likely to stick in that Cub Scout's mind for a very long time. If you were to find a Cub Scout who had had a great Den Chief and ask him why he went on to become a Boy Scout, I would predict with a very high degree of confidence that that Den Chief would be a pivotal part of that decision to become a Boy Scout.

LEE: So, now that we know the benefits of being a Den Chief, let's get more of them into the dens. John, thanks for coming onto ScoutCast for the discussion.

JOHN: Thank you. Have a great day.

BRYAN: And listeners, stay tuned. After a quick Safety Moment, Lee and I will be back with some Reminders and Tips.

(Safety Tip – CO Poisoning)

BRYAN: Let's start Reminders and Tips with succession plans. Having a succession plan means being prepared to replace volunteers in key roles, and now is a good time to put one in place. The Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster may have committed to their responsibilities, but he or she may not be able to keep that commitment.

LEE: Since our motto is Be Prepared, a successor needs to be identified for the role should something unexpected happen. With a succession plan in place, your troop won't be scrambling around trying to fill a vacant role and your troop or crew can maintain its tradition of 100% trained leaders. Tune in to the January 2017 ScoutCast for more details.

BRYAN: Now, in magazine news, you can read all about Scout service in action in the wake of last year's destructive hurricane season in the March/April issue of *Scouting Magazine*.

LEE: And in the March issue of *Boys' Life Magazine* find out what it's like to spend a weekend at Space Camp, Which involves model rockets, flight simulators, robotics, operations of remote vehicles, and much more!

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

LEE: The February ScoutCast has now come to an end. Special thanks to our guest, John Duncan.

BRYAN: And thanks to all of you for joining us. Now, don't forget to come back next month for a special crossover episode with myself and CubCast host Amy Hutcherson. We'll talk about the new Family Program and the Webelos Den and how it's going to affect your troop. Until then, I'm Bryan Wendell.

LEE: And I'm Lee Shaw. Don't forget to send us your thoughts and ideas for future ScoutCast. It's easy. Just send us an email to Scoutcast@Scouting.org or tweet @bsaScoutcast. We look forward to hearing from you.

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