

September –ASKING FOR HELP

Music Full then under

AARON: Welcome, everybody, to the September 2015 CubCast. I'm Aaron Derr, senior writer for *Boys' Life* magazine. My cohost, the lovely Pat Wellen, is quite busy as the manager of the Design and Development Department for the National Service Center. But because the show must go on, please welcome my new cohost, Cub Scout Member Experience Specialist Amy Hutcherson.

(SFX – Applause)

AMY: Thanks, Aaron. As a nine-year Cub leader myself, I'm a big fan of CubCast. So I'm excited about getting to share hosting duties with you. So what will my first CubCast topic be?

AARON: Since you're a regular listener, you know we always have a segment about involving parents and asking them to help. But it seems like a lot of us are still hesitant to do that.

AMY: Oh, so I'm guessing we've got a guest who's going to help us with that.

AARON: You have been listening. Great! So let's introduce him and get started.

Music Fades

AARON: Danny Heitman is a columnist for the Baton Rouge *Advocate*. He also writes for national publications such as *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The New York Times*. One of those articles in *The Christian Science Monitor* called "The Unlikely Den Parent," focused on how as leaders, we really do make a difference, but we don't do it alone, and we need to ask for help. There will be a link to that article posted at the end of the transcript of this interview. Danny served as a den leader for Den 2 in the Istrouma Area Council in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And we're excited to have him on the show. Welcome to CubCast, Danny.

DANNY: Hello, Aaron, and it's great to be here.

AARON: There's a joke in *Boys' Life* that we had one time that goes something like: What did the troubled berry say to the orange? And the answer is, Help, I'm in a jam. If a troubled berry can ask for help, why is it so hard sometimes for people to ask for help?

DANNY: For men, especially, we have this mythology that we can do it all.

AARON: I don't know what you're talking about, Danny. I've never, ever felt that way.

(Laughter)

DANNY: That can be a challenge. I guess as a journalist, what I do every day is go

to people who know more about topics than I do and ask them to help me know those topics better. And so, that's something that I found of help to me a Cub Scout leader because as I mentioned in my article, I'm not the most naturally inclined candidate to be a den leader. I was not in Boy Scouts myself. I am not handy with tools. I had extremely limited experience of the outdoors before I became a den leader. But, I agreed to do it because the den really needed a volunteer. And I thought if I don't do this, my son's experience as a Cub Scout is not going to be what it could be. So with some reluctance, I agreed to be a den leader. And in short order, I discovered that I really needed help to help these kids be the best Cubs that they could be.

AMY: Danny, I also have two young sons. I've been their den leader for several years, and I had several "aha" moments of when I needed help myself. When was your aha moment?

DANNY: About three minutes after raising my hand...

(Laughter)

DANNY: ...and being selected as a den leader, flipping through the manual of skills that these Cubs are supposed to learn I realized, in many cases, I didn't know these skills myself. That's when I knew, gosh, I'm really going to need some help. So what I did as a den leader is for each skill that these, young men were supposed to learn, I would go ask someone in the community if they could come visit our den and help teach these boys

what they needed to know. So for a unit on recycling, as an example, I got a garbage truck to come from our local waste disposal company. The boys just really loved when the garbage truck came. They cheered, and they got to each push the button on the compactor on the back. For a unit on safety, we got the local energy company to come. They set up a live wire in some very controlled circumstances and threw hot dogs on a live wire to...

AMY: Wow.

DANNY: ...to show the kids just how dangerous it could be if you put your finger on electricity. (I) got a lady from the Red Cross to come and do a unit in first aid; she actually had the boys get a partner and bandage each other. And by the time the parents came to collect the boys, half of them looked like mummies.

(Laughter)

DANNY: We had a great time, but it really reminded me, this experience, that if you just ask for help, that there's a world of help out there for you and lots of folks that are really willing and able to help your Cubs reach their full potential.

AARON: So I wonder if you could go into a little bit of how, specifically, you find and identify a credible source.

DANNY: I basically looked for people who had years of experience doing the skills successfully that my boys needed to learn. The Internet is a great tool, but what I really discovered is that often the people that you need to help you are right there at arm's length. As an example, there was a unit in the book about taking care of your home, and there was a maintenance man on the campus of the school where our den meets. All the kids knew him because he was the fix-it guy who fixed everything on campus. And I asked Roland if he would come talk to our kids about basic handyman skills. He was delighted to do it. Nobody had ever asked him to share his skills with any student on campus even though he was a fixture of the school there. So he came and walked the boys through a great lesson on how to fix a faucet. He showed them the breaker box where the electricity comes through the house. We went in the bathroom. He showed them how to fix a leaky toilet. The kids loved it, and he loved doing it.

For a unit on nutrition, I got the cafeteria lady that was there on campus to come talk about how she cooks meals for hundreds of kids each day. And again, she was a fixture there on campus, but nobody had ever asked her to teach the students what she knew. She was thrilled to do it. For an automotive unit, I just asked my mechanic that I've used for years. "Hey, Wallace, can you come talk to the kids about basic car maintenance?" So he walked them through how to inflate a tire, to change oil. He popped the hood on the car and pointed out all the major parts of the car. Kids loved it. So it's really not that hard to find authoritative sources to help your kids.

AMY: So you're looking mostly within your community; myself, I've looked a lot within colleges and universities. It seems like professors really are more than willing to help share their knowledge about geology and meteorology. What are some other places - if people don't know those folks directly, are there other places they can search within their community for help?

DANNY: Your local library is a great source. If you just call a reference library and say, "I'm looking for an expert on this in our community," often they have that information at their fingertips. Another thing is, I ask other dads, "Do you know anybody that can help?" Quite often, the other dads in the den have their own skill sets. And they want to participate in the life of the den. And when you ask them to help run a meeting by bringing their expertise, it makes them happy, it makes the Cub happy, and it makes you happy (be)cause you have somebody else to, kind of, shoulder the responsibility of getting these kids up to speed. As an example, we did a unit where we had the boys build very simple bluebird boxes, and since I'm not good with tools, I asked another dad in the den who also happens to be my brother Tim,

(Aaron chuckles)

DANNY: "Hey, could you help with this?" And, he actually, drew up a little blueprint of a bluebird box that these kids could use, or he found one on the Internet, I think; he did a great unit on that. That was a great resource for us. The thing that I would mention when you are seeking help is that

people are more than willing to help. But one important thing to remember is your audience of Cubs. They're very small, and their attention span is perhaps not as great as a 12-year-old or a 30-year-old. So you really need to underscore that to the people that are coming to visit the den so they can tailor their lesson for the little boys so that it's going to capture their attention. It's going to be relatively brief. I always tell them, probably 12 or 15 minutes is the max for the attention spans. Also, for every lesson we did, we tried to incorporate a hands-on activity because that's what engages the Cub's attention. So instead of just having an arborist come talk about trees in an abstract way, we took the boys out on to the campus where we have our den meetings, and we had the arborist actually walk them through and do a survey of all of the trees on campus and asked the boys questions about what they were seeing. For a lesson on birds, (I) had a local Audubon Society volunteer come. And we took the kids on a walk through the neighborhood in the middle of the city of Baton Rouge. But nevertheless, I think on a walk that lasted about 40 minutes, we identified something like 36, 37 different bird species...

AMY: Wow.

DANNY: ... and just walking around the city in a very brief amount of time. But it was a hands-on activity. For a unit on horticulture, we had a lady come from our local agriculture research station at the university, and she had the boys actually plant their own seeds into a sock, and that was a neat

experience to have the boys out there working in the dirt. So again, short lessons and then hands-on activities, I found to be the key to keeping the kids involved and keeping their attentions on task.

AARON: Very cool. So when you approach folks in your community - whether it's your brother or the local mechanic - how do you ask them for help? Because you are kind of asking them to sacrifice a little bit of their time. You said that they always were willing. But how do you phrase that, and how do you approach them when it comes to actually saying "I need to borrow you for an hour on this night?"

DANNY: The best thing about being involved in Cub Scouts is the brand. The brand goes ahead of you. People know who the Cub Scouts are. They know what the Cub Scouts stand for. And so, I never had any difficulty getting help whenever I would ask because people want to help the Cub Scouts. Many of them were either Cub Scouts themselves or their brothers or cousins were Cub Scouts, and they have great connections with it. One thing I would emphasize to people is, "Hey, if you can't do it for this meeting, if you have a conflict in your schedule, we can work with you and have you come later in the year." Also, I was very conscious of their time. I would say, "What I need is about 20 minutes of your time. You are welcome to stay for the entire meeting, but I know that you are busy, and so you are welcome to leave after 20 minutes." And that was helpful to people to know what is my time commitment up front here? Also, just

making an effort with the Cubs. Whenever a visitor did come, to make them realize that this is a visitor who's come to spend their time with you. I would always mention to them they're not paid to be here, and so you need to be respectful of them and listen. That helped make our guests feel that they were special and that they were respected.

AMY: I have had an instance before where I've been told no when I asked a guest to come visit our den. He was great in his field; however, he just wasn't comfortable with boys ages 7 and 8 years old. So have you ever had that happen, and if so, how would you suggest a leader would handle that?

DANNY: I have had guests who are more comfortable than others with that. But what I would ask of that potential guest, if they're not willing to do it, is say, "I completely understand why you might not be comfortable with this. Do you know anybody else in your field who might be more comfortable with it?" Sometimes a professor might not be comfortable doing a visit to the Cub Scouts, but maybe they have a graduate assistant who would love to do it. That's probably the best way to handle rejection.

AARON: Good advice. Danny, anything else you can think of that our listeners should know about asking for help that we haven't talked about already?

DANNY: It's always important to thank people afterwards. And the other thing is if

you have a successful program with a visitor who's come, such as the garbage truck that came to visit us or the energy company, share your experience with other dens because quite often, other dens are looking for resources like this, too. Quite often, these people that do this, rather than being reluctant to do it, they actually enjoy doing it, and they wouldn't mind doing it again. So, share your success stories with other dens.

AARON: Well, this has been great, Danny. As a Cubmaster myself, this has been a really enlightening conversation because I am one of those guys who sometimes who has trouble asking for help. So good advice. Good tips. And I'm sure our listeners will benefit from it as well. Thanks so much for coming on CubCast.

DANNY: Oh, sure. I enjoy being here.

AMY: While we're at it, we'll help you out with September Reminders and Tips right after this.

(ScoutCast – Popcorn/Fundraising When you're Not Adorable)

AMY: Okay, folks, here we go with this month's reminders. Aaron, you're the expert. Why don't you start, and I'll follow your lead?

AARON: Your pack School Night or Roundup should be held soon if you haven't

done so already. And don't forget to submit all new youth and adult applications and registration fees to the council service center. That's right, folks. You have to turn in the money.

AMY: Remember for every adult wanting to join Scouting, youth protection training is a requirement within 30 days of submitting an application. If you can't attend a council-led training session to get your youth protection training certificate, you can take the training online. Absolutely anyone, especially parents and potential leaders, can take the online training by creating a My.Scouting account. Just go to scouting.org and click the MyScouting tab at the top of the page.

AARON: Now, this is an ongoing piece of business. Remember to turn in your advancement reports every month. The report goes to the pack committee's advancement chairperson who submits the report to the registrar at the council service center.

AMY: It's very important that you turn in advancement reports so that the boys receive an advancement credit in a timely manner. Boys should be recognized as soon as possible at their next meeting.

AARON: Now, we all know your Cub Scouts love the pinewood derby, space derby, and raingutter regatta, and now is the time to begin planning those events. Not next month, not next week, now.

AMY: It's also a good time to start the ball rolling on the Blue and Gold Banquet, which occurs in February. Sure, that seems like a long time from now, but we all know how time zips by, and the sooner you plan for these events, the better they are and the more the boys and their families will enjoy the occasion. You can go back and download the December 2012 CubCast for some great ideas on how to hold a Blue and Gold.

AARON: And finally, be sure to check out this month's "Boys' Life" special STEM issue, which features all kinds of really cool STEM-related activities. The May 2014 and July 2015 CubCast make great companion pieces.

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AARON: Well, as much fun as this has been, the music cue means the September CubCast has come to an end. Thanks again to our guest, Danny Heitman.

AMY: Be sure to come back next month for what's sure to be a spirited discussion on putting the "uniform" in uniformity.

AARON: Now, it's your turn to help us out. If there are topics that you'd like to hear about or if you just want to let us know how we're doing, send an e-mail to CubCast@scouting.org or a Tweet to [@CubCast](https://twitter.com/CubCast). My new cohost and I would love to hear from you. I'm Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Now, we're going leave you with a little assignment. Go through your plan for your next den or pack meeting, and find a task you'd like some help with. Now, take the tips you picked up on from this show, and see how it works. We bet you'll never work alone again.

Music Full Finish

Danny Heitman article in the Christian Science Monitor: <http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Family/Modern-Parenthood/2015/0211/A-Boy-Scout-he-is-not-The-unlikely-den-parent>