

DECEMBER – Are You a Happy Camper?

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AMY: Welcome, everyone, to our CubCast for December. I'm Amy Hutcherson. We realize you're busy with the holidays and other year-end activities, so we really appreciate that you're taking the time to join us.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr with a perfect Think-n-Grin joke from *Boys' Life* magazine to introduce our topic. Amy, what do you call the place where Cub Scouts and their parents go camping?

AMY: Hmm...I don't know, Aaron. What do you call the place where Cub Scouts and their parents go camping?

AARON: Intense...which is why our topic for this month is how parents can mentally and emotionally prepare themselves for the upcoming family camping season.

AMY: The lovely Jennifer Mooney, camping director with the Cascade Pacific Council in Portland, Oregon, joins us to help calm any fears you may have about camping...in the woods...with a bunch of 8-year-olds. No, really. She will.

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AMY: Jennifer Mooney started working for the BSA in high school and as part of the camp staff of Cub World, stayed there for five summers and has been with us ever since handling various camping activities from promotion to

training. Her expertise earned her the position of camping director where she has put a major focus on Cub Scout camping, realizing the importance of camping for our youngest members and how it impacts retention. You may remember her from the April 2013 CubCast as she shared the joys of the Cub Scout Outdoor Program with us. Welcome back to CubCast, Jennifer.

JENNIFER: Thank you.

AMY: So, I've been camping many times with my boys, and I know it can be very exciting, kids jumping off of everything they can find. How is Cub Scout camping different from Boy Scout camping?

JENNIFER: Cub Scout camping definitely plays on the imagination of young boys. All of our camps are very thematic. We have a western camp. One of our camps is a spy theme this year. Our day camps are Cubstructions. So most young boys have a very large imagination, and having that theme helps them just have fun in the outdoors. Boy Scout camp, they're usually, with their leaders for a full week. Our camps are more focused on the families where you'll have a family barbecue on the last night, and the boys might showcase some of the program that they've done or done some special skits to showcase what they've done throughout the week. So on some of our resident camps, we'll have a special day where siblings can even come up and get a sneak peek of it and maybe join them in Scouting a few years later.

AMY: That sounds great.

AARON: Jennifer, you mentioned the emphasis on family. When you look at camp schedules, I've seen family camp and resident camp both listed under Cub Scout camping. Can you talk about the difference between those two

things?

JENNIFER: Sure. Family camp is exactly what it says - the whole family's invited. Siblings included. Most of the camps that I've been involved with that are family camps are centered around the packs, so they might come up and share a camp site, and it's a chance to get to know the members of your pack. The siblings are encouraged to participate as well. A resident camp might also be overnight but, it's more likely to have just the Cub Scout youth and the den leaders and maybe one parent. So it's family, including siblings, participating in some activities that are family friendly versus just a specific rank.

AMY: Can you share with us some of the benefits of camping for the Cub Scouts?

JENNIFER: We're all aware of the saying "Outing in Scouting." It's probably a pretty integral part of what we do in Scouting and it's a chance for kids to learn how to socialize with others, learn new skills. A lot of the boys maybe have not learned how to use a knife before, and this is a chance for them to do their Whittling Chip cards. It's a chance to learn about the buddy system and how to compromise and learning to work with others. They're learning new challenges that they might not have been exposed to before. It's learning new skills, learning how to work with other people, and being independent. So, there's a lot of benefits of camping, especially for those that have never been before.

AARON: In my experience, when planning a camping trip, you just, kind of, never know what kind of experience level and what kind of familiarity you're going to have when it comes to the parents and the other folks in the council. When you encounter someone who maybe is not as experienced with camping as you might think, how do you prepare them for camp?

JENNIFER: This is, kind of, an interesting question because my son is brand new into Scouting himself. And so we've joined a pack, and I have a lot of parents in that pack that have had this nervousness or issue with camping. They've never been before. They're trying to understand how it all works. And me, being very familiar with it, I have to remember how to explain it well so that they feel comfortable.

Part of it is doing some research as a family. If you're not a camping family do as much research as possible. That might be going out and visiting the camp. In our council, there's a lot of events at those camps throughout the year. So if they're wanting to understand how the camp looks like or how it's set up or where they might sleep or eat, that's an opportunity for them to see it before camp so that they can prepare their kids and say, "Hey, you might be sleeping here this summer."

I would say, "We also have a great camping department that's always willing to answer questions." We, also, have what we call *Leader's Guide*, they're available for anybody to read, on here's what to do to prepare, here are the things that you need to pack, here's the schedule so you know what the activities are that they're going to be doing, here's how much money you should plan on bringing for the trading post. And we give the information out for our camp directors as well, so the camp directors can talk directly with any of the leaders or any of the parents that have questions. In June, right before camps start is a great time to meet our camp directors because we hold a meeting so that they can talk one-on-one.

Within the pack it's important to have somebody that is more familiar with the camps address those issues as well because each pack takes that experience a little bit differently. There's all sorts of questions: Do I have to bring a cot, or is there a place to sleep? Do I need to bring food, or are we going to be fed? Simple questions like that, it makes them a little bit more easy when they actually attend camp.

AARON: You mentioned, like, as far as bringing things, cots, sleeping bag, tent, things like that, what about the mental or emotional aspect? Do you talk to parents at all about that and how they can, sort of, prepare themselves mentally for camping?

JENNIFER: Making sure that their questions are answered. Most of our camps have a mail system, so we encourage the parents to provide a little fun book or a candy bar or something to give them and a letter from home so that they feel that there's still that contact there. And, again, if the parents can get the boys to the properties ahead of time, they can talk about that while they're there. Okay, we're going to stay here when we come back to camp. This is where we're going to eat when we come to camp. And talking about those things so that they know if the parent is not going to camp, okay, your leader's going to be in charge of you, and this is how the schedule works. And talking about those kind of things, as much details as the parents can get helps them feel more comfortable sending their kid off to camp.

AMY: Definitely. As a parent myself of a Scout, I love the stuff that the Scouting world provides to ease the mind of the parents. Are there any other resources available to ease our nervousness about camping?

JENNIFER: It's important to check with the local camping department of the council. Ours is very versed in all of our camping programs, and they, usually, have some kind of resource whether it's the camp director's information, a *Leader's Guide*, or just knowing the facilities that are there. They try to answer some of those questions for us. We have multiple times where the camping department or the leaders from the camps like to come out to roundtables, or other big events. We happen to have a university of Scouting here, so all of our camp directors will be there to visit with. We try to make sure that our camp directors touch base with those parents or the leaders that have signed up. We encourage them to send out e-mails

and phone calls, so any last minute request or questions or concerns can be answered. And they work really diligently about making sure that we're contacting people about that. So if parents are searching out the information, it's definitely there for them.

AARON: Jennifer, after you've done all this, after you've got them sort of prepared for what to expect, after they know what to bring, after the kids know what to bring, sometimes, in my experience, the kids are pretty fired up, but there's a dad or a mom, kind of, rolling their eyes going, "Oh, boy, I've got to sleep outside." How do you get them fired up about it?

JENNIFER: I would encourage them just to go. It sometimes is a commitment away from work or a commitment to drive if the camp's far away, but the more that they get exposed to it, they realize that it's a safe place. Whether they're campers or not, it gives them a chance to see the program in action, understand it better. I mean, we can only explain it so many times. And as leaders, we can show them pictures of the kids having fun. We happen to even have a pack campout at the location that we were camping overnight for our summer camp program. And those parents that went with me during summer camp said that was probably the best thing to prepare us to do because they got to see the facilities, they got to play around, and just have more of a relaxed environment to get to know the program a little bit better. So, I would encourage those parents if they can't stay during the session to maybe come up and visit and get a sense of what it's like, or stay for the first day until they feel that it's comfortable. I don't think we ever turn anybody away. We want them to be involved. Cub Scouts seems to be a little bit more family-oriented, so we definitely want them involved.

AMY: Jennifer, camping is so much fun, but it can be a little stressful, especially if you're new to it. So, thank you so much for being on CubCast and

letting our listeners know when they sign up for camp, it's all going to be okay.

JENNIFER: Absolutely.

AARON: We'll be right back with Reminders and Tips right after the sneak peek at the December ScoutCast.

SCOUTCAST – Back-Up Plans

AARON: Okay, everybody, time for a pop quiz. Do you know who your local Scouting professional is? This person may be known as your district executive. If you don't know who that is, call your council to find out.

AMY: If you don't know your council name, go to scouting.org and type "local council locator" in the search field. Your local Scouting professional is a great resource in helping deliver a quality program. It might also help to download the October 2013 ScoutCast entitled *Who's Who in the Zoo*.

AARON: And even though you're probably thinking more about the holidays than next summer, now is the time to start planning for summer camp, which as you know, includes Cub Scout day camp, resident camp and family camp. Now that you're ready emotionally and mentally, the April 2013 CubCast on the Cub Scout Outdoor Program will help you with planning and promotion.

AMY: As you know, the new Cub Scout program is in full swing. Be sure to check out all the CubCast episodes from the past year for best practices or to assist you with questions you may have.

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AMY: Thanks for listening, everyone. And thanks to our guest, Jennifer Mooney. If there's anything else you'd like to hear about, just drop us a line to CubCast@scouting.org or a Tweet to @CubCast. Until then, I'm Amy Hutcherson.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr, ready to go camping. Hope you are, too.

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