

## **AUGUST – FULFILLING THE PROMISE; LIFE AFTER THE FIRST NIGHTER**

### **Music Full then under**

AARON: Hello, everyone! Welcome to the August Cubcast. I am Aaron Derr, Senior Writer for *Boys' Life* Magazine. Joining me, as always, is Cub Scout Specialist, Amy Hutcherson.

AMY: So, listeners, you're probably getting ready to hold your big first-nighter, and you've promised the boys they'll get to go fishing and camping and use a bow and arrow, and you've built up this exciting Cub Scouting program and if you're lucky, you get lots and lots of boys to sign up.

AARON: Then you wake up the next morning and think, "Oh boy, I've got to get these boys fishing and camping, and teach them how to use bows and arrows and everything else we've promised we get them to do."

### **Music Fades**

AARON: So, we've invited 40-year professional Scouter, John Erickson, to help us figure out how to keep those promises. John started his career in Kansas City, and retired from the National Staff in 2007 where he worked at the Center for Professional Development. But retirement didn't mean leaving the program. Since retirement, John now proudly serves as a volunteer Scout as unit commissioner, summer camp commissioner and district trainer. Welcome to CubCast, John.

JOHN: Thank you. Good to be here.

AARON: There's a *Boys' Life* Think-n-Grin joke- Amy loves my *Boys' Life* Think-n-Grin jokes - that goes: what do you call a book with made-up words? The answer is a *fictionary*. Sometimes that's what these new Scouts think we get our info from because we unintentionally make all these promises that we can't keep. Now, why do you think that happens?

JOHN: We idealize what we can do. Sometimes we tend to overpromise but, it's a good idea to perhaps under-promise and over-deliver. In other words, don't promise what you can't deliver.

AMY: So, John, what do we mean by "the promise?"

JOHN: Talking about the promise of Cub Scouting reminds me of a story of when I was the Scout Executive in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I had a night meeting and before I left home my wife reminded me we needed milk, so on my way home from the meeting, I walk into the convenience store in my Boy Scout uniform. I got over a long time ago feeling awkward in my Boy Scout uniform. So, I walk in and I get that feeling. You know the feeling? Somebody is looking at me. And I look around and finally I look down, and there he is. He's about four feet tall. And he's smiling at me and his question is, "Are you a Scoutmaster?" It's difficult to explain what a Scout Executive is so I just said, "Well, sort of. What's your name?" He said, "My name is Damon and I'm a Cub Scout." I said, "That's great, Damon. What do you like best about being a Cub Scout?" And he said, "Every week we get to go to my den leader's house and we play games and sing songs and all my buddies are there and we have a terrific time. He says, "Once a month we have a pack meeting, and Mom and Dad come and my little sister comes. Grandpa and Grandma, they can come

too. And we get awards and we put on skits. There's a lots and lots of Cub Scouts at the pack meeting." He said, "Next month we're going to go to Camp Avondale, my whole family, and we're going to sleep in a tent, and we're going to go hiking in the woods. But, "The best part about Cub Scouting," he says, "is next summer I get to go to day camp. We go every day for a week," and he said, "we play games and we get to shoot bows and arrows, and the fire department comes," and Damon went on and on and on. I said, "Damon, you certainly know an awful lot about the Cub Scouts. How long have you been a Cub Scout?" He said, "I joined last night and my first meeting is next Tuesday!"

*(Everyone laughs)*

AMY: Oh, my goodness!

AARON: Is that a true story?

JOHN: I generally make it a practice to never let the truth interfere with a good story.

AARON: That is a great story.

JOHN: So, I thought immediately promises, boy, had we made some promises!

AARON: Yeah, no kidding.

JOHN: So the next morning I met with a District Executive and I had a few questions about a particular Cub Pack.

*(Laughter)*

JOHN: But, we do that. We tend to promise so much to these young people and it's so important that we are able to fulfill those promises.

AARON: Right, That's my next question. What is our obligation as leaders then to fulfill that promise?

JOHN: It's twofold. It's certainly to the kids but even maybe more importantly to those adults, particularly in Cub Scouting. Because the experience that they have in Cub Scouting will determine how long they stay in the Scouting program. One of the real keys to this is to recruit our leaders enough in advance so that the Rally Night is not primarily a recruiting night of adults. It's primarily the recruiting night for boys. And the way to do that is to start earlier. Ideally, the fall lineup of your adult leaders should be announced at the Blue and Gold Banquet the February before that fall. That way the leaders know in advance that they're going to be a leader and they're far more interested in saying yes if it's months away than days away. You get your leaders lined up - your den leaders, the Cubmaster, the committee chairman, your key committee people. Even if it's April or May, you still have the summer to prepare them, to get them trained, and you're going to be far better off than if you have to recruit a lot of leaders at that meeting. Now, if that hasn't been done, the important thing is to talk to them about the value of their involvement because particularly in Cub Scouting, the parental involvement is really the key to a successful program.

AARON: You'd be proud of me, John. Our Cub Scout pack, we already have a Tiger leader for next fall set up. We are set and good to go.

JOHN: Let me comment on that. A lot of people will say, "We know who maybe our Wolf leader is going to be and our Bear leader and our Webelos leader because those are people that are already in the pack. But we have no idea who's going to show up at the Rally Night that's going to join Tigers. But there is someone in every neighborhood that knows who the Tiger leader should be for next year; it's called a kindergarten teacher.

And you probably know who the kindergarten teacher is at your local elementary school.

AARON: My kid had him.

JOHN: Exactly. And you can go to them and say, "Who are the parents of boys that are particularly active and should be involved?" And then an appointment with those parents saying, "We sure hope your boy joins our Cub pack next fall. You're really not interested in the boy joining. You're interested in those parents, and say, "Here is how we'd like to have you." So you can do that and line those up earlier.

AARON: That's great.

AMY: That's a really great idea, John, and I can relate to this because when my oldest son was in first grade we had the night of his first-nighter on our calendar for a while. Well, he comes home from school and he had someone come to his school that day to talk to him about Cub Scouting and we're getting ready and he's in the garage digging around. I go in there and he's got his fishing pole in his hand. (Laughter) And I said, "Ian, what are you doing?" And he's like, "Well, today at school they said we'd get to go camping and (laughter), and fishing." And I said, "Well, this is at the school gymnasium, Ian. I doubt that we're going to go fishing tonight." (Laughter) So, what should we tell them then at that first-nighter, to be more realistic?

JOHN: You mean as far as the boys or the parents are concerned?

AMY: I think mostly the boys because they're the ones that have all these big ideas. (Laughter)

JOHN: Right. Well, the only time that there is in the mind of an eight-year-old or seven-year-old or six-year-old is right now. They have no concept of next week even. Most rallies, the parents are put off to one side and the kids go off and do something to be entertained during the time that the parents are being explained what it's all about. So, you promise the boys what you're going to do tonight. Then talk about maybe the next activity. If they come to the rally and they have an opportunity to have some Cub Scout fun, that's going to be, that's going to be enough for them. They're excited about it anyway. The parents are really the key here what do we really promise to them? And not so much the activities, although you want to go over that, and you do want to talk about the parental responsibilities and then talk about how important it is.

One thing to keep in mind when you talk to them about becoming leaders, and they agree to become a leader, they are not doing you a favor. You are doing them the favor by getting them involved in this great program because once they get involved and once they become active, then they're going to be around for some time. And give them time to think about it. Sometimes they feel like they're being pressured. And don't threaten. If we don't get a leader tonight, we're not going to...

AARON: I've been to a Scout night where that happened.

JOHN: ... and that's not the way we want their Scouting career starting out.

AARON: Okay, so you've got your first-nighter, your rally, your Scout Night. You've sold the program. After you've got your pack recruited, you've got your leaders, you've told them we're going to do this, this and this throughout the year, I'd love it if you could talk about then what do you do next. How do you keep your promises?

JOHN: One of the ways to do that and hopefully now at this time of year your pack has already done this, and that's to have a strong annual plan so that you know what's going to happen, that makes it much easier to keep the promise if you've already started not only what you're going to do but who is going to be in charge. Then it's much easier to fulfill those promises because you've got people who have said they're going to do that. Sometimes you need to reach out beyond the resources of just your pack. The chartered organization is a great resource because there are people in there that have been involved in Scouting before. There are people that have had kids who have gone through the program who can be called back in to do some specific kinds of things, one shot kind of projects: Pinewood Derby, Blue and Gold Banquet, Fishing Derby, whatever could be helpful to you.

The other place we sometimes overlook and that's Scout troops. There's more adult involvement at the troop level, and some of them really don't have much to do. Some whose kids went through the Webelos program before, and they understand it and they look at Webelos not from a Cub Scout perspective, but they look at it from a Boy Scout's perspective so that they can make that transition much stronger and much easier.

The other one is, you can never have too much help. Always be looking out for somebody new that can get involved in your program. And the more help you have, the easier it is to keep those promises.

AMY: Okay, so John, is there any other resources to share with our listeners to help keep the promise?

JOHN: In your district there are district people that want to help, that want to see your pack be successful. Take advantage of those people. Don't just sit back and wait for them to come to you. Go to them. Someone in your district is called a District Commissioner; rely on them and reach out to them, and the same thing is true with trainers. If you've got some new

leaders, you've got a group of people that need that training, contact them. They may be willing to come out to you to put on a basic Cub Leader Training program.

AARON: This is excellent stuff, John. Is there anything else about what to do after the first-nighter that we should share with our listeners?

JOHN: Communicate, communicate, communicate. One of the most important parts of any kind of an endeavor is trusting leadership. Trust begins with strong communications. Trust builds communications, and once you have good trust, then it improves communications. When I was a Cub Scout committee chairman, the only way we could communicate to people was with snail mail or the telephone. Now there are so many ways that you can do it; use those constantly. Let people know. Remind, remind, remind. Don't assume that everybody knows what to do because they don't.

AARON: So true. Well, as a Cubmaster, I gotta say the adventures in the new den leader books help an awful lot with activities the Scouts can do to keep them interested in the program. John, thanks so much for the discussion today.

JOHN: Oh, I've enjoyed it!

AMY: Let's take a short break and tune in next door to ScoutCast. Then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

### **(August Scoutcast– Kodiak Challenge)**

AMY: Okay, here we go with Reminders and Tips for August.

AARON: Now is the perfect time to plan for new leader training. There's a terrific guide to get started called "So, You're a New Den Leader." Your pack trainer should be handling most of this, but if you don't have a pack trainer, then the committee chair or cubmaster ought to be planning for New Leader Training. Every boy deserves a trained leader, and without training it's hard to implement a good program.

AMY: Speaking of recruiting, it's about time for you to have all your materials ready to go for your first night of recruiting, just like we've been talking about. By now, you should have youth and adult applications, *Boys' Life Mini Magazines*, and any games or props that you might want to use that evening.

AARON: Most importantly, make sure you've set a date for that first-nighter. Finally, don't forget to pick up your copies of the various den leader guides, and *Ceremonies for Dens and Packs*. Your council scout shop or trading post should be able to get you set up with everything you need.

AMY: And, of course, this podcast will assist you with what to do after your first-nighter.

### **Begin Music Under**

AMY: So, that's a wrap for the August CubCast. Thanks to our guest, John Erickson, for joining us.

AARON: And thank you for listening. Are there any other topics we can cover to make your life easier? Just send an email to [cubcast@scouting.org](mailto:cubcast@scouting.org). Until next month, I'm Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Don't forget to tweet your Scouting leadership position or the reason for listening to @cubcast. We want to know. Really, we do!