

FEBRUARY – CUB SCOUT RETENTION

Music Full then under

AARON: Hello everyone and welcome to our CubCast for February. I'm *Boys' Life* Senior Writer, Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson, Webelos Den Leader and International Scouting Program Specialist. So Aaron, I bet you don't have a Think-n-Grin joke for this month's topic.

AARON: Oh, don't take that bet, Amy – you'd be wrong. What did the composer say when he returned from intermission?

AMY: Hmm. That's a hard one.

AARON: I'm Bach! And that's exactly what we want our Cubs to do; come Bach week after week. Kind of like our guest, Liz Bullock.

Music Fades

AARON: Liz has been with Scouting for about 15 years, starting as a committee member for her son's Cub Scout Pack. Being a military spouse, she and her family stayed with Cub Scouting even though they moved from Texas to Arkansas and then to Tennessee. Even when her eldest son crossed over into Boy Scouts, Liz continued with the Cub Scouting program with her second son where she serves as the Advancement Chair for Pack 130 in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Welcome to Cubcast, Liz.

LIZ: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be with you guys.

AARON: Liz, tell us why Cub Scout retention is important.

LIZ: Our boys need to be able to continue in Cub Scouting, so that we can keep them in Scouts.

AMY: So where does retention really occur, Liz? Is it a camp or is it the council office or where is it?

LIZ: Retention actually occurs at the den level and at the pack level because if we have a good program the boys will continue to come back, and it's within that den, that small group of boys that they become friends, regardless of what school they go to or how they know them, that's the group that they're attached to. So if we're keeping the program at the den level fun, they will continue to come back.

AMY: Yeah. That is so true. With my son, when I ask him his favorite thing about Cub Scouting, it's always "to do things with my friends."

LIZ: Yes, with the friends. And, summer camp, it plays a key role because once you get that boy signed up and they go to that first camp, they want more and they want to keep coming. Council is also important because they're the ones that provide those bigger activities for the boys to go to as a pack. But when they do go, they go as a den, they go as a pack and, kind of builds one to the other. The den level is key.

AARON: Uh-hmm. Liz, talk if you could about the role that a Den Chief could play in Cub Scout retention.

LIZ: Den Chiefs are crucial, and actually my eldest boy was a Den Chief, and what we saw happening - it's amazing because when the boys transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts, it's a completely different model that they follow. So when you have these boys that just bridged over into Boy Scouts that that our Cub Scouts know, and how they're coming back in a leadership role and they're there mentoring them and they speak the same language, they have the same likes, that's somebody that they attached themselves to. Does that make sense? Boys like that link, that mentorship.

Commented [CL1]:

AMY: Okay. So how many Cub Scouts earn the Bobcat Rank?

LIZ: Well, that should be like all of them, right? So, with the Bobcat Rank, you know it starts even before your boy is actually registered and is in the program. When we were doing our Cub Scout recruiting and we were having our New Parent Orientation, one of the things that we did, we had two of our adult leaders step away with the new boys that were interested in Scouting, and while we working with the parents, they were working with the Cub Scouts. At that point, they were learning what the sign is, what Scouting is (and) how to salute. When they came back we actually had the boys come in in a line, they were able to stand like our Cub Scouts, they were able to recite the Pledge and Oath with some help and prompting, they could do the sign; that started right away. So if you have a good program and you're following it, every Cub Scout should be earning it.

And remember, once they get that first recognition, you have that buy-in from the child. And if you bring the parent up when the child is receiving it, you are also recognizing the parent for supporting the child.

AMY: That's great.

AARON: Liz, what is more essential, Cub Scout Leader Training or Wood Badge?

LIZ: Okay. So this one you can look at it two ways. Every Cub Scout deserves a trained leader. Because they're the ones that are directly working with the boys. They're the ones implementing the program, so Cub Scout Leader Training is crucial in that aspect. That's looking at it at the den level, down to the boy level. If you look at it at the unit level as a pack, every time we move or we recruit, we bring in all these new leaders. And, yes, they go to Cub Scout Leader Training but they kind of have like a tunnel vision of what the role is - Den leader.

AARON: Uh-hmm.

LIZ: Wood Badge is the next level, so as a pack if you can encourage them and get them to go to Wood Badge, at that point they're not just looking at their little nest; they get to see the whole Scouting program from how Cub Scout comes into effect, moving onto Boy Scouts, how you add Venturing, and all the other venues that they can pursue, so it complements, plus it makes them stronger and better Cub Scout leaders.

AMY: For sure. Okay, Liz, can you help our listeners and give them five or six basics a unit can do to drive retention?

LIZ: It starts with your program. You need to have a good planned program. You need to be able to follow that program that are monthly theme based. So having a planned program, is one.

The second step would be executing that program. I mean, yes, there are times that we tweak this or that or the other but executing that program is awesome.

And then there's camping. Oh, my goodness, camping. I cannot stress that one enough. That's one thing that my boys love. The more camping you can do, the more frequently, wonderful.

Our pack comes out two, three times in the fall, two, three times in the spring, and that is one of the most amazing experiences our boys have. Just recently we had a campout and it rained the whole campout. And yes, everybody was wet. There was rain gear everywhere. We had to change our program to accommodate for the rain. So we were doing rain games and doing some STEM having to do with water but the boys thought it was amazing! And they were outside. They were in the great outdoors.

AARON: And I would even say, Liz, you mentioned camping but even other, just getting outside in general. We take our kids sometimes on just like a day hike for maybe a couple of hours. So even just getting outside is huge, I think, don't you agree?

LIZ: Yes. Getting them away from that electronic device.

AARON: Yup, riding bikes.

LIZ: Whatever that may be. Another thing is recognizing the boys for what they completed. As an Advancement Chair, let me tell you, the minute they get recognized whether it's at the den level or it's at the pack meeting; that is amazing. And when you recognize them, pull the parent in because they're also instrumental as far as helping or supporting their young man moving from one rank advancement to other. And then at the most basic, keeping it fun. The boys need to be having fun. They're learning but yet they need to be having fun.

AARON: Can you recommend any resources, Liz, for our listeners that are available to help with Cub Scout retention?

LIZ: If I'm looking at that new Cub Scout and that parent, the handbook, it's crucial. It really is. Because that gives them the quick look of, okay, these are the things that I'm working on, these are the things that I can do at home or we're going to go here. Oh, I can work on this, so it kind of gives them that this is how I'm helping my boy advance from one to the other. And then there is *Boy's Life*. I see it affecting my Bear into Webelos more, because they're my more avid readers at that point. There are so many cartoons, some of the articles, some of the high adventure areas, there are things that they could look forward to, so that's amazing. Within our pack we promote boys, *Boy's Life*.

AMY: Aaron is doing a little happy dance here in the studio for you mentioning that.

AARON: This is what we like to hear, definitely.

LIZ: One of the other things is Roundtable.

AMY: Yes, Roundtable.

LIZ: I cannot stress how crucial Roundtable is - that's where you, as adult leaders, that's where your networks are. That's where like, hey, how did you do this? Did this work for you? And that's where you share ideas, or you even borrow some of the equipment. They were doing their carnival theme last pack meeting and we're working on it this month, what did you use? What were your props? Can we borrow them? That's how you open up yourself to more ideas.

AMY: Absolutely, yeah. We can't stress enough how important Roundtable is for networking, for sure. Okay. Is there anything else that you can share with us to help our listeners about Cub Scout retention?

LIZ: With retaining Cub Scouts it's all about the boy. It's not about the leaders. So if you've always focused on what's best for the boy, having a good program and keeping it fun. If you have those three key things in there you're going to have a successful pack and you're going to have boys that are going to keep coming back.

AARON: Well, as a Cubmaster myself, Liz, I know firsthand how important it is to recruit new boys but we've also got to do our best to keep the boys we've already recruited in the program. Thanks so much for the discussion today, Liz.

LIZ: You're welcome!

AMY: Stay tuned for our new segment, Safety Moment, then we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips.

(Safety Moment – [Weather](#))

AMY: Okay, time for Reminders and Tips. Let's start with succession plans. Having a succession plan means being prepared to replace a volunteer in key roles because a leader may have committed to their responsibilities but, alas, they may not be able to keep that commitment.

AARON: And 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, you won't be scrambling around trying to fill a vacancy and the pack can maintain its tradition of 100% trained leaders. Tune into the April 2014 CubCast for more on succession plans and cultivating new leaders.

AMY: Now that you know how to keep the boys engaged, this is also a good time to be thinking about recruiting more boys into the pack, and with the Spring Roundup talk to your Unit Serving Professional Scouter about coordinating your recruitment efforts with local schools.

AARON: This month's Ask CubCast question came to the mailbox from Sherri Lawler who wondered how her son can be a Cub Scout if he misses out on competing requirements because he's involved in school sports.

AMY: They can still be a Cub Scout. As a den leader, you can empower your parents to help their son complete the requirements at home. For example, the Bear Den has to put on a carnival to their pack for their Grin N Bear It Adventure, but the boy has to miss due to a sports obligation. That's okay. Perhaps he and his family can put on a small carnival for their neighbors or even his soccer team.

AARON: So be sure to let other parents know that even though boys can't attend all the meetings, they can still advance and have fun in Scouting. In fact, you can go back to the January 2015 CubCast to learn how Cub Scouts and sports can complement each other.

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AARON: So keep the questions comin' folks, and send us your thoughts and ideas for a future CubCast. Just send an email to cubcast@scouting.org or a tweet to @cubcast.

AMY: But this CubCast has come to an end. Special thanks to our guest Liz Bullock and thank you for listening.

AARON: Now we just heard how advancement is one of the keys to retention, so come back next month as we discover the 21st century method for tracking advancement. I'm Aaron Derr along with Amy Hutcherson and we'll see you then.

AMY: Bye-bye.

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