

## **MARCH – TRACKING ADVANCEMENT**

### **Music Full then Under**

AMY: Hello everyone. I'm Webelos Den Leader and International Scouting Program Specialist Amy Hutcherson. Joining me is Aaron Derr, Senior Writer for *Boys' Life* magazine, and we're so glad you've tuned into March CubCast.

AARON: Previously on CubCast we had a really terrific discussion on Cub Scout Retention. We found out that one of the secret ingredients in the retention recipe is advancement.

AMY: We've also discovered a pretty cool way to track advancement called Scoutbook.

### **Music Fades**

AMY: And right here on CubCast is the inventor of Scoutbook to tell us all about it. Welcome to CubCast, Shawn.

SHAWN: Hey, it's great to be here. Thank you.

AMY: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

SHAWN: Sure. Several years ago while serving as a volunteer one of the mothers came to me distraught over the loss of data. We have not been keeping accurate records and her son was not advancing as quickly as she would

have hoped. Through those kind of experiences, I soon realized there had to be a better method to advancement tracking. We were sort of dropping the ball as Unit Leaders. Scoutbook needed to be an environment where it not only, tracked this advancement but brought the parents, Scouts and leaders all together in a mobile type of application where it was accessible from any device, anywhere.

AMY: Okay. So can you help us understand then why tracking advancement is so important?

SHAWN: The loss of records is probably the worst thing that a Cub Scout leader could do; that boy would have to redo advancement and may lose enthusiasm in that Scouting journey, and that's one of the last things we want as leaders to happen.

AMY: Sure.

AARON: I have witnessed that firsthand, my friend. We had a Cub Scout join our pack one time from a different city and he asked me how does he keep his advancement going. And I said, "Well, yeah, talk to your previous pack. I'm sure they kept records," and I'll be danged if they didn't. I didn't know what to tell the poor guy. It was terrible. So what are the ways to record advancement?

SHAWN: Now that Boy Scouts of America has adopted Scoutbook as the Unit Leader's tracking tool, it's a great way to track advancement. Other methods: if your pack is not on track with Scoutbook, continue to track

advancement using, any method. It could even be an Excel spreadsheet. But the most important thing, Guide to Advancement always states reporting advancement whatever method you decide, that information needs to be inputted into the BSA back-end database system.

AMY: Okay. So, Shawn, does Scoutbook sync to a database of any kind, including our Boy Scout database?

SHAWN: Yes, we have a monthly feature inside of Scoutbook where you can go in and you can actually create a file and upload this into the BSA system called Internet Advancement.

AARON: Now, if a Den Leader or a parent uses Scoutbook, do they also need to use paper records or the Internet Advancement?

SHAWN: Whatever method your pack committee decides to use to keep track of that advancement, ultimately at the end of the day it all has to be entered into the BSA system. And we're real excited to announce, within just a couple months, that if your pack is on Scoutbook, if you're a Den Leader and you approve adventures or awards, that information will automatically be synced to the BSA system.

AARON: So, talk about some of the benefits of using Scoutbook as opposed to shall we say, the traditional methods of tracking advancement. Why should people use Scoutbook?

SHAWN: One of the things that I realize as a leader is families are such a big part of Cub Scouting. And one of the advantages Scoutbook brings, not only to Scouts, but families is we give parents a login as well. So the leaders have a login, parents have a login. They can go in and see the progress in real time of their Scout and they can even upload photos, videos, building memories right into Scoutbook to be recorded and never lost.

AARON: Oh, that's cool.

SHAWN: Another great reason that Scoutbook would be a good choice is its acceptable anywhere. If you're used to recording advancement on Excel sheets, if you're ever on the go and you want to work with your son on an adventure, let's say, you can always pull out your phone, load it right up and see which requirements he needs to finish that adventure or that next award.

AMY: Okay. So what are the checks and balances for ensuring proper tracking?

SHAWN: When I built Scoutbook, I knew this was an important aspect where you didn't want to just have parents or the boys checking off things they did so, I implemented a feature where it may be, those early years in Cub Scouts you have Akela which could be a parent or even the boy themselves said, "Hey, I did this requirement," and inside of Scoutbook the Den Leader is alerted through a report that there are requirements pending that need his or her approval. And so we've built into Scoutbook checks and balances so that the Den Leader can go in, follow up with the parent or Scout, and

make sure that those requirements are truly indeed done to the best of their ability.

AARON: As a leader myself, one of the challenges that I have come across when it comes to keeping track of advancement is you know, if you have eight boys in your den, not every single boy is going to be able to attend every single meeting, so you've got, boys who might miss a visit to a fire station or something like that. What kind of resources in your system are available to check the den's advancement as a whole to keep track of that as you move forward?

SHAWN: One of the cool features we built into Scoutbook is a concept of scheduling a pre-planning so that you as a Den Leader can mark certain requirements as "do at home" requirements. So isn't that great where you're with your son you're on a trip, you don't know if he's gonna be working on certain requirements, a month from now in a den setting or are some of those requirements assigned as a do-at-home project?

AARON: Right.

SHAWN: When they miss these requirements parents easily know that the certain requirement was scheduled to be done in a den meeting on X date, so if they miss that and go into Scoutbook and see what exactly they need to do at home to get caught up.

AMY: That's a very useful tool for a Den Leader.

AARON: And how much does it cost?

SHAWN: The cost is a dollar per Scout. So, if you're coming into Scoutbook as either a family or an entire pack, the cost is a dollar per Scout. You can have an unlimited number of adults – parents, grandparents –connect up. The only cost is per the registered Scout.

AMY: So, Shawn, is there anything else about tracking advancement or Scoutbook that we haven't talked about that you think our listeners may need to know?

SHAWN: Maybe just some personal experience when I was a Den Leader, I used to use Scoutbook in creative ways. One of the ways was I would call my Denner to the front of the class. I would have Scoutbook on an iPad, loaded up, hand it to him, and he would actually do the attendance and other little things like that right in Scoutbook. That just lit up his face and all the other boys just love to be the next Denner.

AMY: Yeah, that's a great idea. So, the program really should revolve around the boy and his growth and accomplishments, and now that that's gotten a little bit easier. Shawn, thanks so much for inventing Scoutbook and for coming on CubCast.

SHAWN: Thank you for inviting me.

AARON: We'll be back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief message.

**(SAFETY MOMENT – [Medical Records](#))**

AARON: Now it's time for Reminders and Tips. Be sure to start finalizing details for your summer camping opportunities. This includes day camp, family camp, resident camp and pack overnights. Make sure that you have all the equipment checked out so that everything is working properly.

AMY: Also, make sure parents are making fee payments and the site has been reserved. If you haven't already done so, be sure to contact your district about a camp promotion at a pack meeting.

AARON: You also need to be sure that everyone has the proper training. BALOO, which is the Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation, and Hazardous Weather training are required for any campout. It's too warm for skiing or sledding and too cold for swimming or picnics so, why not spend the time catching up on your training? Contact your local council for training dates.

AMY: Have you supported your local council financially? Be sure to participate in a Friends of Scouting, or FOS campaign or other Scouting fundraiser. Remember, financial donations don't always mean cold, hard cash. See what gifts in kind you may be able to provide.

AARON: This month's Ask CubCast comes from the mailbox and Mike Roytek asks: What if a requirement listed in the book will not work for my den or pack in my local area?

AMY: It's important to remember that each requirement was crafted to support the aims and methods of Scouting. However, let's say a requirement says to visit a historical site and the closest one to your area is 200 miles away. Well, you might be able to have a veteran come visit the pack. Have the historical site come to you. If you have any questions, just check with your Pack Committee before altering any requirement. Download the November 2016 CubCast for more information.

### **Begin Music Under**

AMY: So now our March episode comes to an end. Thanks to our guest Shawn Jackson and thanks to you for listening.

AARON: Now I know you've been meaning to but haven't gotten around to it, but don't forget to let us know what other topics you'd like to hear about. Just send an email to [cubcast@Scouting.org](mailto:cubcast@Scouting.org) or tweet @cubcast. With that, I'm Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Join us next month as we have a lively discussion about Wood Badge.

### **MUSIC FULL TO FINISH**