

September – FAMILY CAMPING

Music Full then under

AARON: Welcome, everyone, to the September CubCast. I'm Senior Writer for *Boys Life* magazine, Aaron Derr. Joining me as always is International Program Specialist and Webelos Den Leader, Amy Hutcherson. So, Amy, tell the folks what's coming up this month.

AMY: This is something that is very near and dear to my heart: Family Camping. I love, love, love Family Camping and I can't wait to talk about it.

AARON: You know, the humorist, Dave Barry once said, "Camping is nature's way of promoting the motel business." I think Scouts know better.

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AARON: Especially Cub Scouts, as our guest, Sara Banks, can confirm. Sara has been involved in Scouting since 2011 and currently serves as Cubmaster for Pack 555 in Midland, Georgia. She is quite the expert on this subject as the pack will typically take 100 or more and their families camping to experience the Fall Family Camp. Even when her own family is not Scouting, they'll take small family trips camping. Welcome to CubCast, Sara.

SARA: Thank you for having me, Aaron, Amy.

AARON: So, in Cub Scouting, Sara, define Family Camping. What do we mean by Family Camping?

SARA: Family Camping; it's an outdoor experience for the whole family. This is an opportunity for the boys being outside. They learn more about themselves and the environment around them. It's a great time for families to come together and learn more about each other.

AMY: I have two boys, 16 and 10, and my 16-year-old has loved the opportunity to go camping as a family and help share his skills that he's learned through Scouting with his little brother's group of friends. So, Sara, is this on a den level or a pack level or perhaps both at times?

SARA: Typically, it's both. A lot of times the pack campouts, the family campouts, they're geared towards families, Tigers, Wolf, Bears. And then the Webelos Scouts, they're able to participate in separate den overnights, but the Fall Family Camping, Spring Family Camping is definitely a pack level.

AARON: Now, how many camping trips are usually taken in a Cub Scout calendar year?

AMY: Usually the Cub Scout calendar year - we're looking at two. You're going to do a Fall Family Campout (and) a Spring Campout. Some packs that may be a little bit more adventurous, they might choose to do their own small pack overnights. And then the Webelos have the opportunity to do their Webelo overnights as well.

AMY: Okay, Sara, so when should the planning begin for these campouts and who is involved in that planning?

SARA: Our pack typically plans three months or more in advance. We like to get our favorite sites reserved. Sometimes those are very popular. And then, whenever either the council or the district opens up their registration, we try to get all of our families onboard and register. Then there is always the opportunity for meal planning if the pack decides to do meals as a group or den-level planning, and then all of your equipment. We like to include our committee chair, our Cubmaster, and then if we're fortunate to have a camping chair or a large group of parents that like to sit around and talk about these types of activities, we try to get them all involved.

AARON: Sara, give me a second. I'm going to write a note to remind myself to start planning our campout right now. All right. Is there an official BSA requirement before a pack can go Family Camping?

SARA: That is a great question. There actually is a BSA requirement, and that is BALOO. That's going to be your Basic Adult Leadership Outdoor Orientation Course, and that's a great time to get your parents involved, your leaders involved, and get them trained in what it means to be outside, how do you plan a great camping trip, and really getting them orienteered to cooking and all of the variety of activities that can happen in a campout.

AMY: Okay. So, we know as a Cubmaster, Aaron has taken BALOO, right?

AARON: Yup.

AMY: So, what's involved in the cost? Does each family pay or is it kind of like a pack budget that you use?

SARA: We do both in our pack actually. If we're going to do our own pack overnigher, we typically charge maybe five dollars per Scout, depending on what we're doing. If we choose to have some kind of craft or an event that's going to cost a little extra, we also vary our cost depending what type of meals we're going to provide. If it's a council or district event, then that usually has a cost that the council and district set up in advanced.

AMY: Okay.

AARON: What level of involvement, Sara, do you ask for parents of the pack to participate in when it comes to Family Camping?

SARA: If we are involved with the district or the council at that Fall Family Campout, we ask them to supervise their children. We want them to be very aware in that environment. We take about 65 to 75 Scouts and their families, so I typically have anywhere from 100 to 120 people running around camp on top of all the other participants. So, we're really asking the parents to be mindful of their children that they bring on the campout specifically, and making sure that everyone's up to date with youth protection policies and ask them to be involved at the level they feel comfortable. So, if I've got a parent or two that love skits and songs, we may get them involved from that perspective. If they like sports and we have a sport activity, we get them involved there. It really just depends on each parent's skills.

AMY: On a side subject, I'm really interested to know what and how you do campfire cooking for that many people, because that's phenomenal.

SARA: We actually get our troop involved, Troop 555. My son and husband are at the troop and then I have my younger son with me at the pack, so we kind of have a little "in" there with our troop. We get them to come and help us out sometimes. We keep it really kind of fun. We'll do hotdogs one night. We tried the walking tacos. The Boy Scouts got out there and browned all of our taco meat for us. Keeping it pretty simple is really the key to cook for that many people.

AARON: Hey, another kind of side question, Sara; so, I don't know if you and Amy have experienced this or not, but I was kind of surprised when I first became a Cubmaster how many parents in our pack were terrified of the idea of spending the night outside camping. We just assume while sleeping outside with the bugs and the snakes and the cold and the hot - this all seems fine to us, right? We all have met families who, their first reaction when you say "camping" is like nope, not interested. So, I'm just curious how you handle that. Do you try to talk them into it? What do you do?

SARA: We make them as comfortable as possible. Communication and just really good planning is the key to get everybody comfortable, explaining to them in advance, "This is what your tent looks like, this is the type of environment we're in." We're not taking our families out on the side of a hill where there's mountain lions and bears and that kind of stuff.

AARON: Right.

SARA: We're taking them to a, council campground, somewhere that's cleaned up, that's not really rustic. That makes it a little bit easier for everyone. Setting up and having them comfortable with their tents and their equipment before they go is another key to making sure that they are comfortable in that. And if they don't want to camp for the night they don't have to. They can stay for the day and experience the day with us and then, come 8:00 at night if they're still really not so sure they want to camp there, then they're welcome to go home at that point. But we do encourage them at least to come for the day and give (it) a shot.

AMY: Are there resources available for parents and leaders to help everyone feel a little bit more comfortable about Family Camping?

SARA: [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) is a great resource. The *Guide to Safe Scouting* for our leaders to understand the requirements for each age group for camping. And then there was also a great site out there at the Scouting.org called [Things Cub Scouts Do](#). That gave some good information. And then everyone should seek their district and council. There may be resources available through both of those avenues as well.

AARON: And I would like to actually recommend the *Guide to Safe Scouting* because I've had a lot of really excited, eager parents; they go camping all the time, and they're making all these suggestions for our Cub Scout Campout like, "Oh, we can go kayaking". So, let me just recommend review the *Guide to Safe Scouting* with all the families before you go because people come up with great ideas, but maybe not exactly what you need to be doing on a Cub Scout Family Campout.

SARA: Absolutely.

AARON: Sara, anything else about Family Camping you think ought to be shared with our listeners?

SARA: Keep it simple; keep it fun. We have had more fun when we had less schedule. We find that the kids really enjoy finding their surroundings and being out there not necessarily elective based or requirement based – just letting them be in nature, whether it be some kind of scavenger hunt or go on a hike. We try to just keep it as fun as possible and allow them to just really explore.

AARON: Good. Well, because I work in the magazine department, I'm going to add that there's a really good article on Family Camping in the September/October issue of Scouting magazine that will be a fantastic companion piece with all the information you just shared. So, Sara, thanks so much for joining us on CubCast.

SARA: Thanks for having me.

AMY: Stay tuned – September Reminders and Tips are coming up right after this brief Safety Moment.

(Safety Moment – Family Camping)

AMY: Hmm – a Safety Moment on Family Camping. Coincidence?

AARON: I think not. Moving on to Reminders and Tips. 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, which you can now do online!

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.

AARON: 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 My.Scouting tab at the top of the page.

AMY: Now, this is an ongoing piece of business. Remember to turn in your advancement reports every month. The March 2017 episode explores Internet Advancement and Scoutbook – tools designed to make the advancement process quick and easy.

AARON: Speaking of advancement reports, Amy, I don't know if anything like this has ever happened to you. But we had a boy join our pack from a different pack. He had been in Cub Scouting several years and his dad asked me if his achievements carried over and I said, "Of course they do. Let me just check his advancements," and there was no record of him at all earning anything because apparently his previous pack had not turned in their advancement reports. They kept records of their own but they didn't sync it with the BSA system. So, don't be that pack! It's very important that you turn in advancement reports so that the boys receive advancement credit

in a timely way. Boys should be recognized as soon as possible at their next meeting.

AMY: But remember, Cub Scout Adventure Loops do not require an advancement report. They are to be presented at a den meeting whenever each adventure is completed. It's all part of the instant recognition program of Cub Scouting. What I like to do is to go to my local Scout Shop and stock up on the adventure loops ahead of time so I have them ready.

AARON: Now, we all know that Cub Scouts love the Pinewood Derby, the Space Derby, and the Rain Gutter Regatta. Now is the time to begin planning those events. Not next month, not next week – right now.

AMY: Got it. 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 right 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.

AARON: The Blue and Gold Banquet should be a big birthday celebration of the BSA, so if you need ideas or inspiration for this event, you can go to the archives and download the December 2012 CubCast for some great ideas on *How to Hold a Blue and Gold*.

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AARON: And now this CubCast has come to an end. Thanks again to our guest, Sara Banks.

AMY: And thank you for listening. Be sure to come back next month for *I Love a Parade*. That sounds like fun, doesn't it, Aaron?

AARON: It sounds great.

AMY: If there are topics that you like to hear about or just want to let us know how we're doing, send us an email to Cubcast@Scouting.org, or tweet to @Cubcast. With that, I'm Amy Hutcherson.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr. Now c'mon, everybody, let's go camping!

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