

MARCH – THE FAMILY PROGRAM AND WEBELOS DEN

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AMY: Hello, everyone. I'm Webelos Den Leader and International Scouting Program Specialist Amy Hutcherson. Joining me is the famous blogger, Bryan Wendell, and we're so glad you've tuned into this special crossover episode of CubCast and ScoutCast for March.

BRYAN: Great to see you, Amy, and why a crossover episode? Well, because we'll be talking about the girls in your Webelos Den and getting them crossed over in a Troop in 2019. These are really exciting times right now in the BSA, aren't they?

AMY: Absolutely, and I am especially excited 'cause I'm a Webelos Den Leader myself and we have a lot of families in our den that have daughters that are so excited to take advantage of this opportunity.

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AMY: So, joining us for this episode is Linda Baker, Program Vice President of the Northeast Region. Linda is currently working with a task force updating the Cub Scout handbooks. Linda is a local Troop Committee Chair, so she has a great perspective from both sides of the transition process. Welcome to this special CubCast/ScoutCast, Linda.

LINDA: Thank you. It's great to be here.

AMY: So, let's just start with the basics. What is a Webelos?

LINDA: A Webelos Scout is a fourth or fifth grade Cub Scout preparing to transition into a troop. The term “Webelos” is actually formed from the phrase “We’ll be loyal Scouts.” Webelos and Arrow of Light combined to make a particularly exciting program with adventures focusing on first responder, building a better world, camp cooking, hiking, and other outdoor activities, and preparing to be part of a Troop. Opportunities for leadership are an important part of the Webelos program and they set the stage for continuing the journey toward Eagle Scout.

BRYAN: So, Linda, are Webelos Dens going to be coed once girls are welcomed into the BSA?

LINDA: Webelos Dens will not be coed. The plan is that each den will be single gender. The pack may have both boys and girls though, but each den will be all male or all female. The decision about whether a local pack will include both genders will be made by the unit leadership in consultation with the chartered organization. I do imagine that most packs are deep into the planning process right now and probably doing everything they can to ensure that both girls and boys feel welcome in our local pack.

AMY: Yeah, we’ve already heard there’s a lot of excitement about that out there right now, so when will girls be officially allowed and welcomed into our Cub Scout Packs?

LINDA: Your local council will announce the official date when girls can join. It will definitely be in time to begin the 2018-2019 school year and it may be sooner than that. Stay tuned.

BRYAN: Now, since this is a cross-over and we're talking about crossing over, could a female Webelos Scout cross over into a Troop, which right now would be an all-male Troop. Could she join that troop?

LINDA: Not exactly, but many current troops are making plans for having what we call "sister troops" for girls. Girls will have the same challenging activities and advancement requirements and the same leadership opportunities, and they could begin right away to work toward the Eagle rank. Even though the female Webelos will not be able to join a current all-male troop, it's important for the pack and the den leaders to start establishing the dialogues with local troops to exchange ideas about the possibilities that there are.

AMY: Okay, so Linda, help of us understand a bit here. Looking ahead for when we do have female Webelos and looking to cross over, what if there is no female troops in their area?

LINDA: Though are no female troops but there are many areas where troops are establishing female troops. And there's even the possibility of a Webelos Den becoming the basis of a female troop.

AMY: Oh...

BRYAN: So, would you suggest starting with a troop nearby or troop that has a good reputation and say, "Are you guys planning to welcome girls once 2019 rolls around?"

LINDA: Yes. I do think that's important to start that dialogue, and it's important not just to ask that question but to talk with everyone they can about possibilities. The den and pack volunteers should talk with their Unit Commissioner and the sponsoring organization and, as you point out, particularly the local troops to think about the approaches that they might take. Look at the newly revised Unit Performance Guides, get information about how to start a troop in case some of the leaders or perhaps many of the parents and families involved may want to be part of starting a new troop. It's especially important to visit with nearby troops and engage in the activities that they host. That's always important for Webelos but it's really helpful in building communication about what makes a successful troop as this group of females and their families moves forward. It will be great to have the partnerships with Scouters who have troop experience so that whatever troop is formed, and they'll all be new troops for the girls, it will all be a new experience for everyone.

AMY: We're sure to have additional questions going forward. Where are some resources or places that leaders can go to have their additional questions answered?

LINDA: There are a ton of resources and new ones are being developed every day. It's really all part of that Be Prepared idea, which is so important to the BSA and is so important to today's parents. So, stay tuned for announcements from Scout-wire, information on the National website, Scouting.org. Be sure to read Bryan's blog.

BRYAN: Yes, agreed.

LINDA: For Webelos leaders and parents of potential Webelos, check out the new Webelos Handbook which is scheduled for publication in June of 2018. It's important to be prepared not just for growth in Webelos but for girls in troops, so current den and pack leaders should be taking Troop Leader Training right away so they can fully understand how a troop works. If a current Scout troop leaders and committees, it will be helpful to talk with commissioners and district reps as well as a chartered organization to consider whether and how you might start an additional unit. Think about which current leaders might become leaders of the new troop and who else can be recruited. Make sure that everyone is trained. Consult that Unit Performance Guide. And for both packs and troops, the position of New Member Coordinator will become especially important as girls join. The New Member Coordinator Team will help get the word out about the benefits of Scouting, help recruit youth and their families and, most importantly, help every youth and family feel welcome and engaged. If we invite girls into the program, we also want to ensure that boys continue to experience the excitement of Scouting and that no opportunities for males are lost even as new opportunities for females open. Scouting offers such a terrific program of character development, learning and leadership. A huge thanks to all those who are listening for all that you're doing. You're making sure that everyone is prepared to maintain and extend that welcome to Scouting.

BRYAN: Yeah. Our listeners are great and they're very dedicated and one thing they do is they'll talk to their the boys and their packs about once they cross over into Boy Scouting they'll get to go on some really exciting camping trips, they'll get to earn Eagle Scout, and I did want to ask you about that because our chief has said that indeed girls will be able to earn Eagle Scout and the requirements won't be easy or "Eagle Light," as he said. So, is it too early to talk to female Cub Scouts about Eagle Scout and

introduce them to that concept and say, “This is, kind of the mountaintop that you’re working toward once you cross over?”

LINDA: It’s not too early at all. I think it’s wonderful for both girls and boys to be thinking about Eagle Scout way back when they’re Webelos Scouts. Certainly in my home troop we have a lot of people coming into the troop saying, “My intention is to become an Eagle,” and I know that that will be true for girls as well as for boys. And I’m surprised always at the number of them who have looked ahead to see what you actually have to do to become Eagle; what it means to do an Eagle project, and things like that. It’s so exciting to have that planning in place already when they’re middle-schoolers.

AMY: Absolutely. Wow, this is definitely an exciting time and we’re very excited to have the girls have the opportunity to join the Cub Scout Packs and be part of a Webelos Den. So, Linda, thanks so much for joining us on this CubCast/ScoutCast episode.

LINDA: Thank you.

BRYAN: We’ll be back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief Safety Moment.

(Safety Moment – Wilderness First Aid)

BRYAN: And now for the promised Reminders and Tips. Be sure to start finalizing details for your summer camping opportunities. Make sure you have all of the equipment checked out so that everything is working properly.

AMY: 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.

BRYAN: Be sure to check out the March-April *Scouting* Magazine where you can read all about Scout service in action in the wake of last year's destructive hurricane season.

AMY: In the March issue of *Boys' Life*, see how the Pennsylvania Dutch Council turns back the clock with a day of vintage activities at its Time Travel Camporee.

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

BRYAN: And we've got another special crossover episode for April, and guiding that discussion will be Aaron Derr from CubCast and my usual cohost Lee Shaw from ScoutCast. And with that, I'm Bryan Wendell.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Have a great rest of your day.

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