

SEPTEMBER: WORKING WITH THE TROOP COMMITTEE

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BRYAN: Welcome to the September ScoutCast. I'm Bryan on Scouting Blogger, Bryan Wendell.

LEE: And I'm National Alliance Team Lead, Lee Shaw. This month, we'll get out our magnifying glass to examine the role of the Troop Committee, because a lot of leaders don't know that there is a committee whose sole purpose is to give them assistance.

BRYAN: That's right, and there might be some Troop Committee members listening right now or people who know Troop Committee members who wouldn't mind a refresher course on what their responsibilities are.

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BRYAN: So, Charlie Garwood currently serves as Southern Region-Area 5 Vice President for Program for the Piedmont Council in Gastonia, North Carolina. We asked Charlie onto the show because he has lots of experience in this area as his past volunteer positions include – deep breath – Scoutmaster, Scouting Coordinator, District and Council Commissioner, District and Council Vice-Chairman for Boy Scout Program, the list goes on. Charlie, welcome to ScoutCast.

CHARLIE: Thank you very much. Glad to be a part.

BRYAN: All right. I always like to start with the basics: What is the Troop Committee?

CHARLIE: The Troop Committee is kind of like a board of directors. It supports the troop program. It's accountable to the chartered organization rep and the chartered organization. It is a collection of like-minded adults committed to a youth-led Boy Scout program. Its best if organized into subcommittees which ensure the quality of adult leadership recruited and trained. It fills the Scoutmaster void when he or she is temporarily absent or unable to serve, ensures that all leadership is approved and registered and trained for a specific position of responsibility especially in youth protection training, provides meeting places and much, much more. There is no maximum limit to the number of Troop Committee members, however, the minimum number is three adults age 21 or older.

LEE: Sounds like a very, important committee, so, why wouldn't a Scoutmaster know that the committee is in place?

CHARLIE: I don't know that I can fully explain this condition for all troops. It may be a lack of training. It may be a lack of commitment to proper BSA

programming. One could assume that the Scoutmaster is doing all the work alone, or the chartered organization rep may be new and unaware of his or her responsibilities. In all cases, the Scoutmaster or chartered organization rep should work to cooperatively initiate a fully functioning Troop Committee.

BRYAN: So who are the people that make up the Troop Committee?

CHARLIE: Experience has shown that troops with committees of seven or more volunteer members work more effectively and provide better troop program support. The best source is parents of troop members when properly trained and committed to youth-led programming. They may also be Eagle Scouts, they may be chartered organization members, and they may be dedicated members of the community. The Troop Committee Guidebook, number 34505, has an excellent procedure about how to recruit committee members. It's available in your local Scout Shop and/or scoutstuff.org. It's great to capture parental involvement immediately upon entering into the troop program. In other words, involve the Scout and his parents too at the earliest opportunity.

LEE: Does each person have its own position and responsibility or is it just collectively shared by the committee?

CHARLIE: That's a really good question. Responsibilities are both. They may be individual or they may be shared. But the main concept here is to do what is necessary to get 'er done. Like all positions in Scouting, Troop Committee members serve for one year at a time. Every committee member should be asked to serve in a specific capacity. No one, including the committee chair, automatically retains the same position beyond one year of charter, however, positions may be renewed annually. The single most important responsibility of the Troop Committee is recruiting adult leaders and volunteers like the Scoutmaster, the Assistant Scoutmasters, and even other Troop Committee members. Other responsibilities include finances such as the troop bank account, petty cash, annual troop budget, troop money, earning projects, camp saving plans, etc. But some of the other jobs are, like advancement where a Scout learns, is tested, reviewed and recognized, recommends adults to do district and council advancement committees for merit badge counselors, assumes leadership for board of reviews. Yet other jobs includes secretary, outdoor activity, service, chaplain, training, equipment, membership coordinator; there is something for everyone.

BRYAN: Some of those seem little bit intimidating at first. So I know training would probably help, but is training required to serve on the Troop Committee?

CHARLIE: Youth Protection Training is required by all registered members. It is highly desirable for Troop Committee members to take as many of the BSA trainings as possible, especially job-specific training for the Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster. The Troop Committee Coordinator is watchful that the troop is taking all steps to ensure the boys' safety. Trainings like weather, safe swim defense, etc., will help in this endeavor. The Troop Committee Training Coordinator ensures troop leaders and committee members both have opportunities for training. He or she maintains an inventory of up-to-date training materials, videos and other training resources.

LEE: Oh, that's great information. What's the relationship between a Scoutmaster and the committee?

CHARLIE: The Scoutmaster is the adult leader responsible for the image and program of the youth-led troop. The Scoutmaster and his or her assistants work directly with the Scouts. The importance of the Scoutmaster is reflected in the fact that the quality of the guidance will affect every youth

and adult involved in the troop. Scoutmaster trains and guides his youth leaders. He uses the methods of Scouting to achieve the aims of Scouting. The Troop Committee supports the troop program. In other words, they support the Scoutmaster and his assistance. It's important that the Scoutmaster and the Troop Committee Chair work cooperatively to deliver the promise of Scouting.

BRYAN: Charlie, you talked about recruiting people to the Troop Committee and recruiting volunteers. Is that a good role for someone who maybe isn't interested in the camping side of Scouting? Maybe they don't want to go on the outings but they still want to really be involved in their son's troop?

CHARLIE: Yes, it is. There's a little bit of something for everyone. If you like service in your local chartered organization or the community there's a place there. There's also a place for even like a chaplain's adviser. Membership coordinator, someone who's out in the community trying to bring in new boys. And last but not least, somebody who may be a new parent coordinator, someone who has come up from the Cub Scout ranks and into Boy Scouting and has a specialty to offer to other parents who are making that transition.

BRYAN: It's almost like if you use a baseball analogy; the Scoutmaster is kind of the manager in the dugout and then the committee is kind of the front office or the GM.

CHARLIE: That's pretty close. That's very good.

BRYAN: And just like in baseball, sometimes there can be a conflict between the two, so what happens if the Scoutmaster doesn't want to let go of his or her responsibilities that really should be part of the Troop Committee's job?

CHARLIE: First of all, we need to understand why the Scoutmaster will not let go. Conversation and guidance is needed by the Troop Committee. The Troop Committee Chair and/or the chartered organization rep should take the lead in initiating this conversation. Sometimes training or retraining may be a proper path forward. And none of the above are successful, remember, it's a one-year appointment and the committee has responsibility to assure proper and approved adult leadership.

LEE: All right. So I've heard something called the Troop Committee Challenge. What is that?

CHARLIE: Oh, wow. The Troop Committee Challenge is an online training session that usually can be completed in about one hour. It explains the various committee positions and duties in detail. To get to it you sign into my.scouting.org with your ID and password, click on Menu and then your dashboard followed by My Training, choose Boy Scout and Varsity and go to the Training Center. There you will find Troop Committee Challenge and, again, it takes about an hour and it's a detailed instruction about what are your jobs.

BRYAN: So that's my.scouting.org, and if it only takes an hour, I mean, really, you owe it to yourself to check that out. Now, Charlie, are there other resources for Scoutmasters and Troop Committee members and, and interested parents where they can learn more about the Troop Committee?

CHARLIE: There are many. Probably one of the best resources is the Troop Committee Guidebook which you can find in your local Scout Shop or at scoutstuff.org. There is the Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster leader-specific training. Unit Commissioners can often offer face-to-face training, Roundtables, University of Scouting. These are excellent resources and I would be remiss if I didn't mention Wood Badge.

LEE: There's also the COR Representative. That training is also available online as well.

CHARLIE: Yes.

LEE: So is there anything else about the Troop Committee that we haven't talked about that you think should be shared with with our listeners, Charlie?

CHARLIE: The key ingredient you hear is that the Scoutmaster and the Troop Committee are like-minded individuals, like-minded in the sense that they both honor the mission of the Boy Scouts of America to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. And as long as they're operating cooperatively to make that happen then we're fulfilling the mission of the Boy Scouts of America.

BRYAN: That's great. Back when I was a Scout, the only thing I really knew about our Troop Committee was that they were a bunch of men and women in the back of the room during the Courts of Honor, so this was pretty eye-

opening for me and I speak for our listeners when I say we really appreciate you coming on here, Charlie, and giving us kind of the behind-the-scenes look at the Troop Committee. Thank you so much.

CHARLIE: Glad to help.

LEE: Now, don't go anywhere. We'll be right back with Reminders and Tips.

(ExploringCast – Open House)

LEE: And now, here we go with September's Reminders and Tips.

BRYAN: The Troop Open House or First-Nighter, you should hold it soon if you haven't had it already. And don't all those new youth and adult applications and registration fees? Don't forget to submit them to your Council Service Center.

LEE: And remember, for every adult wanting to join Scouting, Youth Protection Training is required 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.

BRYAN: That's right. And absolutely anyone, especially parents and potential leaders, can take that online training by creating a "my.scouting account". You just go to my.scouting.org and you should really do what I do which is make it a bookmark on your browser.

LEE: I like that tip, Bryan. The September's *Boy's Life* magazine has an overview of all that Exploring program has to offer. After you've read it, go back and listen to the May 2016 ScoutCast for our discussion on how the Exploring program can support your troop.

BRYAN: Okay, are you crazy for Dutch-oven cooking like Lee and I are? Well, get all those Dutch-oven cooking secrets you crave in the September/October issue of *Scouting* magazine. It has recipes perfect for your next campout, important info like how many charcoals to put on top and on bottom – everything you need to get started Dutch-oven cooking. I can almost smell that pineapple upside-down cake.

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BRYAN: All right, as informative as this has been, that music you're hearing means the September ScoutCast has come to an end. We want to thank our guest Charlie Garwood for joining us.

LEE: If there are other topics you like to hear about or you just want to let Bryan and I know how we're doing, send us an email to ScoutCast@scouting.org or tweet to @BSAScoutCast. With that, I'm Lee Shaw.

BRYAN: And I'm Bryan Wendell. And go ahead, tweet about us. You know you want to.

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