

DECEMBER – THE SCOUTS BSA PROGRAM FAQ’S

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BRYAN: Welcome everyone to our ScoutCast for December. I’m Bryan on Scouting Blogger Bryan Wendell, alongside the new Scout Executive of the W.D. Boyce Council in Peoria, Illinois, Lee Shaw, who has graciously agreed to finish out the ScoutCast year with us. Hey, Lee.

LEE: Enough about me. Let’s start the discussion because people still have a lot of questions about the new Scouts BSA program which, in case anyone out there hasn’t already heard, means girls will be allowed to join Scout troops in February of 2019.

BRYAN: This is a big change to our already fantastic organization, and naturally the questions have been pouring in. We’ve been compiling the most frequently asked questions, and we’re going to get them answered for you right here, right now.

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BRYAN: To do that is the person with all the answers, April McMillian. April is the Department Manager of Program Development here at the BSA National Service Center and she’s going to help us get the *right* answers to all those burning questions. Welcome to ScoutCast, April.

APRIL: Hello.

BRYAN: Thanks for being here. So, we know there’s going to be girl troops and boy troops, but what’s the difference?

APRIL: It's as simple as a boy troop has boys and a girl troop has girls. Otherwise it's really pretty much exactly the same because each troop has patrols and each has Patrol Leaders and a Senior Patrol Leader, and Patrol Leader Councils.

LEE: Ss you mentioned the things that are alike, tell me why should we have separate Scoutmasters for a male troop and female troop?

APRIL: Over the many years, we've known anecdotally the important role of adult association and youth development, and now scientists have even confirmed that it's really important for youth to have those trusted adults, those role models. In fact, the Steven Bechtel Jr. Foundation has funded a sizeable grant to study the role of BSA's adult leaders in the development of character in our BSA youth. So, we are seen as one of the industry leaders in this area, which is really, really cool. And so, knowing this, our organization felt that it was vitally important to maintain that independent relationship between the Scoutmaster and their Scouts, so each troop will have their own Scoutmaster so that we can help provide the very best program to all of our units.

BRYAN: So, a boy troop and a girl troop might meet at the same place but have a separate Scoutmaster. Could they have the same unit number? Like, could there be a girl troop number 1776 and the boys' troop 1776?

APRIL: Absolutely. We had a lot of feedback about that. A lot of dads and a lot of grandparents wrote us and called us and contacted us every way they knew how because they had earned their Eagle in Troop 1776 and really, really wanted the opportunity for their daughter or granddaughter to earn

their Eagle in Troop 1776. Now they can earn Eagle out of the same unit number.

BRYAN: That's cool.

LEE: How do we recruit girls in Scouts BSA? What are some of the methods that will be used?

APRIL: The easiest way really is just to get out there and ask. There are still lots of families and lots of people who just don't know that BSA is welcoming families, so let's take the chance to talk about how Scouting's values are good for everyone. A joining survey that was sent to every person who joined during our early adopter period back in the first part of the year, shows that parents of girls are not only more likely to sign up as a volunteer but they're more likely to serve in a unit-facing position like a Den Leader or an Assistant Den Leader, or a Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster. So, we should not only be recruiting our girls but our men and women for adult leaders as well.

BRYAN: And what about the boys? Does this mean we're going to stop recruiting boys into Scouts BSA since we're focusing on this new, exciting opportunity for girls?

APRIL: Absolutely not. What this does, it allows us to go into classrooms and we can actually speak to the entire room not just half of them. So, we will be recruiting boys just like usual, in fact, maybe even with more enthusiasm than we've had in a long time because we're seeing our membership rise.

LEE: That is outstanding. When we start talking about where the rubber meets the road, can our districts offer training to girls joining Scouts BSA now or should we wait till February?

APRIL: It's a great opportunity to do it now. Get together some of your older youth so that the new troop can benefit from their knowledge and skills and on a related note, we have received guidance from our Risk Management folks that young ladies participating in any kind of an event that we consider to be a recruiting event are covered by our General Health and Sickness Policy.

BRYAN: So, April, people who have been reading about this story might have seen the term "linked troop." What is that and how will that work?

APRIL: Sure. A linked troop, that whole concept was based on what we do now with some of our chartered organizations where a pack and a troop, and sometimes even a crew and a ship, all share a committee and sometimes they even share some of the adult leaders. So, we're just expanding that concept so that the chartered organization can now do the same thing with two troops, a girl troop and a boy troop. And just like usual, that new troop will have its own charter and its own primary direct contact leader, so in this case that would be a Scoutmaster, for a linked troop you do need your dedicated Scoutmaster. That's one position that we don't need to share. and the chartered organization should work with troop leadership to make sure whether those two troops are gonna meet at the same time in the same location. Sometimes we might be limited by space, so they would need to work that out, and if they do choose to meet at the same time and

location, the two troops can actually share openings and closings, but the youth would need to work on their advancement separately in their individual troops. That also says that they probably would need to jointly plan the calendar, especially if they might be doing any joint outings or things like that. It's easier for the chartered organization and much easier for the families. They just have to go to one meeting, one night a week, and that's all good.

LEE: Absolutely. So what leadership positions do we need for a girl troop?

APRIL: The leadership positions for a girl troop – just like those for a boy troop. For youth leadership you'll need a Senior Patrol Leader, a Patrol Leader or Patrol Leaders if you have more than one patrol. For the adult leadership, you'll need your Scoutmaster and then you'll need some Assistant Scoutmasters, committee members.

BRYAN: Let's say there's someone who wants to be a leader and is planning to be a leader of a girl troop in February; hit the ground running right when it happens. Could that person go ahead and start attending district and council functions now or do they have to wait until the troop officially forms in February?

APRIL: That'd be a great idea. Attending district or council functions now or maybe even some unit meetings, that could get some incoming leaders up to speed with how things are done in the BSA, maybe provide them with some current, the most up-to-date information, and get them started with forming their own networks, because we all know that Scouting is a family

and the sooner we get our new leaders into our family, the better all the way around.

LEE: When it comes to Scouters, we will often try to help each other out as much as we can, so how can current Scout leaders help leaders of new troops?

APRIL: It's important for us as Scouters to remember that many of our new leaders are coming in with little to no knowledge of the Boy Scouts of America. And so, when we are talking with them, try to remember not to use our jargon or our acronyms, and remember to break things down to the details. There's a lot of things that we all just take for granted, we've done them for so many years, so share your best tips, invite them to shadow you, invite them to roundtable, and make sure that they know as they're getting started that you're always there for them with questions and that no question is too small. We want this to be a great experience.

BRYAN: Yeah, that's a great point. ASPL, ASM, NYLT, - there are so many of those and we take for granted even things like what a merit badge is and how you might earn one.

APRIL: Absolutely.

BRYAN: So, speaking of getting people up to speed, is there a role for the New Member Coordinator here at the Scouts BSA level? Because often that position has a vital role at the Cub Scout level, but do you see a role for these volunteers at the Scouts BSA level as well?

APRIL: The New Member Coordinator is gonna be a vital role for these new girl troops as well because if you think about it, we're going to be starting all new troops, the New Member Coordinators will be a great help. And by the way, for those of you listening, if your unit doesn't have one yet, what are you waiting for? Let's get one onboard. Having someone there just to do a simple welcome is so meaningful. Often at the beginning of a meeting we're all so busy, getting everything ready, that sometimes it's a little hard to make a personal welcome to visitors or guests, and that New Member Coordinator could be the perfect person to give a warm, personal welcome to our newcomers, and they will know information about the unit, sort of expectations from the program, maybe answer questions. A lot of the questions I'm getting are about the uniform, what do they have to buy, how do they get all the patches on, where do they put 'em, those sorts of things can be addressed by the New Member Coordinator. And don't forget that those New Member Coordinators can actually help walk the new members through our registration process, so if you've got someone coming to just visit, those New Member Coordinators could actually help them get signed up before they even leave.

LEE: That's great information there, April. And, speaking of patches, can girls start working on advancement before February? I mean, we know February is the month in which we're actually having the troops and having the girls get involved at that level, but can girls actually start working on advancement before February?

APRIL: We do recommend that girls get together before February. They get to know each other, maybe learn some basics that a lot of our boys get while they are in Cub Scouting, but actual work on advancement, that can't begin until you're a registered member in the Scouts BSA program.

LEE: Got it.

BRYAN: Yeah, that's helpful to know. So, can girl and boy troops attend program activities together?

APRIL: Scouts BSA members, whether they're boys or girls can attend program activities together and just like, Troop 123 and Troop 1776 could attend together now, or they could attend separately, just like now. So, an example of when it might make a lot of sense to do things together is maybe if you have a special guest coming to talk. That would make a whole lot of sense to do that together rather than asking the guest to do two talks. So when and how often to do that, that'll be a unit decision working with their chartered organization, and sometimes that decision may be predicated by how much equipment the chartered organization has. So, things like campouts, while they can be done together, would need to be planned to make sure you know who's gonna use what equipment.

LEE: And so, April, can boy BSA Scouts teach girl BSA Scouts?

APRIL: That's a great question. Thanks, Lee. Yes, we would love to have our boy Scouts BSA members mentor our girl Scouts BSAs the same way that we're asking our Scoutmasters to mentor new Scoutmasters coming in.

BRYAN: There's been so much good information here, but people might still have questions or want to get more details on the stuff you've told us. Is there a

resource that you like to send people to if they want to get their further questions answered?

APRIL: Absolutely. The best place to get information on Family Scouting, whether it's for Cub Scouting or Scouts BSA, is our Family Scouting website which is at Scouting.org/FamilyScouting, all one word. Or if they have questions that they don't see the answer to on there, they can always send an email to Family.Scouting@Scouting.org, and we have real people monitoring that email and generally we have answers within a day but sometimes it takes two or three days if we have to track something down, but we would love and welcome any feedback, any questions that people have.

LEE: Well, anything else about the new Scouts BSA program that we haven't talked about that you think should be shared with our listeners?

APRIL: February is just around the corner. Again, if folks have questions, I would direct them again to Scouting.org/FamilyScouting. There's a great FAQ on there. It's updated pretty regularly with lots and lots of questions as we get more and more questions as we go through this process.

BRYAN: 2019 is gonna be an amazing year for the BSA, and I'm so excited it's almost here. We want to thank you, April, for this discussion and for helping us assist our listeners with all their questions and concerns that they might have as we begin what's really a new chapter in the BSA's history.

APRIL: My pleasure.

LEE: Thanks, April. And we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief Safety Moment.

Safety Moment – Hypothermia

LEE: Brrr ... wow. That makes me cold just thinking about it. But now it's time for Reminders and Tips. Let's start with a pop quiz! Do you know who your local Scouting professional is? This person is also known as your District Executive or Youth Serving Executive. If you don't know who this is, call your council to find out.

BRYAN: And if you don't know your council name, that's OK, you're not the only one. Just go to Scouting.org, type "local council locator" in the search field, and then you'll be able to enter your ZIP Code and get links to your council website and find out what your council name and actually council number are. You could also download the October 2013 episode of ScoutCast. It's called "Who's Who in the Zoo" and it has a lot more information on that subject.

LEE: Even though you're probably thinking more about the holidays than next summer, now is the time to start planning for summer camp. Since you already planned for camp, and you put it in your budget, it's now time for sign-ups.

BRYAN: That's right, and it just wouldn't be Reminders and Tips without a plug for *Scouting Magazine*. In the November-December issue, you've got some important tips from the top experts, authors, Scoutmasters and even some Eagle Scouts on how you should talk to young people about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. It actually gives you an actionable plan for doing just that.

LEE: Well, Bryan, I don't know about you, but I'm a little hungry. And that brings me to the December issue of *Boys' Life*. It's all about food. You'll meet a Scout who was a MasterChef Junior finalist and follow a Nebraska troop as they perfect their back-country cooking techniques on the trail. Also, see what camp kitchen equipment the Gear Guy recommends.

BRYAN: And before we leave, Lee, this is your last episode and I just want to say it's been really great sharing this space with you, this little cubicle that we're in to record these each month. And it's been really an honor getting to work with you, and I wish you nothing but the best in Illinois; you will be missed here on ScoutCast - I've learned a lot from you.

LEE: Well, Bryan, I can't thank you enough. You've been the awesome, the greatest cohost anyone could ask for. It has been a pleasure of mine to just be part of the ScoutCast, and I'm thankful for our listeners who chime in every month and they give us the feedback necessary for us to kind of help them answer some of the questions that they have and I just want to say thanks to the Scouting family for being a part of ScoutCast. I'll be tuning in to you and the new cohost. So, thanks for all that you've done to help Scouts and thank you for all you've done to help me.

BRYAN: I'm going to quote Scouting founder Lord Baden-Powell who once said: *The most worthwhile thing is to try to put happiness into the lives of others.* And doing these podcasts with you has made me pretty happy, I know it's made our listeners happy by making their Scouting lives easier, and now, Lee, you're going on to make the people of Illinois very happy by helping to grow Scouting up there.

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BRYAN: That's it for us. It's been another great year for ScoutCast. We want to thank our guest, April McMillian, for helping get us ready for Scouts BSA next year.

LEE: And we want to thank you for listening. Don't forget, you can send us your ideas and comments to make – and comments to make ScoutCast an even better tool for you. Just send the email to Scoutcast@Scouting.org or tweet us. Our handle is [@BSAScoutcast](https://twitter.com/BSAScoutcast). And one last time, I'm Lee Shaw.

BRYAN: And I'm Bryan Wendell. But come on back and join us in 2019 where we'll have a new cohost, so has some pretty big shoes to fill, but the show must and it will go on. So, for the final time in 2018, from all of us here at ScoutCast, happy holidays, everyone. Thanks for listening.

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