

MARCH – SUMMER ACTIVITIES (AND ITS NOT ALL CAMPING)

Music Full then Under

AMY: Hello, everyone. I'm Amy Hutcherson, Membership Growth Coach for the Northeast Region. Joining me is Aaron Derr, former Cubmaster and Senior Writer for *Boys' Life* magazine, and we're so glad you've tuned into CubCast for March.

AARON: This month we ask the question: what summer activities should my den get involved in? We know about camping, right? That's a BSA staple. And if you need more information on that, you go to the February 2018 CubCast.

AMY: But Erica Smalls thinks we should be looking at a lot of other activities in summer. So, let's find out what that's all about.

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AMY: You may remember when Erica joined us back in Oct 2016 to explain the differences in Webelos dens compared to other dens. Not only has Erica served as a Den Leader for all four Cub Scout ranks, she is currently the Cubmaster for Pack 387 out of Bedford, Texas. Welcome to CubCast, Erica.

ERICA: Well, hi. Thank you, Amy, for having me back.

AMY: Sure. We usually think of a Scouting year as a traditional school year, starting in the fall, ending in the spring, and going to camp that summer, but what are the benefits of other activities for the youth?

ERICA: When we think outside of the box and bringing some new ideas that the Scouts themselves have offered, it helps the Scouts to stay engaged, it helps them to promote the program by being visible in the community, and gives them an opportunity to bring in some of their other friends that might have been engaged in other activities throughout the school year, and then it just helps us to stay physically strong.

AARON: Have you noticed any other benefits to summer activities other than the ones to the youth?

ERICA: Oh, of course. I love to use the summer activities to get parents who are a little bit more reluctant during the school year because of busy schedules to get them more involved, to bring in community leaders over the summer, to engage members of the community that aren't traditionally involved with the unit during the year. I like to use the summer activities to do so, like we may get a soccer team to come out and do a soccer game in the summer with the kids or we might have some indoor hockey with one of the local hockey teams, and so we get those coaches involved or we get those players involved, and it makes for a great experience.

AMY: So, you mentioned actually getting some of the ideas from the youth themselves. What are some of the activities that the youth are excited about doing in the summer?

ERICA: The activities evolve every year, so it is whatever they are currently in I try to incorporate that. For instance, last summer it was bottle flipping and so whereas that might annoy teachers at school, it's a wonderful activity to do in the afternoon. We have a bottle-flipping competition and it's thrifty and it's an opportunity for me to teach them about leaving no trace. I said, "Go find some of those bottles that have been discarded." We put some water in it and we have a bottle-flipping competition. Or something like an indoor lock-in. The indoor lock-in lets them come up with what they want to do. What do we want to do? Do we want to do board games? Do we want to watch a movie? Do we want to race cars? Do we want to build something together?

AMY: Lots of activities and you're giving us so many great ideas.

ERICA: We try to think out of the box as much as possible over the summer because everything else is pretty pre-prescribed if you use some of the great Scouting tools that we have.

AARON: So, from your experience, do you have to get permission, permits, things like that in advance for these summer activities?

ERICA: For Cub and den activities, I try to stay away from needing permits as much as possible. There are a lot of activities out there that we could do. Our communities offer so many great things where those things have already been handled for us. But in some cases where we need those permits, I try to work proactively throughout the year to get those early. An example of that is if I am going to want to throw a lock-in or something at a

local community center and we need a permit to lock in, I work on that early, but mostly I try to avoid needing permits for places, keeping the activities as simple as possible. That helps with the flexibility and scheduling.

AARON: So, when it comes to planning these summer activities, how far in advance do you usually get together and try to work these things out?

ERICA: For me, planning is a year-round event. So, for instance, my summer activities are already planned. And what lends itself to that is the great community resources that we count on happening every year. So, we start by planning with the things you know are going to happen like Twilight Camp in June, and you know that the pools are going to have an opening splash day. Organizations like the world's largest swim, they're going to do their events at the same time so planning one summer events while you're doing a summer's events is big and helpful. But you have to leave a little bit of wiggle room or flexibility for some new things that may come on the calendar. So, I would say year-round planning, planning a year out, is not unheard of. It's actually the best way to do that. Start the summer that you're in planning for the next summer with staple items, and then throughout the year start asking in advance from community leaders, Scouts BSA troops and other resources what they think they'll have planned.

AARON: How do you work with Scouts BSA troops?

ERICA: Oh! So the Scouts BSA troops will have made an annual calendar and they will have included some summer activities, some of them specifically geared towards recruitment of their younger leaders, so they're an awesome resource, really a month out in advance, And then we try to create somethings together that we can do with them, So have a little bit of flexibility in your schedule probably six months out gives both parties a chance to put something unique and special together for the kids.

AARON: Cool.

AMY: So, Erica, what are some resources that are available to assist us in finding community activities during the summer?

ERICA: The key word there is "community." Almost every city or local community produces a summer activity like a newsletter; It can be in different forms. It could be online. It could come to you in your mailbox. I will go to the city offices and find they will have those out prior to the summer. Just going directly to the city and asking about opportunities that they have over the summer for your kids to engage in, either some service projects like community trash cleanup projects. A majority of those activities will be free, like parades and summer festivals and musicals. we have local theater groups that put on reduced-price activities. One of the best resources are our Scouts BSA troops. They often have a lot of activities that they plan just to recruit the young Scouts in from the Cub Scout packs. They also need opportunities for service for their Scouts, and so they provide a number of resources for us as well. City leaders are oftentimes looking for Scouts to participate in events in fun ways, say, tree-planting ceremonies. They often go do flag ceremonies at council

events and things like that over the summer. So, there's a number of resources out there that we can use. that help fill up your summer calendar schedule.

AMY: Fantastic.

AARON: And do you make any special efforts, Erica, to get the parents involved or work for the chartering organization or anything like that?

ERICA: Oh, yes, I do. Just as much as a Scout deserves a trained leader, they then deserve an engaged parent, but we have to engage parents on the level that they feel comfortable with, and then at a level where we can train them to be able to do something else. Part of our commitment in Scouting is positive family engagements, and so we try to talk to them about that early on, and we show them little ways that they can do that. For instance, you may not be able to build a Pinewood Derby track, but you might be the caller before the race. Or you can be the person running the concession stand at an event. Just try to find a way that everybody can play some small role. And we know that children like to see their parents engaged. We tell them we're a team. That's my pack's motto: One pack; one team.

AMY: For sure. I feel so inspired about all of this information. I love the theme of community visibility...

ERICA: Yes, visibility, getting out there. We try to do that as much as possible. We don't just think about our pack in general. When your pack engages in an activity in the community, particularly when they are fully dressed in their uniform or a Class B uniform, they automatically tell the community that: one, the Scouts are out here; two, they have something to give back. The Scouts give back to the community by participating, and the community gets to feel like they're giving back to the youth and involved with them, and it helps the organization, I believe, as a whole.

AMY: Sure. Is there anything else about summer activities for our listeners?

ERICA: Yes. Think outside of the box. We know that in the summer it's going to get hot, so having a water activity is great but what we did we do last summer and how can we change that activity this summer? We went to the splash pad last year. This year we're going to do a water fair. It's just changing the activities up. If they like it, stick to it and find a way to modify it. If they don't, find something to replace it, and engage them in helping you determine what that is.

AMY: Sure. Great stuff. Thank you so much. I've got to say, as a Membership Growth Coach, I really appreciate you sharing all these great summer activities, 'cause they're not only good for retention but a great way to recruit new members into our units. So, Erica, thanks so much for coming on CubCast.

ERICA: Oh, you're welcome. Thank you for having me.

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

(Safety Moment – Campout Safety Checklist)

AARON: And now the promised 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.

AMY: It's too warm to be 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.

AARON: And one last thing. Have you supported your council financially? If not, now is a great time to do so. Be sure to participate in a Friends of Scouting campaign or other Scouting fundraiser.

AMY: Remember, financial donations don't always mean cold, hard cash. See what gifts in kind you may be able to provide to your local council.

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AMY: So now our March episode comes to an end. Thanks to our guest, Erica Smalls, and thanks to you for listening.

AARON: Be sure to send us your thoughts and ideas for a future CubCast. Just send an email to cubcast@Scouting.org or a tweet to [@cubcast](https://twitter.com/cubcast). With that, I am Aaron Derr.

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

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