

MARCH – EXPLAINING ADVANCEMENT: THE TRAIL TO EAGLE

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BRYAN: Hey, everyone. I'm Bryan on Scouting Blogger, Bryan Wendell, with the Digital Producer for *Boys' Life* magazine, Gina Circelli. And we're so glad you've tuned into ScoutCast March 2019.

GINA: This month is all about advancement in the troop, which is very different from Cub Scout advancement.

BRYAN: For one thing, in a troop, advancement includes the path toward becoming an Eagle Scout.

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BRYAN: So, returning to ScoutCast for our discussion this month is Wayne Huddleston. You may remember Wayne from the June 2016 episode, where we discussed who exactly can sign off on requirements. Wayne has been active in several district and council positions, including as Council Training Chairman and he served on the faculty at the Philmont Training Center and Sea Base. He also serves on the National Advancement Task Force. Hey, Wayne, welcome back to ScoutCast.

WAYNE: Hey, glad to be here, Bryan and Gina. Thank you for asking me.

BRYAN: So, Wayne, nuts and bolts, time. What do we mean by advancement, specifically at the troop level?

WAYNE: The BSA defines advancement as the process by which youth members progress from rank to rank during their Scouting journey. However, advancement is much more than that. It's just not an end in itself. It's one of the eight methods used by the BSA, none of which are more important than any of the others, by the way, to help unit leaders carry out the mission and aims of instilling the values of the Scout Oath and the Scout Law in our youth and helping them with character development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness. A great way to learn more about the purpose of advancement is to review chapter two of the Guide to Advancement - a BSA publication all adult leaders and parents will find indispensable.

GINA: Awesome. Now, I do know Cub Scouts advance together. Is it the same with a troop?

WAYNE: No. Advancement in a troop is entirely different from Cub Scouts. There isn't any standard for how quickly advancement should occur in a Scout troop, but typically individual Scouts advance at different rates based on their own interests, abilities, and level of participation, and also on how fully developed the troop's program is with opportunities for advancement as part of their activities.

BRYAN: So, Wayne, then, if they're not advancing all together once per year, how often does a youth member in a troop advance from one rank to another?

WAYNE: Well, for the younger members after first joining, BSA recommends that they strive to achieve First Class within 12 to 18 months of joining. Experience has shown us that Scouts that do that have a tendency to stay

in the program longer, which gives us more opportunity to influence them with the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.

For Star, Life, and Eagle ranks, the goal of advancing every year might be appropriate. However, as Scouts get older, they become more involved with many other activities that occupy their time. Adult leaders should be mindful of these distractions and continue to encourage the Scouts' participation.

BRYAN: Let's dive a little bit more into that. How does an adult leader encourage someone who, doing the calculations in their head and thinking, okay, you're at Star and you're about to turn 17 so the time is running out. 'Cause we don't want them to regret not reaching whatever goal they may have, so how do we kind of nudge them toward Eagle?

WAYNE: The best way to do that is through a Scoutmaster conference. It can be somewhat of a formal setting or even just a casual setting, sitting around a campfire sometime, where a Scout leader might sit with the youth and, and just talk to about what their goals are and point out what some of the time constraints might be in achieving those goals.

BRYAN: That's good.

GINA: So, the purpose of Cub Scouting is to advance to the next rank. What exactly is the purpose for the older youth?

WAYNE: From adult perspective, the purpose of Scouting comes back to the mission and aims that we're trying to accomplish: the character

development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness. For Scouts themselves, advancement serves to provide challenges and recognition. Age-appropriate hurdles are put in front of them as the rank requirements, and they face these challenges, they learn about themselves, and they gain self-confidence.

BRYAN: Is the focus of troop meetings and activities and campouts, should we always be kind of lasered in on advancement or at least, since it's youth led, be encouraging the boys and girls in troops to be focusing in on advancement or is there something else that we should be focusing on?

WAYNE: No, not at all. Advancement shouldn't be the focus of troop meetings. There's a lot of other things that troop meetings are used for: preparing for outings, practicing skills, exercising leadership, strengthening patrol. But most importantly it's having fun. Advancement has a place in a program like that, but it shouldn't be the only focus.

GINA: How do you go about recognizing Scouts who do advance? I mean, you're talking about a balance between not focusing on advancement, but there is some recognition in place for them. Is that right?

WAYNE: Oh, absolutely. You have the casual recognition and you have more formal. When a youth, for example, completes the requirements for a rank during a troop meeting, just happened to have done their Scoutmaster conference or Board of Review at that point, it's certainly good for the Scoutmaster, other leaders stand up in front of the group and announce it to everyone, "this young Scout just completed the First Class rank," for example. And then at a more formal setting, like a Court of Honor, you

could present the badges and have parents present and others there to enjoy the moment.

BRYAN: Wayne, have you ever seen troops use like a visual way to recognize Scouts along their trail to Eagle?

WAYNE: There are many, many ways you can do that. I've seen troops where they've had a kind of a hang-board where the Scout's emblem itself moved from place to place depending on their rank. They might be under the Second Class and when they moved for First it could move over to the next column or something like that. There are lots of good ways that we can recognize the youth that encourages them and the other ones to continue advancing.

BRYAN: It's healthy competition, right? That's how I see it.

WAYNE: Oh, sure.

GINA: Since a troop is youth led, who supports the advancement of a troop member?

WAYNE: Advancement is supported by many individuals, both youth and adult leaders. The Scoutmaster is responsible for the overall vision of advancement in a troop, but then youth leaders are able to provide the examples of leadership, they provide education for the Scouts and teaching skills, training, and other encouragement. And then the Scouts themselves can support advancement by providing encouragement to

each other in their patrols and in other activities. Scout support is the best you can get. Adults provide support by ensuring that the program has plenty of opportunities for advancement, that they're available for boards of review, and other activities like that, and that administrative requirements such as reporting and maintaining advancement records and organizing and conducting advancement ceremonies are done timely.

BRYAN: So, talking about advancement records, who do you see as responsible for knowing exactly where a Scout is along his or her journey to Eagle? Is that the individual youth's responsibility, is it a leader's responsibility, a parent?

WAYNE: Everybody has some of that responsibility. We don't just push it off to say, "Well, you're supposed to take care of everything yourself." As adults we're here to help encourage them, help lead them and guide them along their journey. Sure, the Scout needs to be paying attention to what's going on, but everybody can help in that regard.

BRYAN: So, let's talk about resources. You mentioned chapter two of the Guide to Advancement. I'm looking through the Guide to Advancement for blog stuff all the time, so I'm a big fan of that as a resource. What other resources, Wayne, do you like to point leaders to?

WAYNE: *Advancement News*, which is the bimonthly publication produced by volunteers for volunteers through our committee; there's very good articles in there. To subscribe, what listeners could do is send an email to advancement.team@scouting.org with "Subscribe" as the subject, and

include their name, email address, and their council, and they'll be on our list. Six times a year they'll get their publication.

At Philmont this summer, we've got actually three courses dealing with advancement – issues, solutions, mechanics of advancement – and this year we've added one for Scout troop advancement. That's new. Philmont is just a great venue for training and education. *Troop Leader Guidebook* also has a couple of chapters on advancement which are good for people to review.

GINA: Wayne, you've given us so much great insight into advancement. Before we let you go, is there anything else about advancement that we haven't talked about that you think listeners need to know?

WAYNE: Two things. First, try not to get the cart before the horse. While earning the rank of Eagle Scout is one of the outward signs of Scouting, it's not in the BSA's mission or aims. Earning the rank is a byproduct of a well-rounded program focused on character development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness. But most importantly, make the program fun. Don't make it a chore.

BRYAN: I love that you said that 'cause that's how I've always viewed the rank of Eagle - it shouldn't be something where you're just checking off requirements along the way. When I got Eagle, it was just doing all these fun things in my troop, and getting Eagle just happened to be a byproduct, like you said. There's some things you wouldn't probably do if not for your journey to Eagle, like the Eagle Scout Project, but for the most part it's just a byproduct of having fun. So, that's really great and, half of ScoutCast hosts are Eagle Scouts, so....

Wayne, we want to thank you for joining us here on ScoutCast. We always appreciate your insight and I know our listeners do too.

WAYNE: It's a pleasure to be with you. Thanks again for inviting me.

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

(Safety Moment – Camp Safety Checklist)

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

BRYAN: Yeah. You don't really want to get to summer camp and then realize your stove doesn't work or your tent has a hole in it, or other camping mishaps, right? Also, training. You don't want to have any holes in your training either. And one of the required trainings is the Hazardous Weather Training, so make sure everyone has that. It's important to know what to do when Mother Nature takes a turn. This is a perfect time for training because it's really too warm to ski or sled or snowshoe and it's too cold to swim or have a picnic so why don't you catch up on some training, right? Contact your local council for training dates and details.

GINA: Also, have you supported your local council financially? Be sure to participate in Friends of Scouting, or FOS campaign, or other Scouting fundraisers. 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.

BRYAN: All right. It's time to talk about *Scouting* magazine, and in the March-April 2019 issue, you can read Aaron Derr's refreshing, uplifting story about how the Palmetto Council in South Carolina. They reached out to a local school for the deaf and blind and successively brought the principles of Scouting to a group of disadvantaged children who otherwise never would have had the chance to experience this life-changing movement.

GINA: You probably need to have a tissue handy for that one. It's a great story. And, meanwhile, March is the special wilderness survival-themed issue of *Boys' Life*. It's a really fun story. Read about the Survivor Man Challenge, where Scouts participate in a competitive wilderness survival experience. You can take a wilderness first aid course with Scouts from the Simon Kenton Council, and you can learn how to assemble your wilderness survival kit.

BRYAN: That's called being prepared. There's a lot of good reading in *Scouting* magazine five times a year and *Boys' Life* every month. You can hit up boyslife.org or scoutingmagazine.org for more on that.

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BRYAN: So, that's the end of our March episode, so, we're going to march on out of here. We want to thank our guest Wayne Huddleston and just as importantly, thanks to you for listening to ScoutCast.

GINA: Be sure to send us your thoughts and ideas for future ScoutCast episodes. Just send us an email at scoutcast@scouting.org, or tweet [@bsascoutcast](https://twitter.com/bsascoutcast). With that, I'm Gina Circelli.

GINA: And I'm Bryan Wendell. Have a great rest of your day.

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