

APRIL – SCOUTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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AMY: Hello, everyone, and welcome to *Scouting* magazine’s CubCast for April. I’m Amy Hutcherson, Growth Coach for the Northeast Region and former Webelos Den Leader, along with Senior Writer for *Boys’ Life* magazine and former Cubmaster, Aaron Derr.

AARON: The topic this month is Scouts with Special Needs, and even if you don’t have any special needs youth in your den or pack, you’re sure to find this discussion very enlightening.

AMY: I’m actually pretty excited to start the conversation,

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AMY: So, let’s go ahead and introduce our guest, the Chair-elect of the National Disabilities Awareness Committee, Warren Weener. Prior to becoming the Vice President of Meals on Wheels for Greater Houston Area, Warren served as Scout Executive for the Okaw Valley Council in Belleville, Illinois, where he led the growth of Special Needs Scouting and Learning for Life Special Needs programs. Warren has assisted with the development and the writing of the “Understanding Cub Scouts with Disabilities Resource Book” and developed and wrote the current National Camp School Session on Special Needs. So, with that, welcome to CubCast, Warren.

WARREN: Thank you very much.

AMY: When we use the term “special needs,” what specifically are we talking about?

WARREN: There's a lot of children have special needs. It could be a learning disability like dyslexia. It could be a physical disability like CP. Could be hearing, intellectual disability. There are just a few of them.

AARON: And how is Scouting important for special needs youth?

WARREN: Scouting is important for all youth. Special needs are just another group of boys and girls to have fun in Scouting. It builds good assets and it builds confidence, especially with children with special needs to be part of a group, a den, a pack, that they're having fun in.

AMY: Absolutely. When we have a special needs youth in our den or pack, how do you determine what practices to use based on the special need of that youth?

WARREN: I like to use the Individual Education Program. Some school districts will share that with the Cub leaders with the parents' permission. The IEP is a piece where public schools try to help special needs children get to the next level and Scouting is a place to help them feel successful in the things that they're trying to work on. The IEP was created through a team effort and it's reviewed periodically, so the Special Ed teacher is going to be excited that somebody else is going to help them, and if that's a Den Leader or Cubmaster or Webelos leader, that's just the better.

AARON: What are some advantages to mainstreaming a special needs youth into your den, and what are best ways to do that?

WARREN: Mainstreaming is almost common now. Children today see this as normal, so why wouldn't you mainstream and adapt if both regular Cub Scouts and special needs Scouts benefit from this?

AMY: My son who's 18, who just earned the rank of Eagle, he still talks about one of his fondest memories when he served as a Den Chief at a Cub Scout day camp, and there was a Cub Scout with Down Syndrome who didn't want to be there. He's kind of combative. And my son plays the guitar and the ukulele, and he had his ukulele at day camp and this young man with Down Syndrome was drawn to that, and so Ian became his buddy at day camp and walked around to the different areas with him and helped him succeed in his day camp experience. So, you are right, it's just as much for Scouts with special needs as it is also too for the kids who don't have special needs that are benefiting from those things as well.

WARREN: That's great.

AMY: OK, listeners, we'll be back with personal stories and resources right after this.

(Commercial – Cyber Chip)

AMY: Warren, do you have any personal stories that you'd like to share with us?

WARREN: My son had cerebral palsy and he's legally blind, and is in a wheelchair, yet he went from Tiger Cubs to becoming an Eagle Scout, and I want to share a few stories about that.

When Jason was a Cub Scout, they were working on cooking, and if you're in a wheelchair the only thing you could do is cook a hot dog over a campfire, for the most part, because you've got to be able to reach the fire. Our Cub leaders decided that it might be good to talk with the Special Ed teacher, and the whole class decided to work on that requirement. Again, going back to the IEP, where kids are learning to take care of themselves in special ed classes, so they went shopping just like it was in

the Cub Scout Handbook and they cooked together, and so it was just a great event that the Cub pack and the school district worked together on.

When Jason became a Boy Scout, I was kind of nervous, like all parents are but, Jason is in a wheelchair, so I started to attend Merit Badge classes with him. And one of the kids in our Scout troop said to me, "Mr. Weener, why are you with us?" And I said, "Well, I'm here with Jason." He said, "We've got this. We know Jason. We've been working with him for years. You can go do what you want with the other leaders." So, I left. And they did. They had it from start to finish. They knew his disability, and they had already figured out how he could work with them in earning his Merit Badges. So that was kind of cool. His peers made sure they that he had the best experience he possibly could. So mainstreaming is a good thing in Scouting.

AARON: Are there any resources out there where leaders can get more information about working with Cub Scouts with special needs?

WARREN: Sure. We have a lot of a good resources through the Boy Scouts of America, but what I want to say first it's probably better to start locally. The local school district is going to have resources and they're gonna know the community the best. So, taking that Cub Scout Handbook, the parent, the leader have seen the things in that community, and then working with the school district, the special education teacher.

Working on advancement you can go to the Guide to Advancement.

There's a section in there that will help you. If you have any more questions about it, you certainly can ask your local council and District Executives and they'll be able to assist you. We also have the Disability website that's online, or you can go to that section too.

AMY: For more information on Scouting with disabilities, check out our website at scouting.org, and in the search field type in “disabilities awareness.” Is there anything else that you can think of that that our listeners may need to know about Scouts with Special Needs?

WARREN: The troop Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmaster came to me and said, “We think Jason can make Eagle.” I went, “I just want him to be in Scouts.” As a parent, I didn’t see the full potential that my son’s Scoutmaster saw. So, they made that happen. They looked at the requirements. They worked with the local council when there were challenges. Here I am the father and I am not seeing the potential that the leaders are seeing in him, or the Scouts themselves in that Scout troop.

AMY: Right.

WARREN: There is to be no child out there that shouldn’t be allowed to be a Scout because there’s some type of challenges or there’s some type of lack of understanding. We have a great national committee, but more important, local councils and local districts have great resources in their community,

AMY: And people there that want to help, absolutely. This was such an important discussion so, Warren, thank you so much for coming on CubCast and showing us how Scouting seeks to be all inclusive and provide opportunities for everyone.

WARREN: Well, thank you for inviting me.

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

(April Safety Moment - Stroke)

AARON: It's time for April Reminders and Tips. If you didn't already know, April is Youth Protection Month, and the Boy Scouts of America takes that very seriously. Go to scouting.org/training/youthprotection for more details and be sure that your Youth Protection Training is up-to-date.

AMY: Family participation is very important in Cub Scouting. A great resource is the Family Talent Survey found in the Cub Scout Meeting Guide. Once they fill that out, you'll have a treasure trove of information to assist you in parental involvement.

AARON: In the April *Boys' Life* magazine, Cub Scouts from the Greater St. Louis Council attend Angler Education Day, where they learn all about fishing at 30 different learning stations.

AMY: By now you should have received the March-April issue of *Scouting* magazine, where our very own Aaron Derr writes about an innovative way to serve young people with special needs. The Palmetto Council successfully brought the principles of Scouting to a group of disadvantaged children who are otherwise never would have had the chance to experience our life-changing program.

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AMY: So, the April CubCast has come to an end, but we can't leave without a special thank-you to our guest, Warren Weener, and thank you for listening.

AARON: Come back next month to find out everything you need to know about training: why it's important and where to get it. With that, I'm Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Don't forget to send us your ideas and comments to cubcast@scouting.org, or tweet [@cubcast](https://twitter.com/cubcast). We look forward to hearing from you.

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