

## **JULY – LINKED TROOPS**

### **Music Full then Under**

RYAN: Hey, everyone. We're so glad you've tuned into *Scouting Magazine's* ScoutCast for July. I'm your new host, Ryan Larson, and joining me in hosting duties is the lovely Anissa Hicks.

ANISSA: Hi, Ryan, hello, everyone. This month is all about Linked Troops. I have no idea what that's about but I'm excited and looking forward to learning more about it along with our listeners.

RYAN: Well, you know, I am an Eagle Scout and I gotta tell you that even I don't know what a Linked Troop is, so we're going to learn together. Good thing we have some guests to tell us all about it.

### **Music Fades**

RYAN: Joining Anissa and me in our inaugural episode is Paige Samdal and Neil Goltermann. Paige has served Scouting since 2002, in such positions as Merit Badge Counselor, Committee Member, Assistant Scoutmaster, and Scoutmaster for an all-male troop for two years. She is currently Scoutmaster for a female troop, Troop 1505. Along with Paige is the Chartered Organization Representative for Knox Presbyterian Church of Naperville, Neil Goltermann. Welcome to ScoutCast, Paige and Neil.

NEIL: Thank you.

PAIGE: Thanks for having us.

NEIL: So, let's begin; what do we mean by a Linked Troop?

PAIGE: The Linked Troop is an opportunity where you have more than one unit, operating with the same charter organization. There's a singular committee, but the individual troop leadership is independent. You could have people serving in dual roles. You could have an assistant Scoutmaster of the male troop serving as an assistant Scoutmaster in the female troop. In our scenario we've got people serving both troops simultaneously. The benefit of it is to create a family environment where we work together for the purpose of raising these kids within the Scouting environment. And it offers new units the opportunity to enter into an established committee that's trained, that's functioning and to be able to have that support rather than having to flounder through the creation and establishment of a committee simultaneously with the creation and establishment of the youth and the adult leaders for the unit.

ANISSA: But whose decision is it to have a Linked Troop: Scoutmaster, Committee, Committee Chair ...?

NEIL: It was a collective discussion and agreement to move forward with a Linked Troop last year with the National's announcement that young ladies, would be a part of Scouting, it was a discussion that I as the COR had with the head of staff at our charter organization. We have co head pastors of the church. They're married to each other. They readily agreed. So, I discussed it with the Scoutmaster and committee chair. The organization has been a charter organization in Scouting since the early Sixties so the opportunity to have an organization for young women was a good opportunity. All we had to do was start reviewing how this is going to happen practically and within whatever guidelines we got from National.

ANISSA: You had mentioned boy troops and girl troops. Are there two different Scoutmasters or can one Scoutmaster for a boy troop be the same Scoutmaster for a girl troop and be linked?

NEIL: Definitely two Scoutmasters, and we were fortunate to find Paige...

PAIGE: It's a big responsibility! Having separate Scoutmasters, provides some autonomy between the two units. We do a lot of things together, we have a lot of activities, we enjoy it, but we are two separate troops and by having two separate leaders, it helps with the streamlining of duties. You can have people that are cross registered. We've got kids that have siblings in the other troop, and so it's a neat opportunity for parents to work with both units but it really is best to have two separate Scoutmasters. Between our two units right now we have over a hundred, registered active Scouts, and so for one person to consider that many Scouts, across two units is more than what would be reasonable to ask of somebody,

RYAN: Yeah. I can't imagine being a Scoutmaster for two units and having a hundred Scoutmaster conferences.

PAIGE: Yes. *(Laughter)*

RYAN: That would be quite a lot.

PAIGE: There's a lot of divide and conquer that goes on.

RYAN: For sure. So, hey, Neil. Are there any challenges with the equipment and, the accounting for the Linked Troops?

NEIL: With the equipment, the boy troop is in a transition of kind of buying new equipment, so it was a matter of just making sure that we had more. The girl troop goes on their own campouts and so they can use the equipment from the troop trailer anytime they need to have it. The boy troop does the same thing. There is a little bit of an increase in need for space and that was discussed ahead of time and identified. That's probably the biggest aspect of it in providing a space for meetings, because it's not just the troop meetings, it's the committee meetings and other organizational meetings that adult leaders get into and stuff like for planning and whatnot.

ANISSA: So, Neil, what are your expectations for the chartered organizations with Linked Troops?

NEIL: We do have occasional workdays at the church and, Scouts have always been a good part of that, and the expectation is that the girl troop will continue to be a big part of that as well. It has been very heartwarming to have them be visible and be around the church and recognizable part of the program.

RYAN: So, Paige, same question over to you. What have been your expectations for the Linked Troop?

PAIGE: The charter organization has been welcoming and embracing the unit. With our troop once it registered - Knox has a program of Scouting for every child from kindergarten up through age 20, boy or girl. There are no gaps in that for children at the church or in the community. They enjoy the activities that our unit provides and offers, but now we've got the opportunity to be able to expand that and say, okay, that sister that's been sitting and watching her brother do all these things now can do it the same thing, at same time, same place. The facilities have been fantastic. In regard to the equipment; the other Scoutmaster and I compare calendars. We merged what we knew we were doing together and then we went back to our respective PLC's and said, "Okay, these are the weekends for the available for the troops to go solo," and just cross-coordinate so that the equipment is available. We're doing some of our events together and then we're doing campouts and activities as a standalone unit too, and it's been a great blend within the program schedule.

ANISSA: So, Paige, what are some examples of activities for Linked Troops?

PAIGE: Our troops went together on a five-day Big Deal. It's a traditional campout that the boys have done for many years and the girls were included this time. We went down to Kentucky and spent time in Lexington and Louisville, went caving, ziplining, hiking, went to the Louisville Slugger Museum, the Corvette Museum. At one point I looked around at this group of kids and thought, there is no way you would realize that for some of them, this is the first time they've met each other. Some of them don't go to school together. The camaraderie that our two groups have put together has been amazing. We did an advancement campout together in April, which was especially key for the new Scouts that had crossed over in the boy's troop as well as the new Scouts we had in the girl's troop so they could learn some of those basic fundamentals within camping.

RYAN: It's funny that you say that because in my Scouting ventures about, I have seen a lot of that same camaraderie with the youth and we shouldn't necessarily be surprised because we've been seeing it at the adult level, because the adult volunteers have been working together. So, it's kind of heartwarming to see that interaction and positivity occur at the youth level as well.

PAIGE: We've seen the success that you have within the crews and the posts and the ships. We've had a coed environment. The difference now is we're just introducing it at a younger age and instilling that. And if we can create an environment where kids learn how to be collaborative at this age, then that carries into a whole different element for them as an adult.

RYAN: We're going to take a short break and be back with more on Linked Troops right after this.

### **COMMERCIAL: Boys' Life Warehouse Sale**

RYAN: Yeah. So, resources, where did you find resources? What available resources do you think are out there to assist leaders that are considering a Linked Troop structure?

PAIGE: If there's organizations that are looking for greater opportunities to serve the youth in their community, the first way to do that is definitely talk to their District Executives and their council because there may be people that have already come to those people saying, "we really would like to see a female unit in this area," Start there because there may have been people already identified to the council that's on the other end of that looking for a charter organization.

RYAN: So if they said, "Yes, I'd like to create a unit and I want to link it," where do you think they might find the best practices to create a Linked Troop structure? I think you said one and that is talk to their District Executive, but are there any other places that they would go to kind of help foster that interaction like you have?

PAIGE: They likely have Unit Commissioners that have worked through and helped expand Scouting in the past with addition of other units, so they understand the nuts-and-bolts process of it. Those are good people to have conversations with. Look around within your district, within your council. Are there other units that have recently created? Talk to those people and say, "Okay, what worked well? What did you need to go?" We've got resources really in place within the BSA structure that are tasked with these types of things, and so those are some great places to start.

RYAN: Scouting.org. That has a wealth of information on this and other topics.

ANISSA: Paige, is there anything else that we haven't touched on that you think we should all know?

PAIGE: Absolutely. Scouting has the opportunity to serve every youth between the ages of five and 20. Not every youth is going to move through Scouting in the same pathway as his or her peer. We've got amazing programs to help Scouts that are either in disadvantaged communities, that have special needs. It's just a matter of having adults that are willing to expand their comfort zone and provide opportunities, support, and strength for these kids to be able to have a quality Scouting program.

RYAN: This has been a very much a learning experience for me and I'm sure helpful to our ScoutCast audience out there. Neil, Paige, thank you so much for joining us.

NEIL: Thank you.

PAIGE: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

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

**(Safety Moment – Physiological First Aid)**

ANISSA: Okay, listeners, it's time for July Reminders and Tips. It's that time of year when you want to get your chartered organization representative, also known in Scout speak as the COR, involved in your annual program planning.

RYAN: This allows the COR to actually see what activities the troop is planning for the year and how they may relate to the yearly plan and objectives that the chartered organization may have.

ANISSA: In this month's *Boys' Life* Magazine, you'll be able to read about a Utah troop that backpacks 2,000 feet into the mountains for the perfect fishing spot. Also, this month, get a step-by-step how-to project on building a backyard amphibian ecosystem.

RYAN: That sounds really cool. Now usually there's a plug right here for *Scouting Magazine* but it doesn't publish in July or August. However, the stories don't stop, so if you want the latest Scouting news all summer long, you're all invited to visit [Scoutingmagazine.org](http://Scoutingmagazine.org). There you'll find the latest advancement news, inspiring stories, and insight into topics affecting Scouters.

### **Begin Music Under**

RYAN: In fact, you can check it out right now because we're at the end of our show. Thanks to our guests, Paige Samdal and Neil Goltermann, for joining us.

ANISSA: And thanks so much for listening. Be sure to tune in next month for everything you need to know about Peer-to-Peer Recruiting. Until next time, I'm Anissa Hicks.

RYAN: And I'm Ryan Larson. Have you got an idea for a discussion on ScoutCast? Just send us an email to [Scoutcast@scouting.org](mailto:Scoutcast@scouting.org), or tweet @BSA ScoutCast. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **MUSIC FULL TO FINISH**