

SEPTEMBER: PARENT ORIENTATION

Music Full then Under

RYAN: Welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* September ScoutCast. I'm Ryan Larson, along with Anissa Hicks, who will now reveal the topic of today's conversation.

ANISSA: Hopefully your recruiting efforts are bringing lots of new members into your troops, but new boys and girls also means new parents, so you will need to let them know what's expected in both the Scout and the parent.

RYAN: Ah, yes, parent Orientation. Let's find out what that entails.

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RYAN: Julie Bucciarelli is the founding Scoutmaster for female Troop 2119 in Bartlett, Illinois. She is also Assistant Scoutmaster for linked Troop 227, and Associate Advisor for Crew 127 in Elgin, Illinois. She is currently staffing her third Wood Badge course. Welcome to ScoutCast, Julie.

JULIE: Thank you so much. It's really a pleasure to be here.

RYAN: So, what do we mean by "parent" orientation?"

JULIE: Parent orientation is our chance as leaders in a troop to really give a overview of how a Scout troop actually runs. We go into all kinds of details on what does the uniform look like, when do we meet, how often do we meet, what are campouts, when are outings, all kinds of things like that, and how the program actually runs.

ANISSA: And who orchestrates that?

JULIE: The parent orientations are done actually by several different members of our troop. In our troop we have our Scoutmaster, Committee Chair. We'd like to have an SPL, ASPL, or another youth leader also join us, but another great option is to have other involved members, parent members of your committee to be involved in the parent orientation as well

RYAN: Have you found that you really need to have a parent orientation?

JULIE: You really need to have a parent orientation. You know, lots of times we make the assumption that parents already know our program, however, even if they're involved in the Cub Scout level, joining a troop is a whole different ballgame. There's lots of different equipment that's involved and a different level of commitment as well, but there's really two primary reasons why we want to have parent orientation at a troop level. The first is to make sure that parents understand the program and the second is to help them understand how they can actually be part of the troop, so there's really those two key reasons why it's important for us to have a parent orientation.

ANISSA: So, Julie, tell us more about the process of parent orientation.

JULIE: The process of a parent orientation really starts when you're recruiting your Webelos Scouts. So they may be first year Webelos or your Arrow of Light Webelos Scouts, and that's when you start to share with them the

differences between a troop and a pack and how they operate, because really it's hard to digest all of the information on how a troop program runs just in one sitting.

RYAN: It sounds like you have your parent orientation as they're joining. What about for Scouts that join at other times during the year. Do you try to have the parent orientation each time or do you do another one in the spring? How do you work that?

JULIE: Anytime a new Scout joins a troop, it's critical to have a new parent orientation. This may be one-on-one with a Committee Chair and the parents involved with the new Scout, but generally our Scouts will cross over into our troops usually early spring, usually February-March timeframe. So, during that time we'll have a more formal sit-down on how our troop runs and a more formal parent orientation, but you might be able to do that in a different way as well. Perhaps that one orientation session really doesn't work for your parents. Perhaps by bringing it down into smaller chunks might actually help. Perhaps three 15-minute sessions over the course of a month might be able to be more palatable to some parents and their commitment.

ANISSA: With the vast information that you provide during this orientation, how long does it typically take?

JULIE: If you do it in one big sit-down, it's usually about 45 minutes to maybe 60 minutes and then leave time for some questions after that but, again, it might work better for your troop in order to have several smaller sessions at well. What we've found is that usually it's hard to get parents to come

and make a commitment to really sit down for a meeting like this, so we like to give them as much information as we can at one time.

RYAN: Speaking of time, how do you address the time that a parent will need to invest? And I guess the other way to ask this question is, "How do you not scare these parents away?"

JULIE: Well, we really want to show them how much fun they can have while experiencing Scouts with their son or daughter. We know it is a big commitment not just for the Scout but for the parents as well, and we know that parents that are involved and understand the program, their Scouts really thrive and do so much better in the program as well. You know, success in the program is very different for every family. Some really have their sights set on Eagle, but we know that every Scout benefits no matter how long they're in the program. They really are learning those lifelong skills. So, we do our best to stress how important this program is for raising them into strong, confident adults as they move through the rest of their life.

ANISSA: So how do you address the needs of single parents as it relates to the program?

JULIE: Oftentimes, we really see one parent, even if they're in a two-parent household, but we all turn into a larger community and a family that all works hard to raise each other's children. If there are carpool needs or anything else, we make sure that contact information and rosters are shared very early on, so if there are some additional needs of a single parent household, we're able to address those as well.

ANISSA: Well, and to piggyback on that, how do you get current parents involved with new parent orientation?

JULIE: We want our existing parents to share in some of that because they were there. They walked in these same shoes that these brand-new parents have been in. And they have a lot of great ideas and can share wonderful stories about their Scout journey as well, so it's really great if you can have a parent or two. Perhaps they've sat on boards of review and have seen the growth in not only their own Scout but other Scouts as well, so it's great to kind of get those testimonials coming from existing parents over to brand new parents.

RYAN: Okay, we'll be back with more on the art of Parent Orientation, right after this short break.

COMMERICAL: Scout Shop Uniform Sale

RYAN: What resources have you found that are available to assist with the new parent orientation?

JULIE: There absolutely are lots of resources. Anytime you're feeling like you're on an island by yourself as a leader, go to [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) and then you'll be reminded of how many resources are actually out there. So, while we're talking about parent orientation, if you went to [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) and just typed "parent orientation" up in the top right, there's a search bar there. Just click that and you'll find a treasure trove of information there on Scouts BSA resources. You'll have information, a couple different things, but one that pops out to me is called Welcome to our Troop; it's a one-page customizable document for you, but there's also a whole 'nother orientation. They lay out a full outline on what a parent orientation meeting

would look like, who might be involved, and kind of walks you through a full script there, so you're definitely not in this alone.

ANISSA: Well, this is awesome information, and thank you for listing those resources. Is there anything else about new Scout parent orientation that you think would be helpful for our listeners?

JULIE: It's important to remember that our program, even though we know it really well, is brand new for many parents as they're joining a troop. So be open to their questions and be very welcoming. The other thing that we like to do in our troops is, after our early spring parent orientation meetings, we like to hold other meetings again in the fall. So, we run what we call Scouting 101, and those are for our parents and Scouts up to First Class. We kind of dig into a little bit deeper on some questions that they still may have lingering about the program. And then we actually hold Scouting 201 for those above First Class because they have a different journey that they're on at that point, and we hope that they know the program a little bit better by that point, but you'd be surprised at the questions that still come out from even these more advanced Scouts. So, don't ever just assume that they know it all, be open to all of their questions, and be ready with lively answers and support no matter what level they're at in the program.

RYAN: It's just so important to get the parents involved right away and have them feeling comfortable, and also outlining some of the ways that they can be involved. I found that when we give them an opportunity to serve, they feel really, really good. And I think the parent orientation and getting that them to be able to participate in that is really important. And I really appreciate you, Julie, bringing this discussion to ScoutCast.

JULIE: You bet. It's absolutely my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

ANISSA: Now, don't go anywhere 'cause we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips after this brief Safety Moment.

Safety Moment – LADDER SAFETY

ANISSA: Let's start with a tip from *Scouting Magazine*. The September/October issue has an article about a group of Eagle Scouts who ride their bikes across America – from Seattle to Washington, DC – promoting goodwill along the way. In this month's *Boys' Life Magazine*, meet an Eagle Scout Lego master builder who works at Legoland Discovery Center in Michigan.

RYAN: Looks like we're starting with the magazine ads early this month. In other reminders, your troop open house should be held soon if you haven't done so already. Remember to be sure to approve or accept all applications for your unit. And get all the new youth and adult members registered using the online registration tool.

ANISSA: And remember, for every adult wanting to join Scouting, Youth Protection Training is required when submitting an application. If you are unable to attend a council-led training session in order to get your Youth Protection Training Certificate, you can also take the training online.

RYAN: That's right. And absolutely anyone, especially parents and potential leaders, can take that online training by creating a my.scouting account. Just go to scouting.org and click the My.Scouting tab at the top of the page. Then you can do what I do and make it a bookmark on your browser.

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RYAN: All right, as informative as this has been, that music you hear means the September ScoutCast has come to an end. We want to thank our guest Julie Bucciarelli for joining us.

ANISSA: If there are other topics you'd like to hear about or you just want to let us know how we're doing, send us an email to ScoutCast@scouting.org or tweet @BSAScoutCast. With that, I'm Anissa Hicks.

RYAN: And I'm Ryan Larson. And go ahead, tweet about us. You know you want to.

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