

OCTOBER – DEN ORGANIZATION

Music Full then Under

GINA: Hello, everyone, and welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* October CubCast. I'm Gina Circelli along with my favorite sidekick, Aaron Derr.

AARON: Now, in previous CubCasts we've discussed the ways to grow your dens and the various activities a den can participate in.

GINA: This month, we're going to figure out the structure of a den – you know, how to get it organized.

Music Fades

GINA: With Barb Perez. Barb has served Scouting since 2001 in various roles as Committee member, Cubmaster, and Den Leader for Tigers and Wolves and Bears. She has been a Cub Scout Day Camp Director, as well as Roundtable Commissioner and is currently serving as a Development Director in the National Capital Area Council. Welcome to CubCast, Barb.

BARB: Hey, Gina, thanks for having me.

GINA: Okay, so, an organizing principle is a core assumption from which everything else around it can derive a classification or value, so, what does the typical den look like, what are the roles and responsibilities with the den?

BARB: A typical den is going to look like about six to eight kiddos, all the same gender, and all in the same grade together. And then from the adult leaders, you would have an adult den leader, an assistant den leader and somebody else can be responsible for taking attendance and logging it all into Scout Book. It's important at every den meeting to always have two adult leaders that are registered with Youth Protection.

AARON: So, in terms of the number of youth, Barb, you mentioned six to eight, minimum and maximum number of youth. Talk about that a little bit more. Why is that the ideal number and what do you do if you have fewer or more than that?

BARB: Ideally, if you have fewer than that, the simple answer to that is you recruit more, right? That would be the short answer to that. And if you really have more than that eight, once you get into those higher sorts of double-digit number, the den can really become kind of unwieldy, so you really want to stick to that six to eight. And I personally am a fan of partnering the kids up with odd numbers so that you never really have pairs of kids. Does that make sense?

AARON: Yes. So, you're saying, like, a den of five or seven might be better than a den of six or eight?

BARB: That's exactly right.

GINA: Okay. So, we've talked about the youth. What about the adults? Other than the den leader, wonderful den leaders like yourself, what other adult volunteers are required or ideal?

BARB: I work hard to recruit the parents of the kiddos that are there to do a myriad of different things. Somebody can send out the reminder for kickball on Friday, and you can have an adult volunteer who's responsible for organizing the outings. We need a Blue and Gold coordinator and they need a committee. As a new family entering into Scouting, I don't even know what a Blue and Gold is, let alone what a Blue and Gold committee is, so knowing what those roles for those volunteers are ahead of time and having that available for people to see when you're recruiting them is super helpful. So, when somebody says, "I need a Blue and Gold

coordinator,” that’s not overwhelming. And then you can recruit someone to be the newsletter editor or the reminder for the emails; There’s always something for someone to do within a den, and I would encourage you to have parents involved in that.

AARON: When you talk about den leaders, you have to talk about recruiting den leaders. So, I would be curious to know your methods for doing that. I used to be a den leader, and when I would recruit other parents, I would always present it as “this is an opportunity for you to spend time with your child and help him help me.” How do you recruit new den leaders and other adults to help out?

BARB: I use a similar tactic - the “Scouting gives us the opportunity to spend quality time with our kiddos,” If I take my kids to a sport thing, I get to watch my kid do that sport thing, but in Scouting I could be hands on and involved in stuff that they’re doing, and that’s how I pitch it to other parents, ‘cause parents really want to be involved and they want to find ways to be involved, and if we invite those parents to the table, they’re more apt to be involved. A super-important takeaway is just to ask them. Lots of times we assume that parents are too busy, or parents have too much stuff going on. And so many times I have found that if you just ask the question, people are super happy to help out. And then you get the others who are like, “Oh, I don’t want to be in charge.” And those parents, I try to partner them up. You’re never in this alone. And then I try to give each parent within the den a week that they’re responsible for. The new leader guides really help in that. You can pick out one week at a time, hand it to a parent and say, “Here, can you do this one week?” And it’s all spelled out in great detail. It’s beautiful.

GINA: Okay, we’ll be right back with more on Den Organization, right after this.

COMMERICAL: (Uniform Sale)

GINA: Okay. So, we all have an idea of our perfect den looks like, so what does an atypical den look like?

BARB: Ideally, we don't want to mix them up, but sometimes that happens. We have one Tiger that's recruited in first grade and then he or she hasn't brought any friends with them yet. At that point, put them in with a Wolf den so that they're not just one person in a den by themselves, but ideally, you'd want to stick to those kiddos in the same grades together. And I would encourage that Tiger to go out and recruit more of his first-grade friends, because surely, he wants to hang out and play with them more than he wants to hang out and play with the older kids. What I wouldn't do is I wouldn't mix greater than two grade differences together, so I would never put a Webelos Scout together with a Tiger Scout to make up a den. You really want to stay close in grades when you're mixing them. And challenge him or her to bring back a friend next week to grow that den so that they're not the lone man out, 'cause it's really no fun to play kickball by yourself.

GINA: Totally. You make a good point too, because we want to give every kid a chance to be a Scout; we'd certainly don't want to turn youth away.

BARB: I would never ever turn a Scout away, ever. So, if I only had one Tiger, we would figure out a way to make it work with that one Tiger.

AARON: And you also wouldn't want, if one Tiger shows up with his mom or dad or her mom or dad, you wouldn't want to necessarily say, "Well, congratulations. You're the new den leader," You want to sort of ease them into things.

BARB: That's probably one of the biggest mistakes that we make when we recruit folks is, they've brought their kiddo to join Scouting. They don't realize at

that point that it's really a family affair and we want them all to join Scouting and give them all these roles that they're like "what just happened?"

Our Lion and Tiger program really help us to breed what Scouting ideals are in that we want to get the whole family to volunteer. And then as they cross over into Wolves and Bears, it's not necessarily the mandate that I'm there, but it's really kind of expected that I'm going to be there. I might as well be involved.

AARON: So, for those den leaders who did just get recruited and then brand-new Cubmasters, what resources do they have they can go to for assistance with den organization?

BARB: Oh, my gosh. The Boy Scouts of America has done a phenomenal job and the best place to start is really at the My.Scouting or you take your Youth Protection and it jumps you right into your role-specific training. And there are great little snippets of training. So, there's a training for what do I do before the meeting, what do I do at the meeting? Instead of the hours' worth of training that you sit through and go, "I have no idea what just happened," It's perfect, bite-sized pieces of how to get trained up and create that kind of muscle memory that we want from really great den leaders.

And then another resource that I personally love is The Den Leader Guide. It follows right along with the Cub Scouts Book. It takes you step-by-step with before the meeting, what the gathering activity is, what you should do for the main part of the meeting. It's a great resource.

GINA: Barb, is there anything else about den organization that we haven't talked about that you think we should share with our listeners?

BARB: It's just really important to realize that as you jump into Scouting with both feet, it's really not as overwhelming as you sometimes make it appear to be? And if you set the tone for those new parents to just kind of get their feet wet and figure out what's great and fun about Scouting, we'll be able to recruit more adult leaders.

AARON: That's a great point; like you said, you give them one meeting, one week, and they do that, and it goes great and they're like, "That wasn't too bad. Maybe I'll do that again," and then they do another one a month later, before you know it, you've got yourself an assistant den leader or maybe even like an assistant Cubmaster down the road.

GINA: Totally. So, it sounds like a well-organized den can mean a whole lot more fun and adventure for everyone – adults and kids alike. Barb, thank you so much for joining us on CubCast.

BARB: Thank you so much for having me. It's been a blast.

AARON: After this brief Safety Moment, we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(Safety Moment - Wounds)

AARON: Now it's time now for our magnificent Monthly Reminders! Let's start with your council roundtables: To locate roundtable sites and times, check with your Unit Commissioner or your local Scouting professional, the Council Service Center or website, or your Cub Scout calendar.

GINA: There's really no better way to help deliver a quality program than to experience the idea-sharing that goes on at those meetings. Need more convincing? You can throw it back and listen to our September 2016 CubCast to hear an in-depth discussion on the benefits of roundtables.

AARON: Now here's a question you should be asking yourself: Have I asked at least one parent in my den to help with one task? Have I asked each parent to help with at least one task?

GINA: Parents may not be willing to jump into a leadership position right away, but like Barb said, ask for help with something simple like coming early to help set up or lead the gathering activity or game. If you don't ask for help, parents will assume you don't need any.

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

GINA: So that's it for October CubCast. Thanks to Barb Perez for joining us.

AARON: And thank you for listening. Hope you're back next month as we figure out pack communications. Are there other topics we should be discussing? Send that email to Cubcast@scouting.org or tweet @Cubcast. With that, I am Aaron Derr.

GINA: And I'm Gina Circelli. We look forward to hearing from you!

MUSIC FULL TO FINISH