

NOVEMBER – PACK COMMUNICATIONS

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AARON: Greetings and thanks for tuning in to *Scouting Magazine's* November CubCast. I'm Aaron Derr along with my podcast partner, Gina Circelli.

GINA: Hello Aaron, hello listeners! So, I found this quote that I thought would be perfect for this month's topic: The playwright George Bernard Shaw said – ready for this? “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

AARON: That is so true, you are so right, Gina. That is the perfect quote. Communication is so important to the success of a pack, so we're going to figure out the best practices for pack communication.

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AARON: And joining us for the discussion is Sherry Miller. Sherry has been involved in Scouting since 2010, having held every den leader position and several different committee positions with Pack 84 out of First Baptist Church in Sulphur, Louisiana, and is currently serving as a Roundtable Commissioner. Welcome to CubCast, Sherry.

SHERRY: Well, thank you so much for having me.

AARON: So, Sherry, do you agree with that quote, that the single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place? Is that applicable to Cub Scout Packs?

SHERRY: Oh, yes, sir. It's applicable to all forms of life, but especially in Scouting. Sometimes we think we've communicated, and we have. We've given them the message. We know it's been received, but we don't know if it's been processed, and that's where we get into trouble.

GINA: Okay, but we've got a Pack Calendar, right? Can we leave it at that?

AARON: What else do we need?

SHERRY: Would that that was true, right? *(Laughter)* The Pack Calendar is so important. We've got to have that. Without that it's like going on a trip without a map. So, we've got the calendar, and we've planned out what we're going to do and where we're going for the year, but we cannot put every bit of information on that calendar. People are going to be asking questions as the event approaches, so the calendar is good but it's not the end-all, the be-all.

AARON: Right. You can put a camping trip on a Pack Calendar but brand-new Cub Scout families don't know what that entails, don't know what that involves. You need to communicate all the other aspects of that trip, right?

SHERRY: Exactly. It's the, "What do I bring? What do I wear? Can I just drop my kids off?" All those questions.

AARON: Absolutely, yeah. I would have families when I was Cubmaster asking me, "You guys provide the tents, right?" And I would say, "No, I'm sorry, we don't supply the tents. They don't know any better. They're just asking

normal, basic questions. So, what are the different methods we could use to distribute pack communication?

SHERRY: The best communication is when it's done face-to-face in small groups, so, that falls a lot on the den leaders. So, when they have the den together with the parents they can, one-on-one, tell each parent or guardian what's going on. We also have the pack meeting where we can do face-to-face communication. But, you know, that's like a game of telephone sometimes. People only hear parts of it, so it doesn't take long for that information to kind of get messed up, so there needs to be a written form as well.

Now, with Pack 84, something that has served us very well, is an app that we use it's almost like a bunch of chat rooms. And there's a chat room for each den so that the den leader can address just his or her people in her group. Then we have one just for leadership, so the leaders can get together quickly and sometimes work out some information real quick, and then from there they send the information to all the different dens. And I like that because it's quick, it's dynamic, it's something to stay on top of, but also there's a written record of it so if someone goes, "Oh, I remember them talking about that. Let me go look back." So, that's key, having it verbal but also having something to rely back on a hard copy, if you will.

AARON: Okay, we'll be right back with more on pack communication, right after this.

COMMERICAL: (Campsgiving)

GINA: So, you mentioned you prefer face-to-face conversations. How do you decide what's best for your specific pack in terms of communication style?

SHERRY: Okay. So that could be tricky. What works best is what's going to give you

the best success. So, if you've been trying something forever and it's not working, then it's time to move on to something else. Once you find what works for your group, then you stick with that, but also you set that expectation with your parents and you say, "This is the way we communicate," whether it be, it's always with email so make sure you always check your email. Or if you say, "We only communicate through Facebook, so make sure you do that." That's the key thing, to let the parents know this is how we communicate and this is how you need to keep up with this.

GINA: Sounds like consistency is key.

SHERRY: Yes, ma'am.

AARON: I had a den leader at one time, Sherry, a sweet nice lady, who proudly proclaimed to me that she only checked her email like once a month, and I had to real politely say, "Could you please read your pack newsletter on Mondays that I send out so you can at least stay up to date on what we're doing?" And she said, "Okay, sure, yeah, no problem." But you're right, it's kind of an individual case. You have to find out what works best for your pack. So, who is responsible for pack communication, like in your pack, for example?

SHERRY: Well, in our pack it would be the committee chair and the Cubmaster. They stay really linked together and then they give the information to leadership. And, like I said, we use that LINE chat where we can talk to each other, in real time, but then they meet together once a month, so they're the ones most responsible for what information gets sent to who

and how.

GINA: How do they decide who to communicate with? Does everyone need to know everything?

SHERRY: That's kind of like you don't need to know how the sausage was made; sometimes they don't need to hear all the nuts and bolts of all the decision-making when we're trying to plan an event or an activity for the Scouts. So, after all that's said and done, we've got the game plan. Then that information gets sent to the den leaders who then send it to the parents. So, I don't think everybody needs to know everything all the time.

AARON: What resources are available, Sherry, for pack leaders, den leaders and Cubmasters to learn more about how they can communicate with their pack? Like, if there's like a brand-new den leader or someone who just is really eager to help out but doesn't have that much experience communicating with other people like that? What's resources are out there to learn more about the value of this and how this all works?

SHERRY: Well, with being involved with Roundtable, I'm going to give a plug for that.

AARON: There ya go.

SHERRY: You've got to get those den leaders, whether they're long in the tooth or they're brand new, because Roundtable only works when we have an exchange of ideas back and forth with each other. So, when we have that new leader come in and say, "I don't know how to do this," then you can turn to the ones who've done it a while and say, "Well, what works for

y'all?" And another group might say, "Oh, that never worked for us. Let me show you what happened when we tried that." So, get position training, make sure they have all their training that they can do, but Roundtable to me is a resource that's so good and there's so much value added to it. So go to these Roundtable meetings, get that information, plus they would make friends with other den leaders, and that's another resource for them, having a mentor, someone they can reach out to that's maybe outside their pack or their unit.

GINA: Great point, Sherry. So, is there anything else about pack communication that you think we ought to share with our listeners?

SHERRY: The one thing that comes to mind is this. All of us who volunteer are generally nurturing people. We care about people and we want to take care of them. And so, sometimes some people get off track. It's easy for certain things to get off track and then, all of a sudden, it's a new tradition or it's a new rule. For some of us that see that coming, there's a way to say, "Hey, guys, I hate to see you doing it wrong but you're doing it wrong. Let's, let me tell you the reason why." Or here's the BSA guidance on this. And if we can do this in a kind, loving way, with kindness in our heart, we can keep people from going down the wrong path. Because there's a lot of times people get all on a wrong foot with Scouting because they haven't done things the way it's supposed to be done. So, correct each other when we can, but to do it in a very kind, loving way, 'cause communication only works when someone is open to it, and that's a lot more effective.

AARON: Very nice. Well, Sherry, it's my job to communicate. I write for *Boys' Life* and *Scouting Magazine*, so I'm a professional communicator, and even I

have learned a thing or two from listening to you, so thanks so much for being on CubCast and helping us turn pack communication from illusion to reality.

SHERRY: Well, thank you so much. I enjoyed talking with y'all as well.

GINA: Now before you go running off, listeners, let's check in with this month's Safety Moment. Then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(Safety Moment – Camp Fire Safety)

GINA: Let's jump into Reminders and Tips for November. First, let's talk membership inventory. By now, all your new youth and adult applications from your recruiting drive should be submitted to the council office. It's a good idea to compare your records to make sure there are no discrepancies and that all those new Scouters are properly registered.

AARON: Now, ask yourself this: do all of your dens have Den Chiefs? Talk to your Commissioner or Scoutmaster about recruiting an older Scout to serve as a Den Chief. A Den Chief can be from a Scouts BSA troop, a Venturing crew, or a Sea Scout ship. And being a Den Chief counts as a leadership position for the Scout's advancement, so you're actually doing a good turn by "hiring" a Den Chief. He or she can also make a great program assistant. I had a Den Chief one time and he was awesome.

GINA: As a bonus, you'll find you have a lot more time for yourself and having this assistant will make being the leader so much easier. Download the February 2018 ScoutCast to find out why *you* should have a Den Chief.

AARON: Now here is an ongoing piece of business. Remember, Cub Scout Adventure Loops do not require an advancement report. They are to be presented at a den meeting whenever each adventure is completed. It's all part of the instant recognition program of Cub Scouting. Stock up on the adventure loops ahead of time so you have them ready. And there's got to be something in that process that a parent could help with.

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AARON: And that, sadly, brings us to the end of the November CubCast. Thanks to our guest, Sherry Miller, for joining us. And thanks to you for listening.

GINA: So, did you enjoy this CubCast? Hey, even if you didn't, let us know. We can take it. Just send us an email to Cubcast@scouting.org or tweet @Cubcast. Tune in next month for Religious Emblems. With that, I'm Gina Circelli.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr. From all of us at CubCast:

AARON & GINA: *(In unison)* Happy Thanksgiving!!

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