

FEBRUARY – CULTIVATING NEW LEADERS

Music Full then under

ANISSA: Hello and welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* February ScoutCast. I'm Anissa Hicks, along with my podcast hosting buddy, Owen McCulloch.

OWEN: Thanks, Anissa. This month, let's talk about Cultivating New Leaders, also called Succession Planning: having the right person in place to take over if, for whatever reason, a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster or Committee Member needs to bow out of his or her commitment.

ANISSA: There's a little more to it than just having the first available warm body to fill the vacant slot. You need to find the right person.

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ANISSA: And we have the right person to help us figure out how to do that, Donna Ragusa. Having been with the program for over 10 years, Donna has been a Scoutmaster, Wood Badge Course Director, and has served at the 2013 Jamboree, and even at an OA Summit. Donna has served as the Scout BSA National Committee Recruitment and Retention Taskforce Chair since 2018. Welcome to ScoutCast, Donna.

DONNA: Thank you, Anissa.

ANISSA: Cultivating New Leaders or Succession Planning – whatever one calls it – what is it exactly?

DONNA: We need to think of succession planning as our job as mentors. Mentoring begins with adults when they come in as new parents in your unit and units need to realize that they will be stronger and more successful if they cultivate a culture of mentorship.

OWEN: Donna, can you explain why is it so important?

DONNA: Nationally we see that units that fail tend to be those that are run by individuals with little support from their parents or their chartered organization. Those leaders tend to become burned out with too many responsibilities, and as such, the units tend to fold. Scouting is a youth-led program and it suffers if there is not enough adults to share responsibilities such as camping trips, or activities and events. And the great thing about Scouting is that it's a continuum where the youth mentor the next generation of youth leaders to prepare them to take over leadership in the troop, and we should be doing the same with adults. Adults grow out of their units, districts and councils, should be cultivating a pool of leaders who can run programs, become commissioners, and then even move on to become executive leadership in their council.

OWEN: Donna, that certainly sounds like good reasons why it's important. I've heard people talk about, "Gosh, I was in a Scout unit but it folded," and it almost always, in every case, comes down to lost leaders.

DONNA: Agreed.

ANISSA: Donna, where do we find these future leaders of tomorrow?

DONNA: Recruiting adults really begins at the Cub Scout parent level. Whether or not you're a Scouts BSA leader, having a good experience as a Cub Scout parent will more or less dictate whether or not they'll step up and volunteer later on in their child's Scouting career. For each unit, having a membership chair is really crucial, and we tend to sometimes overlook that position on our committees, and then you have various other committee members trying to fill that gap. And usually, it's not done very well, so, having that dedicated membership chair and also a parent coordinator in your unit is a great resource, just for identifying interested adults. And starting out those interested adults in a small task and building up to a leadership position really works well. If you hit someone with a large job they'll tend to say no, but if you can give them something small to chew on first, usually they'll have a positive experience and then step up for you the next time you give it an ask. But then we also as leadership in our units and our districts, we also need to be open to new ideas and new points of view from these new and upcoming adult leaders.

And also, it's critical to be aware of who may have financial difficulties, who feels that they cannot become an adult leader because their finances keep them from fully participating.

And then there are so many community resources, beginning with your own chartered organization. There are other youth organizations that you can look to; such as your school PTA or PTO, religious organizations, professional organizations, and other nonprofits, and even like Alpha Phi Omega, which is a coed service fraternity. We've had some success in where we are in the Northeast, tapping into Scouting alumni who participate in that fraternity. So, there's a lot of community resources. And having an alumni force in your unit and your council can be really, really

empowering to pull back in those adults that were Scouts and they want to give back in some way. And then also providing opportunities for recruiting and training and other events such as program events and roundtable is really crucial as well.

OWEN: So, Donna, you've given some excellent examples of really prospecting and where to identify potential candidates that, maybe you wouldn't normally think about. So, once you kind of get those individuals that you think might be good fits, who actually decides who would be the best prospect to fill a position like a leader, or a committee member or a commissioner or even a Popcorn Kernel?

DONNA: Well, usually it's up to the committee that is in charge, so if it's a unit it would be your troop committee and your chartered organization. And generally, the grass unit level like that, you tend to begin to know that person fairly well, you know what their strengths are, you can play up to those strengths, empower them to be part of your program based upon those strengths. As you move up to the district level, it's the district chair, the district membership chairman as well and the district committee, and they tend to look for those outgoing adult leaders from units who have expertise and the willingness to volunteer as well. And the council commissioner will be looking for district and unit commissioners and those jobs go very far in having an overall successful program and mentoring for each individual unit. So each chair should know that recruiting adults is part of their job description because as a chair you should always be looking for your successor and who is going to fill in on your committee.

OWEN: I've even often heard that the first job somebody has as a new volunteer in a leadership role is to figure out who their replacement is going to be in two to three years.

DONNA: Absolutely.

ANISSA: We'll be back with more on Cultivating New Leaders right after this.

COMMERCIAL – Philmont Training Center

ANISSA: Donna, what role, if any, does generational diversity play?

DONNA: It plays a huge role in in mentorship and continuity. Often older Scouters are pushed aside, but they can be invaluable resources in membership and even program. They hold the history of what works well, what doesn't work, and they also have connections to communities if they've been a longstanding member in different organizations in communities.

GenXers and Millennials, the 25 to 30-somethings are often passed over because of our preconceived notions of how they live their lifestyles, but they're really the target audience here for adult leadership. You need to know how to approach them and keep them engaged. They actually have a very high rate of volunteerism and social awareness, and Scouting fits right into that with our emphasis on leave no trace, outdoor ethics, and community service.

OWEN: Donna, if a unit wants to be good at recruiting folks and identifying them, what resources are available for units that would help them become experts at cultivating new leaders?

DONNA: There are actually a lot of resources at the national marketing and membership hub. So if you were to go on the national website and search for “marketing and membership hub,” you will see a various number of resources including an actual ScoutsBSA adult recruitment approach booklet. And then there is also what we call playbooks which are step-by-step means of recruiting both adults and youth, using some quite innovative, programs such as geocaching, chess, things that, that not only youth are interested but adults are interested as well. So, anything that we use as far as recruiting new youth to our program, we should also be aware that, at the same time, it could be a good gateway to recruiting adult leaders as well. Our home councils and districts have many resources including membership teams, brochures, fliers, commissioners that will be able to come to your unit school night and recruit not only the youth but also adults into Scouting.

ANISSA: Donna, you’ve shared a lot of great information. Is there anything else about cultivating new leaders or succession planning that we haven’t talked about that you think our listeners should know about?

DONNA: The most successful Scouters that I know who recruit well always build a relationship. It makes it easier if you establish this relationship first. It also will help you learn what the individual is good at and be able to fit the job to the person’s interest. Let them see that you enjoy what you’re doing. People like having fun. If you are a complainer, people will not come away with a good picture of Scouting and volunteering in general, Tell people why you personally volunteer. Make that one-on-one connection. Whatever your reason is, share it. Let them know what your heartfelt motivation is. And don’t always assume someone will say no. Ask anyway.

The worst that they can say is no, but you never know. You may be able to convince them at least to take that first step towards volunteering. And make an individual ask. Go in with a specific job description for what you want the person to actually do. Be honest about the scope of the position. Don't minimize it or overstate it, because if they have a bad experience, they won't want to volunteer for you again. And let them know that you will support them and what training is available. The National Boy Scouts of America has the most comprehensive training for their adult leadership. And follow through with everything you promised. Keep tabs on the progress of your volunteers and let them know that you care that they are volunteering for you. The most important thing is to remember to say "thank you" often.

ANISSA: You know, we talk sometimes in Reminders and Tips about having back-up leaders in place, and now we know all should know how to go about doing that, so thanks for coming on ScoutCast for this eye-opening discussion.

DONNA: You're very welcome. My pleasure.

OWEN: And we'll be back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief Safety Moment.

Safety Moment – CPR

OWEN: And now, the promised Reminders and Tips. Don't be shy, Anissa, tell us everything.

ANISSA: Be sure to start finalizing details for your summer camping opportunities. Make sure you have all of the equipment checked out so that everything is working properly.

OWEN: You also need to be sure that everyone has the proper training. Hazardous Weather Training is required for any campout. It's too warm for skiing or sledding and too cold for swimming or picnics, so why not spend the time catching up on your training? Contact your local council for training dates.

ANISSA: Also, have you supported your local council financially? Be sure to participate in a Friends of Scouting, or FOS, campaign or other Scouting fundraisers. Remember, financial donations don't always mean cold, hard cash. See what gifts in kind you may be able to provide to your local council.

OWEN: In the January-February issue of *Scouting Magazine*, learn about Powder Horn high-adventure training program as it's carried out in three geographically diverse locations: Pennsylvania, Texas, and Hawaii.

ANISSA: And in the special double issue of the January-February issue of *Boys' Life*, get a peek into some of the adventure involved in Philmont's Rayado Trek program.

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

ANISSA: The February ScoutCast has come to an end, but we can't leave without a special thank you to our guest, Donna Ragusa. Are there any other topics

you'd like for us to talk about? Just send us an email at cubcast@scouting.org, or tweet to @bsascoutcast. So that's it. I'm Anissa Hicks.

OWEN: And I'm Owen McCulloch asking the question: if money doesn't grow on trees, why do they call the bank's branches?

ANISSA: Is that because we're talking about cultivation?

OWEN: Oh, yeah. It's a Think and Grin joke from *Boys' Life* Magazine.

ANISSA: Well done.

Music Full to Finish