

APRIL – YOUTH PROTECTION

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GINA: Hello and welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* CubCast for April. I'm Gina Circelli Mulcahy, and he's not like a regular friend, he's a podcast friend, Aaron Derr.

AARON: Thank you, Gina. April is National Youth Protection Month, and the BSA takes that very seriously. We want to be sure all leaders and parents are aware of the BSA's Youth Protection Guidelines and all the steps that the BSA is taking to ensure the safety of all youth.

GINA: A topic this important doesn't really require a lot of banter, so let's just get started.

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GINA: Now, you may have heard of the Barbara Sinatra Foundation, which is dedicated to ensuring every child's right to a normal, healthy, and secure childhood. Joining us for this special episode is the Director of the Barbara Sinatra Foundation, John Thoresen. John is going to share with us what the foundation does and their partnership with the BSA to provide personal safety awareness training to all Scouts. Welcome to CubCast, John.

JOHN: Thank you, Gina.

GINA: We are super glad to have you here today. Would you mind telling us a little bit about the Barbara Sinatra Foundation, what's the story behind the foundation?

JOHN: Oh, yeah, sure. Well, hopefully some of your listeners will know who Frank Sinatra is, but, (*Aaron laughs*) Frank and Barbara Sinatra, some 30 years ago, decided to raise some money and build a center that actually treated children that have suffered the devastation and trauma of abuse. Since that time the organization has helped treat over 23,000 children and, we're in a very unique position because we've seen so many kids that had been traumatized, we felt that we needed to reach out and teach children, from grades K through now high school about how to protect themselves from abuse. So, what we're trying to do is get us out of the business is having to treat them, but we know that that's not gonna happen but we're gonna do our best. So, based on, on our aptitude and long-time treatment of children, we decided to globally help prevent and bring awareness to the issue of child abuse, and we're very proud of the relationship we have with the Boy Scouts of America.

AARON: Yeah, it seems like a perfect fit with the BSA. How did that partnership come about?

JOHN: Michael Johnson, who is the Director of Youth Protection for BSA, and our scholar consultant on the messages that we provide to youth, Dr. John Conti, have known each other for some time, and it was Dr. Conti who basically introduced Michael and I together, and it was a great fit.

GINA: What's special about this youth protection training program as opposed to others?

JOHN: There's a couple of things, and I think the main thing is that ours are animation based. We did a lot of research on animation and education; children's experience of cartoons at different levels and as we started the process of building our animated videos, we tested them in schools all over the country. We hired a firm in Washington, D.C. to conduct focus groups in states like Minnesota, Maine, New York, California, the state of Washington. And what we saw out of that was kids were really riveted to the stories and understood what was being said, so we knew we were on the right track. We then converted those stories into animation and populated a website in January of 2017. And since that time, we've had over 14 million views and have reached over 100 million children worldwide.

AARON: Yeah, so talk a little bit more about the idea that you guys use animation. Is that chosen just 'cause that's a medium that kids can easily relate to and are not intimidated by?

JOHN: Exactly. They're not intimidated, and we found that kids and even teens pay attention to an animated character. And we have various ethnic characters, but the thing is they can relate to not having to judge that character. In fact, when some of our research we asked kids, "Hey, what do you think of those characters?" A lot of the younger kids especially said, "Oh, Lenny or Sarah, they could be my friend!" So, animation works.

AARON: Yeah, yeah.

JOHN: Aaron, the company that we hired, Wonder Media of Encino, California, the president of that company was the president of the company that did the Rugrats movies and the Thornberrys series, so he knows animation very, very well. He's won an Academy Award in animation, and we felt it was a good partnership for us to join with Wonder Media to produce these videos.

GINA: I can tell you firsthand, Rugrats was very important to me growing up. *(Aaron laughs.)* Loved that show. And the Thornberrys was also cool, so at least for me, I can firsthand say those cartoons stuck with me.

JOHN: Good.

GINA: Okay, listeners, stay tuned. We'll be back with more right after this.

Commercial – Family Adventure Camps

AARON: And you guys have found with older kids, teenagers, animation still works well for them?

JOHN: Yes, it does. We just released a couple of episodes. However, we did test it with over 100 teens, and we found the exact same data came out of those focus groups. The kids related to it and, more importantly, the teens

– these were grades eight through 11 –every one of them said, “This is really important stuff and I’m glad you’re doing it and we can see a lot of kids using this,” so that was helpful to us also.

GINA: So, are there other resources where our listeners can get more info on keeping kids safe?

JOHN: Oh, absolutely. The Cub Scouts can go to the Cub Scouts website and go to the preview adventure and participate in the program. But, other than that, any of your listeners can go to www.fightchildabuse.org, and there is material in there, the videos are there too and they’re free of charge but there’s also information there on the research that we did. There’s information on the signs and symptoms of abuse. There’s a little bit of information about us and some of the scholars and leaders from around the country that helped us put these together. It’s a great tool for both parents, grandparents and children to experience information on what they can do to protect themselves and what parents can do to protect their children.

AARON: Nice. Well, John, is there anything else about youth protection or the Barbara Sinatra Foundation that we haven’t discussed that you think we should share with our listeners?

JOHN: Unfortunately, child abuse is an epidemic and the more we can do to protect children so they don’t become abused, or if they’ve been abused to disclose that abuse as soon as they feel comfortable doing it, it’s vitally

important. You know, most abusers are well known to the children and it's sometimes hard, but if they learn these lessons, from K through sixth grade and now with the teenagers, we can really help a lot of kids. We've started to receive notices from teachers and parents, including Scouts' parents that have said, "These have been so helpful. I sat down with my child and had a discussion." Or a teacher said, "A child came up and said that something uncomfortable happened and we reported it, and it's been taken care of." So, what we can always say is, "Shout, run and tell." Shout, "No, don't do it," run away and tell somebody.

GINA: Great advice. So, you know, we need to keep ourselves safe out there, and Scouting is really doing everything they can do to help ensure everyone is protected. So, John, thank you for all you and the Barbara Sinatra Foundation do to keep kids safe and your partnership with the BSA and sharing all of that right here on CubCast.

JOHN: Well, thank you very much and congratulations to BSA for taking a leadership role in protecting all the Scouts, from Cub Scouts on up.

AARON: Thank you, sir. We'll be back with Reminders and Tips right after this brief Safety Moment.

(April Safety Moment – Code of Conduct)

AARON: It's time for April Reminders and Tips. You've just heard all about April being Youth Protection Month and its importance in the BSA, so be sure to go to [Scouting.org/training/youthprotection](https://www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection) for more details and be sure that your youth protection training is up-to-date.

GINA: On a lighter note, by now you should have received the March-April issue of *Scouting Magazine*, where you can find out all the ways you can take your Scouts fishing. It's a lot easier than you might think.

AARON: By now you should know that family participation is very important in Cub Scouting. As a reminder, a great resource is the Family Talent Survey found in the *Cub Scout Meeting Guide*. Once they fill that out, you'll have a treasure trove of information to assist you in parental involvement.

GINA: And here's 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 maybe a parent could help you out with that.

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

GINA: So, the April CubCast has come to an end, but we can't leave without a special thank-you to our guest, John Thorsen, and thank YOU for listening.

AARON: Come back next month to find out everything you need to know to start your Annual Program Planning Conference. With that, I'm Aaron Derr.

GINA: And I'm Gina Circelli Mucahy. Now, don't forget to send us your ideas and comments to Cubcast@scouting.org or tweet @CubCast. We look forward to hearing from you.

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