

MAY – PLANNING THE CUB SCOUTING YEAR

Music Full then Fade

AARON: Hello, everyone! I'm Aaron Derr alongside the perpetually cheerful Gina Circelli Mulcahy, and we are so glad you could join us. Now for this episode, well, I admit it's not the most glamorous of topics –

GINA: But it is important. In fact, I'll give it to you straight: it will make your Cub Scout leader experience a whole lot easier.

AARON: That's right. *Scouting Magazine's* CubCast for May 2020 is all about Planning the Cub Scouting Year.

GINA: And thanks to the Think-n-Grin section of *Boys' Life Magazine*, I've got the perfect joke, Aaron. What is a calendar's favorite food?

AARON: That's an easy one! A calendar's favorite food is obviously DATES! So, let's find out how to get those important dates in the Cub Scout year onto your calendar right now.

Music Fades

AARON: And joining us for all the program planning details and how to have fun doing it is Lora Taft. Lora is the Council Commissioner for the Chattahoochee Council in Columbus, Georgia, and was also Pack Committee Chair of Pack 47. And just to make sure we give you as many

tips and tricks as we possibly can, we've also invited the chair for the National Cub Scouting Committee, Lisa Wylie. Welcome to CubCast, Lora and Lisa.

LISA & LORA: Thank you. Thank you.

AARON: So, start off: basic question: What exactly is program planning?

LORA: Well, program planning is where you get all the dates –school dates, community event dates, your charter organization date, district and council dates – and you get all those dates together, and then you sit down with your committee and parents - that's very important to have parents there so they could buy into this calendar. And then you put the dates on a calendar. You put your den meetings, you put your pack meetings in there, and then you plug in all these other dates that's important, so the parents know what's going to go on for a whole year.

GINA: Okay, so that's what program planning is, but why is it even important?

LORA: It's because you want your parents to buy into Scouting. And there's been some research done that says that the common element among the strong packs is that they have a good program planning a year in advance. That way, the parents know what's on the calendar for the whole

year and that parents can plan accordingly so they can make sure that their Scout is involved.

AARON: So, Lisa, tell me who in the pack is responsible for this process?

LISA: I'd invite everyone. That includes the pack committee chair, all the den leaders, all the committee members. I would invite your charter organization rep if you see fit and all the parents. This is a really great time for everyone to see what it takes to make the magic of a program year happen.

GINA: And so, to follow up on that, what are some of the best methods of the program planning process? Lisa, if you want to go first.

LISA: Well, some of the best methods include to bring along your current pack calendar, your school calendar, have a list of council and district activities, have a list of holidays. Have a list of volunteer opportunities, including tasks that really don't require an official title or registration as a leader. You need to be collecting any feedback from families with regard to council and pack events. You need to be thinking about what worked this past year, what did not work, ideas for new activities based on any new Cub Scout offerings, and also bring along two or three years of the budget and actual finances, and a review of joining the events that you've had throughout the year. You need to populate your calendar with things that you know will happen. For example, every year you're gonna have a Pinewood Derby. You're gonna have a Blue and Gold banquet or a rank

advancement, if you do any holiday celebrations. And then you go back on your calendar and fill in the holes.

In our pack, we found some things that kids wanted to do every single year, and then there were things that the kids really didn't enjoy, so we would maybe think, well, if they didn't enjoy that activity let's try something else. But you have to remember too: you don't have to have a pack meeting every single month. There is no requirement to hold a pack meeting. So, if you have a month and nobody really wants to be in charge and nobody has a great idea, it's okay to skip that month. Our pack would actually go through three-year calendar each time, and we would review the upcoming two years. So, we wanted to keep things fresh and we wanted to make sure that we didn't repeat things, 'cause kiddos who started as Lions and are now Webelos don't need to be doing the same thing over and over and over again.

GINA: Lora, do you have anything?

LORA: Our pack, what we did, we plan our yearly calendar at the end of the year, after May meeting. In June, we would get together as a pack for our summer activities, and we would do it during the summer to plan out for the next year. And we found that our parents really like that time because there wasn't the hustle and the bustle of school and consumed with softball, soccer and all that. So, they had a time to breathe and we sit down, and we brainstorm some new things, and we allow anybody to throw out any idea. And when they did that, then we kind of narrow down that list to the top three or top four things that they wanted to do new in the next year.

AARON: So, both of you mentioned the importance of getting parents involved, and as a former Cub Scout leader myself, I don't know if y'all can relate to this or not, but I've been in a situation where you try to get parents involved and you invite parents to come to a meeting, and then who shows up? The same three people or four people that always show up. So, I would love to get some advice from you guys on how we get parents involved in this kind of thing. Lora, you want to go first?

LORA: You're always gonna have the ones that are vested in the kids that will come to that meeting, but I see that if you throw a picnic or you do a hot dog cookout, you do –

AARON: Ah, interesting.

LORA: – some kind of activity for the kids. And we used to get maybe a troop to come and kind of watch the kids while the parents and us kind of plan our calendar at that time. So it kind of gave them a time to help us plan, but their Scouts were involved in a activity, and we kind of centered around the end of the school year bash, and that's how we got our parents involved.

AARON: Okay, nice. Okay, listeners, we're going to take a short break and be back to talk more program planning right after this.

Commercial – Day Camp

AARON: Lisa, What about you, any thoughts on that?

LISA: What we did is we called everybody, invited them personally, and we try to make it an adults-only type event at somebody's house. We asked everybody to pick what it is that you're going to volunteer for. So, we have a stack of sticky notes, and on each sticky note we would put one task: like, for instance, around popcorn. There's a lot of things to be done around the popcorn, so one could be pick up the popcorn from the warehouse. Another task would be on a separate sticky note, pick up the popcorn from my garage. Another one would be collect the awards. Another one would be collect the money. Have those up on the wall and so that people see what opportunities are available, what needs to be done to make the pack run smoothly, and then people at that time get to pull the sticky note for what it is they want to do. And it provides a way to get everybody on the volunteer train, lets everybody know that these are all the tasks that have to be done to actually get the pack to work, and they get to pick what they want to do.

AARON: So, it's interesting, Lisa. You didn't necessarily call this a committee meeting. You call this a parent meeting.

LISA: I do. I call it –

AARON: (Voices overlap.) Just a parent meeting.

LISA: – a parent meeting. We are a volunteer organization and we keep saying that, but what we need to do is provide volunteer opportunities for all our parents. Not everybody is going to be in a leadership position, and by doing this planning conference and having everybody involved, we can

show them that there's ways that they can help where they don't have to be a registered leader and they can pick a task and they can do it on their own time.

AARON: Cool, cool.

GINA: Very interesting. So, no matter what you're calling it, when should an annual program conference take place?

LISA: I like to hold them in May. Kind of depends upon when your school year ends. Out here in the West our school year ends at the end of June, so we like to do ours in the May-June timeframe before school ends because when school ends and people start leaving town and on vacation, but it's a good time to wrap up the year, what you've accomplished during the year and what you want to celebrate. That's a good time to be getting some feedback, thinking about what worked during the year, what didn't work, and so that you can plan for the following year.

AARON: Lora, I think you said you do yours around the same time, is that right?

LORA: While I was the committee chair. We did it in June, but then we started doing it in July when the kids started coming back right before they came back to school. They called it Back to the Pack.

AARON: Gotcha. Okay, good. All right, Well, Lora, what resources are available to help with planning in the Cub Scout year?

LORA: There's a pack committee template that's on the National website that you can get. There is also this Facebook it's the Cubs, and you can just kind of bounce ideas off of everybody. Great resource if you need ideas. National has a lot of great resources on their website, and if you want a template, they got one already made up for you that you just can put the dates in and then you can share it by Google Mail. A lot of parents have that Google Mail so they could do a Google Calendar, and that way you can share it, and then all the parents have it. And then if you've got to make some changes in your calendar, you don't have to worry about notifying everybody. It's already updated in their Google Calendar. And then when you have your committee meeting either once a month or whatever you decide to do your committee meeting, you could tell the parent three months out what's gonna be happening to keep them abreast of what's out there for them.

AARON: Nice.

GINA: You guys know so much. I'm in awe. What else do we need to know?
Lisa, you first.

LISA: Well, by planning in the spring, then you're ready for your fall kickoff. There's so much activity in the fall. The kids are coming back to school. They're all excited. By doing the planning in the spring, you're ready to go

in the fall. You need to have your calendar, if you've got your budget, your volunteer opportunities identified, and a recruiting event all in place, your path to success is there. It's already been created.

GINA: Very cool, Lora. Anything to add?

LORA: I'd just like to add that packs that are very strong and very successful, it's because they do have program planning, and they do their whole year in advance so that parents do not feel like they're not in the know, as long as the parents know what's going on. And I like what Lisa was saying that you get the parents to invest in it, and they take ownership. So, if it might be Sally, this season, is going to be the popcorn chair or someone is gonna be in charge of the Pinewood Derby, you give them the assignment. It's not all the Cubmaster's responsibility. It's everybody's responsibility. Y'all invest into our Cubs, our Scouts, so when we invest in it, we take ownership, we're gonna have a great Cub Scout program.

AARON: One thing we haven't mentioned that I've found in my experience is the benefit of having a planning meeting like that is that when you have prospective families that you're trying to recruit to join and they say, "Well, what kind of stuff do you do?" you can just give them a calendar for the next 12 months, or maybe it sounds like in Lisa's case the next few years. That's huge, as opposed to just saying some sort of vague, "We go camping once a month," or whatever. To have a calendar to show like that your plan for the next nine months or 12 months or two years, is a huge recruiting advantage.

tThis all kind of reminds me of that Ben Franklin quote that goes: "By

failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” Thanks for being on CubCast, Lora and Lisa, and making it sound so easy.

LISA/LORA: Well, thanks for having us.

GINA: I’m personally just shocked that Aaron could give a Ben Franklin quote off the top of his head!

AARON: Yeah, I just knew that off the top of my head... no big deal.

GINA: *(Laughs)* We are gonna be right back with Reminders and Tips after this brief Safety Moment.

(May Safety Moment - ATVs)

GINA: And now for the May Reminders and Tips. This is a busy time of year for planning summer outings so be sure your unit has adopted the Risk Assessment Strategy. Check out the BSA Health and Safety website for all the tools you need to access risk. As a bonus tip, it’s recommended that Cub Scouts obtain permission slips from parents before going on any outings.

AARON: Also, you should be recruiting your Popcorn Kernel or other fundraising coordinator right about now. The committee chair is the person responsible for appointing someone, but if you know somebody who will

make a good candidate, go ahead and pass this – go ahead and pass the suggestion along to your committee chair.

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AARON: But now our May CubCast comes to an end. Thanks to our guests, Lora Taft and Lisa Wylie, for joining us, and thank you for listening.

GINA: Have an idea for a future CubCast? Let us know by emailing Cubcast@scouting.org or tweet @CubCast. Until then, I'm Gina Circelli Mulcahy.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr. Join us next month for Cub Scouts and Social Media. I'm looking forward to it. I hope you are, too.

Music Full to Finish