Rekindling Memories with the Scouting Alumni Association

The Scouting Alumni Association is our call to find Scouting alumni and invite them to get involved with the Boy Scouts of America again. In addition to former Scouts, Scouting alumni include all those positively impacted by the BSA—family members of Scouts (past and present), volunteers, Scouters, community leaders, and the millions of Americans who benefit from Scouting in their communities every day.

Program Overview
The program focuses around the three R’s—no, not Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmatic. Our R’s are:

- **Reconnect** alumni with Scouting friends and mentors … and local councils.
- **Rekindle** enthusiasm for Scouting and the values it represents.
- **Re-engage** alumni to become active in Scouting again.

Why Participate
The Scouting Alumni Association program has incredible potential for local councils. When a person “signs up,” data is collected. That data will then be sent to local councils for follow-up and additional communications. So, the more people who sign up from your council, the more relationships you can build for fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and more.

But what’s in it for alumni? With all of the junk mail and spam people already get, why would they want to add their name to yet another list?

For starters, the BSA is not just any organization. Our alumni have deep personal ties. Many spent their formative years in Scouting, or their children did, or both. They probably want to be involved but don’t know how without giving a major time commitment. The Scouting Alumni Association invites them to get involved with an organization they believe in—giving as much or as little as they choose.

The program also features new incentives to draw in Scouting alumni. They will be able to search for their old friends and mentors, make donations directly to their local councils, and learn about programs and events. Alumni will be helping to build better youth.
Program Components
Because Scouting alumni can vary greatly in age, geography, affiliations, and technological savvy, we are taking a multifaceted approach to structure the program. For example, the Internet will be our best resource for finding and engaging many of our alumni, but for others, it isn’t relevant to their lives at all. So, we are using a variety of methods to reach our goals:

- Promotion
- Strategic relationships
- Website
- Alumni database
- Online scrapbook

Finding BSA Alumni
Before we can reconnect, rekindle, or re-engage with Scouting alumni, we have to find them. The idea of doing a full-scale alumni search can be intimidating—especially if you’ve never done this kind of outreach before. However, many of the tactics you’ll need to find alumni are things you already do every day. Minor modifications to your current community outreach and fundraising campaigns can bring significant added value to your council.

Promotion
The BSA National Council will support local efforts by promoting the Scouting Alumni Association and other outreach programs. We will drive traffic to the Scouting Alumni Association website through the use of social media, advertising, and traditional media outreach. Local councils can also build on national efforts with some basic promotions of their own. Samples of the materials below—emails, articles, and advertisements—can be found in the Scouting Alumni Association local council toolkit. To access the toolkit, go to www.BSAalumni.org, go to “Click here for more information,” and click on “Resources” in the left menu.

What local councils can do:

- Print and distribute Scouting Alumni Association business cards and/or postcards at every opportunity.
- Email and send letters to alumni from your council, inviting them to sign up. To find prospects, you may want to enlist the services of a list broker.
- Feature articles about the Scouting Alumni Association in your council newsletter and/or on your council’s website.
- Promote the Scouting Alumni Association alongside existing council programs. For an example, see the Scouting for Food flier in the toolkit.
- Write a letter to the editor or guest editorial about the Scouting Alumni Association program for your local newspaper.
- Purchase advertisements in local papers and/or place banner ads on local online media.
- Place the Scouting Alumni Association logo on your local council’s website, and link to www.BSAalumni.org.

• Share your message (and Scouting Alumni Association business cards) at community meetings, with civic organizations, and anywhere else you have an audience!

• Promote the Scouting Alumni Association program at special events and expos held in your community. Have a booth at outdoor expos, car shows, or wherever you think you might run across Scouting alumni.

• Add a Scouting Alumni Association “tag line” to all of your council’s press releases and other communications.

• Keep your eyes open. Scouting alumni can be found everywhere—in the grocery store, at the park, on an airplane. Encourage Scouters to start conversations and share information.

• Give away Scouting Alumni Association window clings so Scouting alumni can display their pride as they drive a round town!

Third-Party Relationships
It is no surprise that many of our Scouting alumni have become highly successful leaders—in business, nonprofit organizations, government, and even sports and entertainment. Many are also members of civic clubs and professional associations. By working with groups that likely have Scouting alumni as members, we not only find our alumni but also strengthen relationships with influential organizations throughout the country.

The BSA National Council will begin outreach with major national organizations—to open doors for local councils to work with their local chapters. We have created an online portal called Best Practices Portal in MyScouting. The National Council will also work with key, strategically selected alumni for additional outreach and promotion.

Other third-party groups that shouldn’t be ignored are the hundreds of “unofficial” Scouting alumni groups on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn. They’re already out there, proudly stating that they support and value Scouting.

What local councils can do:
• Reach out to organizations likely to have BSA alumni as members. Use the customizable partner flier or partner solicitation letter/email in the local council toolkit.

• Once partners are secured, ask them to promote the Scouting Alumni Association by doing the following:
  • Scheduling a BSA representative to speak at one of their meetings.
  • Linking to BSAalumni.org.
  • Emailing their members about the program.
  • Writing an article for their newsletter or website.
  • Working to support your local council with activities or events.

- Gathering volunteers.
- Referring you to other possible partners.
- Hosting a BSA alumni gathering.
- Work with notable BSA alumni in your area to see if they’re willing to support the program as spokespersons, donors, or through their influence in your community.
- Do a quick search for Scouting alumni in your area on popular social networking sites. “Friend” the administrator of that group, and share information!
- Collaborate with other councils to see if alumni in state government could help get a Boy Scouts of America license plate or other visible state designation.

Reconnect
Once people have been found and are aware of the program, the next step is getting them to reconnect and officially register as Scouting alumni. They can do that in one of two ways. People without Internet access can send a postcard to their local council with their information. However, most people will probably opt for the second way, signing up at www.BSAalumni.org. Even with national Web-based registration, the relationship remains local. Alumni will reconnect with the council where they live.

The Scouting Alumni Association website is an incredibly valuable tool, but remember that it is only one tool. A website alone cannot build and maintain relationships with alumni. That being said, when people reconnect online, it does offer your council some bells and whistles that are really exciting!

Database
One of the most useful council tools coming from this program is a database that will be populated when individuals sign up online. People will be required to provide basic contact information such as address, phone, and email. The BSA has developed a system to effectively manage the distribution of that data to local councils on a regular schedule.

Other Features
Reconnecting is more than just capturing alumni data, though. It is about giving Scouting alumni access to each other to strengthen relationships and help build better youth. Eventually, this is where we hope to house social networking for our alumni and an alumni directory.

What local councils can do:

- Drive traffic to the Scouting Alumni Association website from your local council site and encourage people to reconnect.

- Add your council’s current alumni list to the database so you have a central resource for all of your information.

- Appoint staff and/or volunteers to keep the database as up-to-date as possible.

- Build opportunities for Scouting alumni to reconnect with each other into council events.

Rekindle
After they reconnect, alumni are invited to “rekindle memories” of their Scouting experience. Through creative new technologies, we will share campfire stories like never before! More importantly, we will reinforce people’s love of Scouting and capture personal accounts of how Scouting has helped to shape lives.

Online Scrapbook
The Alumni Scrapbook is an interactive tool that lets us hear the story of the BSA’s history, told by the people who lived it. It is both easy to use and visually attractive—with historical milestones for each decade and vintage video. People can share photos and Scouting stories by simply browsing for a file and clicking “upload,” much like attaching a file to an email. It is accessible from the Scouting Alumni Association website.

In addition to giving us a fun, nostalgic view of our first century, the scrapbook has key strategic value. First, it will give councils hundreds of new stories and photos to use in promotions and funding applications. Second, the scrapbook is linked into the database, so it can provide access to alumni to build stronger relationships. Third, because it’s fun, it provides an incentive for Scouting alumni to stay engaged. We believe that people will come to share their own memories, and come back (repeatedly) to read what others have written.

What local councils can do:

- Submit your own photo and story to the scrapbook and encourage others in your council to do so.
- Feature the online scrapbook in your council’s newsletter or other communication.
- Keep your eyes open for entries from your council. Reach out to people who have posted and start to build more personal relationships.
- With permission, use compelling stories and/or photos from the scrapbook in your local media outreach.
- Make it fun! Think of creative ways to drive traffic to the online scrapbook. As an idea, you could have a district-wide contest for people to submit the best, oldest, silliest, or most compelling photo or story.

Re-engage and Support Scouting

Making the connection is fundamental, and evoking memories is important for strengthening relationships and building goodwill. But, getting Scouting alumni to re-engage and help build better youth is the ultimate goal of this program. This is where we encourage Scouting alumni to get involved again by sharing their expertise with (and for) Scouts, volunteer their time, contribute financially, and enjoy the fun and fellowship of Scouting.

Keeping people interested and involved is critical to the success of this program. If people don’t feel like they’re getting something of value, they’ll disappear. They’ll ask to be removed from mailing lists or simply delete or discard whatever we send them.

Volunteer Recruitment

While the volunteer spirit remains strong, adults have less time to give. That is making it hard for councils to provide all of the programs they would like. Our great hope for the Scouting Alumni Association program is that it recruits Scouting alumni who re-engage as volunteers. Because of the importance of this effort, volunteering is mentioned throughout the website and given high visibility on both the “Re-engage” and “Support Scouting” pages. Alumni are directed to reach out to local councils to find out about volunteer opportunities in their area.

Support Scouting

Because fundraising is a major priority for us, and to be perfectly honest for a lot of our alumni, we wanted to create a separate—highly visible—area for people who want to support Scouting. Here we bring together all of the ways to give to the BSA, including donations to the BSA National Foundation, gifts that go directly to local councils, corporate gifts, and giving a gift of time through volunteerism.

Local council donations are managed through the Blackbaud database originally developed by the Finance Support Division. However, we’re integrating the donation pages into www.BSAalumni.org to create a seamless, user-friendly experience for our alumni.
Currently, data on donors is available to local councils through Blackbaud Sphere. Instructions on how to retrieve data are available in the Scouting Alumni Association toolkit.

**What local councils can do:**

- Invite alumni to **volunteer** with council events and service projects. Most people are willing to give a few hours, and it might lead to a larger volunteer commitment down the line.

- Form an **alumni association** or a **young friends group** for your council. Host regular meetings and social gatherings. Ask the group to help the council reach its goals.

- Feature the national engagement opportunities in your council’s **newsletters** and **emails**.

- Encourage donors to **give online**. It is easy for them, reduces paperwork for you, and captures the data you’ll need for follow-up.

**Next Steps**

The Scouting Alumni Association program will continue to grow and evolve. Inviting people to reconnect with Scouting will be part of every promotion and activity. The Scouting Alumni Association toolkit has everything you need to get started. So, now is the time to start soliciting partners, sending emails, handing out business cards, and inviting alumni to reconnect with Scouting, rekindle memories, and re-engage with the Boy Scouts of America!