Chapter 5—Unit Commissioners

Unit commissioners help units succeed with a good program that attracts and retains youth members.

Perhaps no other members of the unit service team have a more important or demanding responsibility. As friends, coaches, and counselors of unit leaders, unit commissioners operate quietly, generally in the background. They are effective communicators, providing the resources of the district and council to the units they serve. They aid the chartered organizations that operate the units through charters from the Boy Scouts of America.

Occasionally, unit commissioners find it necessary to recommend changes in personnel or in the way a unit is operating. Such action is taken with good judgment and tact and involves the chartered organization. Units are people. To help units succeed, today's commissioners must be people-oriented more than procedures-oriented. They are truly a council's front-line diplomats. Because *Scouting operates mostly by persuasion rather than by legislation,* commissioners must exercise the highest degree of diplomacy.

What are the qualities of Scouting's diplomat? Perhaps no single description fits all situations. So, consider the following qualities, and apply them as you recruit and assign commissioners to fit the needs of your district and its units.

- Be an effective communicator.
- Be a good listener.
- Have sound judgment.
- Be tactful.
- Have a Scouting background or be a fast-track learner.
- Be persistent and patient.
- Be adaptable.
- Know and practice Scouting ideals.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Fulfill promises.
- Be a team player.
- Be a coach.

Unit Commissioner Responsibilities

Unit commissioners go about their duties in many ways. Their methods of service vary from telephone contacts to group meetings, from "hit-and-run" visits to planned personal conferences. All are important avenues that lead to the fulfillment of their mission, but the main "freeway" to successful service is the personal conference.

Much has been written and said about the job of unit commissioners, and no list can encompass all the tasks they may be called to perform. The following services, however, are top priority:

- Maintain a close liaison with the chartered organization of the units they serve. This requires a working relationship with the chartered organization representative to strengthen Scouting's chartered organization concept.
- Work to assure effective and active unit committees.
- Facilitate the on-time annual charter renewal of all assigned units.
- Help select and recruit unit leaders. Though the actual appointment is approved by the chartered organization, with help and action on the part of the chartered organization representative and the unit committee, the unit commissioner plays a key role in the process, making certain that proper techniques are used to locate and enlist the best possible leaders. Because unit leaders are the key people through which Scouting objectives are carried out, commissioners must recognize the important qualities that make up successful unit leaders. Simply said, a good unit leader is a person of quality, high moral standards, dedication, and enthusiasm, a person who is well informed and who understands and puts into action the objectives of Scouting. The process by which such a person is selected and the care with which we help that person be successful are unquestionably the most important responsibilities of the commissioner.
- See that unit leadership gets adequate training.
- Cultivate and maintain the best possible ongoing relationship with the unit leader.

See the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service* for a complete list of responsibilities.

Recruiting Cautions

Commissioners must not be registered as unit leaders. Although some commissioners may be registered on a unit committee because they have a child in the unit or because of previous personal history in the unit, their principal Scouting obligation should be with commissioner responsibilities.

Please don't assign unit commissioners to their own units or chartered organizations. A commissioner needs an objective view as an arm of the district and council. Avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Commissioners may be currently registered in only one commissioner position.

Please don't ask units to provide their own commissioner. Commissioners must be selected by the district on the basis of qualities needed to adequately represent the district and council.