

THE COMMISSIONER

www.scouting.org/commissioners

Donald D. Belcher serves as national commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America. Don is the retired chairman of the board and CEO of Banta Corporation. He is an Eagle Scout, Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, Distinguished Eagle Scout, and James E. West Fellow, and a member of the 1910 Society and Founders Circle. Don has served as Central Region president, council president, and in a variety of other local and national responsibilities. He became a Cub Scout over 50 years ago in Kansas City, Missouri.



"TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PROGRAM IN EVERY UNIT IN AMERICA!"

"The role of the unit commissioner is to help every unit be successful. Unit success is defined by the unit achieving Quality Unit status and demonstrating an improvement in the retention of its members."

To All Commissioners,

In May 2006, at the National Annual Meeting of the Boy Scouts of America, an exciting new National Strategic Plan was presented, "2010: When Tradition Meets Tomorrow." The plan is designed to give direction in the key areas of support that are needed to successfully drive a quality program experience for each youth and his family. The plan has five pillars, each with specific objectives. The five pillars are

- Every eligible youth has an opportunity to be involved in a quality Scouting experience.
- Every local council is fiscally sound.
- The number of engaged, accountable volunteers is dramatically increased at all levels of Scouting.
- Local, regional, and national chartered organizations and strategic alliances are identified and engaged.
- Enough of the right professionals are identified, developed, and retained in the right positions at all levels, with a focus on diversity.

To support this Strategic Plan and these five pillars, a new and exciting Centennial Quality Award program is being introduced with a bold overriding objective "To Improve the QUALITY of Program in Every Unit in America."

I am particularly excited about this new Centennial Quality Award program, not only because, as you will see, it is powerful and focused, but because it is exactly in line with what we, as commissioners, are committed to accomplishing! The commitment "to improve the quality of program in every unit in America" fits perfectly with the definition of our responsibility, which is "to ensure that every unit is successful." And our measurements of success, which are "Quality Unit designation" and "improved retention," are integral parts of this new program and its goal-setting and measurement process. And among the key goals for every unit, district, and council will be that most critical requirement: the unit commissioner's monthly visit to each unit.



Strategic Plan

2006-2010

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

A key component of this new program is a high degree of volunteer involvement in the goal-setting, measurement, and evaluation process at all levels. Commissioners will play a particularly important role working directly with units in establishing their goals, accomplishing those goals during the year, and reviewing performance at year-end. Obviously, the monthly unit visits by commissioners are a vitally important contributor to the success of this process.

The process and the new forms have been simplified. There is one standard form, downloadable from the BSA Web site, for all units: packs, troops, teams, and crews. An "interpretation worksheet" will explain the goal-setting criteria and give examples. Importantly, each unit will establish its own goals to focus on what you and your professional



Strategic Planning Provides You a Road Map for Action

Strategic planning is a process everyone should be involved with, since you have a part in accomplishing the goals. The new National Strategic Plan will guide us as we embrace our mission to serve youth. Our rich history gives us a foundation upon which to adapt to America's evolving culture. Our mission has not changed, nor have the principles of Scouting. Each council should

To All Commissioners

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and volunteer leadership consider to be the criteria of a “quality program” being provided by the unit, district, or council. A truly powerful part of this program is the volunteer leadership signoff and approval at all levels. The quality standards will differ slightly for units, districts, and councils, but all will have emphasis on growth of traditional membership or density (that is not a typo!), retention, training, recruitment of commissioners, and measurement of unit visits by commissioners. For each of these quality standards, specific goals will be set jointly by the volunteer and professional leadership, the Key 3 will sign off on the goals at the bottom of the form, and at the end of the year, the performance versus goals will be recorded. Of course, throughout the year, commissioners will be actively involved in making unit visits and providing the assistance required to help every unit reach success and achieve their goals.

You will find more details on the new Strategic Plan and on this Centennial Quality Award program and process in this edition of the newsletter and in the implementation packet you will each receive.

I believe you will find this new program to be as exciting as I do, and will find that with this new set of awards and a renewed sense of purpose we can and will do a better job serving kids with meaningful program experiences that fulfill the promises we made them when they joined. I ask you to join with me in promising to do our best, as commissioners, to help make it happen.

Yours in Scouting,

Don Belcher

National Commissioner

Strategic Planning Provides You a Road Map for Action

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integrate the five pillars into their local plan.

The key areas of the plan needed to implement a quality Scouting program are from the five pillars and are stated below with definitive actions:

- Every eligible youth has an opportunity to be involved in a quality Scouting experience:
 - Increase market share and/or growth.
 - Increase the number of new members.
 - Improve member retention.
 - Increase the number of units.
- Every local council is fiscally sound:
 - Reduce the number of councils with annual operating deficits.
 - Increase local councils’ unrestricted net assets.
 - Increase local councils’ endowment fund assets.
- The number of engaged, accountable volunteers is dramatically increased at all levels of Scouting:
 - Add 1 million new volunteers.
 - Increase the number of Quality Councils, Districts, and Units.
- Local, regional, and national chartered organizations and strategic alliances are identified and engaged:
 - Increase the number of chartered organizations.
 - Identify national and/or regional funding sources to fund phases of the Strategic Plan.
- Enough of the right professionals are identified, developed, and retained in the right positions at all levels, with a focus on diversity:
 - Increase the number of youth-serving executives.
 - Increase the number of minority/female professionals.
 - Improve employee retention.

■ As you view the objectives identified, look at the number of volunteers involved in the direct delivery system. Volunteers are critical in support of measuring key accomplishments:

- Financial goals of each district
- Centennial Quality Award status of your units and the district
- Outdoor program participation by units and their youth
- Adequate number of active, registered volunteers in each unit, at the district committee, and commissioner staff
- Trained leadership, both adult and youth
- Advancements earned by youth members
- Award recognition given on a regular basis
- Membership density for each age/grade group
- Average size of units
- Provision of effective and financially viable programs

As you begin to develop your action plans, each area is reviewed, looking at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and roadblocks. More details of this planning process can be obtained from the new *Local Council Strategic Planning—A Workbook for Success*, available from your council.

Annually, when the council leadership meets with the districts during the annual Key 3 planning meeting, you will review other key items critical to providing a quality program. These may include, but are not limited

to, a functioning Key 3 with all key positions filled with registered volunteers, establishment of a percentage of unit reregistration, balanced growth, commissioner-to-unit ratios, monthly unit visits, and annual visits with the head of all chartered organizations.

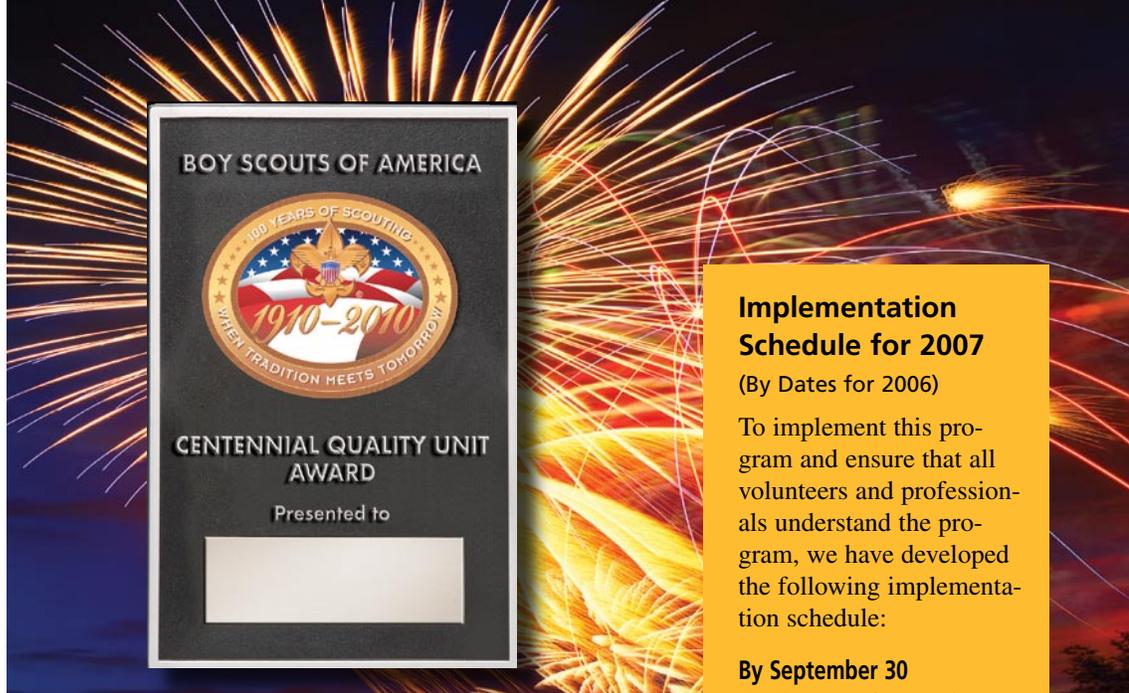
The issue related to engaged, accountable volunteers will assist in your success. There are many tactics to help in their accomplishment: membership campaigns to involve more youth and adults, and the membership validation process involving a “unit health checkup” assessed twice annually—January and July—that will help in developing an action plan to assist units not currently qualifying to earn the award.

To measure your progress, you have to review historical data, then establish where you want to be and how you get there. Keep in mind the status of trained leaders and the recruitment of new youth and adults. You have to know how many youth and units are projected in the future, as well as the current density served. Other questions to ask are: What types of programs and what percentage of participation do you anticipate? At what level do you need to increase participation to accomplish those goals? Once you know where you are and where you want to go, you can establish goals. Checkpoints can help measure your progress regularly.

How are you going to accomplish this task? Some examples include (1) Integrate plans for the national parent initiative into current programs. (2) Create new position descriptions (specific tasks) for units to involve more parents with their program. (3) Develop an orientation for new parents to receive one-on-one coaching, Internet

access 24/7, and the integration into regular training of leaders. (4) Promote links to key promotional tools, planning tools, and program resources from different venues on the Internet. (5) Analyze what type of delivery system it takes to accomplish the goals and develop and implement for broader volunteer involvement. (6) The ratio of unit commissioners to units should be determined by how many you need to accomplish the tasks specific to your district's needs. It may be a 1-to-3 ratio in some; in others it is measured by the number of units needing assistance to provide a quality program. (7) Develop a marketing approach to engage resources of Scouting alumni through Eagle Scouts, NESAs, Order of the Arrow, and the general public. (8) Increase the capacity of volunteers to conduct more quality outdoor programs by providing them with adequate training and resources. (9) Elevate the status of volunteers who produce sustained results through enhanced recognition. (10) Identify, recruit, and involve volunteers with varied abilities—diverse in ethnicity, gender, and religious backgrounds, representative of all geographic areas served, and representative of major sectors of the community.

Support of a strong nominating committee process is critical for success. There has to be effective training for volunteer positions and establishment of a monitoring system to keep volunteers accountable for achieving their established goals. Usually, the amount of time spent in planning is directly proportional to the success achieved. Your vision must have buy-in from everyone involved in your district. The 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America can help you stay focused on the theme “2010: When Tradition Meets Tomorrow.”



Centennial Quality Award Program: 2007–2010

“To improve the QUALITY of program in every unit in America.”

The Centennial Quality Award program is designed to recognize units, districts, councils, areas, and regions in achieving excellence in quality programming for a growing youth population. The successful implementation depends upon each level of Scouting to take its role seriously. If everyone does their part, we will be successful in providing a quality program experience. The role of the council is to use the 2007–2010 implementation tools to generate excitement for the new program. All councils have been sent the implementation packet, and it is available on the national Web site, www.scouting.org. Each council should be training all council and district personnel in support of the implementation, maintain year-round support to units in qualifying for the award, provide reports and recognitions during the program, develop a campaign to help strengthen your district committees and commissioner staffs, and implement the national parent initiative to assist in involving more parents at the unit, district, and council levels.

These are some key components of the new award:

- You must complete all the requirements to qualify.
- Applying for and earning the award is no longer a part of rechartering.
- Qualifying should answer the simple question: “Did we accomplish the goal of providing a quality program to our youth by achieving the requirements?”
- Step-by-step procedures are outlined in the Council Implementation Packet on the Web.

NOTE: There is a Frequently Asked Questions section available on the Web to answer questions about the award and its implementation.

Implementation Schedule for 2007

(By Dates for 2006)

To implement this program and ensure that all volunteers and professionals understand the program, we have developed the following implementation schedule:

By September 30

Implementation packets and award forms are shipped to all councils.

By October 31

All councils share the program with their professional staffs, office employees, executive board, district committees, and commissioner staffs.

By November 15

All councils share the program with their unit leaders through roundtables, special meetings, and training courses.

Between November 15, 2006, and February 15, 2007 All districts have their commissioners meet with each unit to secure their commitment to earn the Centennial Quality Award. Once completed, the forms are turned in to the council.

Between January 1 and February 15, 2007

Councils and districts work with each unit as a part of the membership validation process to develop an action plan to help all units qualify for earning the award annually.

Best Practices: An Active Commissioner Staff—A Key Ingredient to Success

Your responsibility in delivering the promise of a quality Scouting program is directly related to the number of active, trained, and accountable commissioners you have. You might ask yourself:

“How can I recruit enough commissioners to serve all the units in my district?”

The answer is simple: You don't . . . not without the help of your district Key 3 and your assistants!

One of the things you learn is to recruit volunteers to help you do the critical things important to a successful Scouting program. The first thing you do is identify how many commissioners you will need based on a ratio of one assistant district commissioner for every five unit commissioners. Then analyze where your units are organized and where units will be organized in the future. You will pair units from the same chartered organization under the same commissioner.

You will match units based on their transitioning from packs to troops to teams and crews. This determination will assist in determining if you need a ratio of one commissioner to three or four units.



This process can help with your commitment to the national parent initiative and involving more parents in the program. Now you are ready to take a look at who can serve as commissioners.

Developing a Unit Commissioner Prospect List

The following plan has been used successfully by the commissioners in the Bay-Lakes Council of Appleton, Wisconsin, under the leadership of Scout Executive Mike Surbaugh. The key ingredient to success is to use what works for you. Throughout BSA literature on commissioner service we give district commissioners many ideas on finding unit commissioner prospects and offer guidance on recruitment strategies. You are in constant need of commissioners. Very few districts have a full commissioner staff. One statement that will always tell you if effective recruitment is occurring is: “Let me take a look at your prospect list.” If the district executive and district commissioner cannot produce an identical list of unit commissioner prospects—or any list, which is more common—it tells us they are not recruiting effectively.

Ideas for finding commissioner prospects are found in the *Commissioner Administration of*

Unit Service manual, No. 34128. Fourteen suggestions are given, from friends, business associates, and executives to former Scouts. All are good ideas to guide you in your recruitment process, but will not yield a specific prospect list. In addition, there are various recruitment strategies such as “group recruiting” in a specific company whereby the president brings together a group of top employees and they are all recruited at the same time, even if most do not have a Scouting background. This may work in some places and for the district commissioner at the time.

Last, without a solid prospect list, district commissioners tend to model the worst recruiting strategies for unit leaders. We have all witnessed the commissioner who at a roundtable says to the assembled unit leaders, “We really need some more unit commissioners. Our meeting is next Tuesday. Hope we see some of you there.” In addition to speaking to the wrong audience, this has taught Cubmasters that the way to get den leaders is to stand up at the end of the pack meeting and make a general plea for leadership as we are “really hurting for den leaders.” You don't walk through the *Selecting Quality Leaders* worksheet, give



them the expectation of developing nominating committees with their units, and then speak at a roundtable and ask all the Cubmasters to help out by being unit commissioners! This comes out of frustration from not being able to find good prospects for unit commissioners.

The System

This is a tried and true recruitment program. It has never failed to develop a solid prospect list and ends the frustration of staff and district commissioners that you hear: “We just can’t find anyone.” The system uses the premise that the best prospects are those with a good Scouting background, solid progression of leadership, and program knowledge. While someone “from the community” without Scouting background may make a good commissioner, it has been my experience that this works well with district committees and can rarely be seen at the commissioner level. This system has never yielded fewer than 25 qualified prospects with small (30 to 40 units) districts. The average district of 50 to 70 units will usually get 50-plus qualified prospects.

STEP 1 Set meeting with district commissioner, district executive, and assistant district commissioners (if any).

Allocate three hours for the meeting. This will not complete the process in a very large district, but is usually adequate for a 50-unit district.

STEP 2 Prior to the meeting,

assemble materials—five years of past leader rosters and current-year leader and member rosters for each unit in the district. Supplies include highlighters, blank paper, pizza, and beverages.

STEP 3 Separate the rosters in order by years and unit next to each other.

Match up the troops that typically draw from each pack. As technology has improved, it

is now helpful to have a computer connected to ScoutNET available. For this, you need a meeting place with large tables available to spread everything out.

STEP 4 Orientation. This is a paraphrase of the general talk: “OK, what we are going to do is become investigators. We are going to find the hidden talent within our program and identify some excellent prospects to join our commissioner staff. I think we can all agree that the most effective unit commissioners would be those people who have good leadership experience in a unit, have seen the program work with their son, and are committed to the values of Scouting. The first thing we need to do is take our highlighters and start with the oldest year and work forward. What we are looking for is a person with a pattern of successive leadership experience, e.g., DL, ADL, assistant CM, CC, etc. You may notice that after the fourth or fifth year they drop off the charter. We then look for their son in the associated Boy Scout troop (or check via ScoutNET). If the youth is in the unit, we then look for their parent on the troop roster. If they are not in a key leadership position, this would qualify them as a “suspect.”

STEP 5 Process. At this point, the room gets pretty quiet as everyone starts looking. It gets fun quickly as they start to get some “hits.” You will find the staff starts to figure out that you can tell a lot about a family from their registration record. Some examples of good “suspects”:

- Mom and Dad were registered in the pack in alternate years; this happens often. This is exciting because it says the

family is committed, and both have good leadership experience and have decided to share the responsibility. Both might make good suspects.

- Mom is involved in the pack; Dad is on the committee of a troop. This indicates they have a second son in the program. Watch for when Mom is going to be stepping out.
- Mom was on the charter for multiple years but now has dropped off. Dad is now on the troop charter. Obviously, Mom said, “OK, Dad, your turn. I’ve done Cubs; you can do the Boy Scouts.” Mom is now in our minds as a good suspect for unit commissioning.
- Mom or Dad is a second-year Webelos leader for the second time. Excellent prospect as they have a second son who will soon be leaving for the troop, and a great time to catch them.
- Great succession of leadership in the pack, son moves on to the troop, now parents are unregistered. You may find the troop has a bunch of assistant Scoutmasters and they weren’t needed in a key leadership role. Great suspects.

STEP 6 The vetting process. After you have assembled a suspect list, you must write down two names and numbers of other key leaders who were in the unit at the same time. They may or may not still be involved; it doesn’t matter. This step is crucial as the ADCs will now play a key role in the follow-up of the suspects. This meeting is now concluded when you have 50 to 100 suspects. Next to each are names and phone numbers of two people who know them.

STEP 7 **Narrowing the field of suspects to PROSPECTS.** This step is often skipped; don't let that happen! Within one week of the initial meeting, each suspect's "references" should be called. The ADC initiates a call: "Hi, Jim, we are looking at Cheryl to help in a Scouting job called a unit commissioner. Briefly, this is someone who is a mentor to packs and troops. How do you think she would be?" The reason this step is crucial is that it sells the ADC on the person. Ninety percent of the time you are going to get great feedback, and it cements the ADC or DC (who will be recruiting) that this is someone to get excited about and is not just a name on paper. The person is now a qualified prospect. The person making the call will often get some good additional information that would help in recruitment. Sometimes you need to eliminate the person based on the call. That's OK; it saves time.

STEP 8 **The list.** Everyone now agrees on the specific list of PROSPECTS. The DE and DC should have the same list.

STEP 9 **Recruitment.** It must be held sacred that recruitment will be with two members of the district and the prospect. Over coffee, breakfast, in their home, wherever—it must be a formal, in-person meeting. No deviations. Steps 6–9 are often shortcut. The staff leader must not allow this to happen. Frequently, a well-meaning person will come up with the idea to save time (make it easier) by sending the suspects a letter, sending the references a letter, holding a steak fry at camp and inviting all the suspects, etc. (These all will fail.) NO, NO, NO. Steps 6–9 must be followed for this to work effectively.

STEP 10 **Follow-up.** The staff leader and council commissioner can now check to see how the recruitment is progressing. It is a big investment of time, but it pays off and removes the excuse/problem of not knowing who to go after. This method gives a solid prospect list that should yield enough people to fill any commissioner staff.

Thoughts for Future Reference

“We must open the doors of opportunity. But we must also equip our people to walk through those doors.”

—Lyndon Baines Johnson

“Act like you expect to get into the end zone.”

—Joe Paterno

“Character, not circumstances, makes the man.”

—Booker T. Washington

New Centennial Quality Awards



2007

Centennial Quality Unit Award
 “TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PROGRAM
 IN EVERY UNIT IN AMERICA!”

Annual Unit Service Plan Actions for Fall 2006

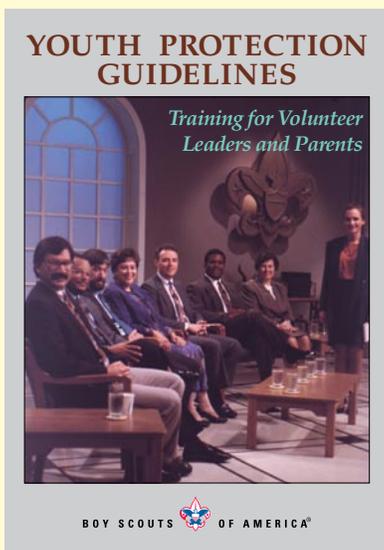
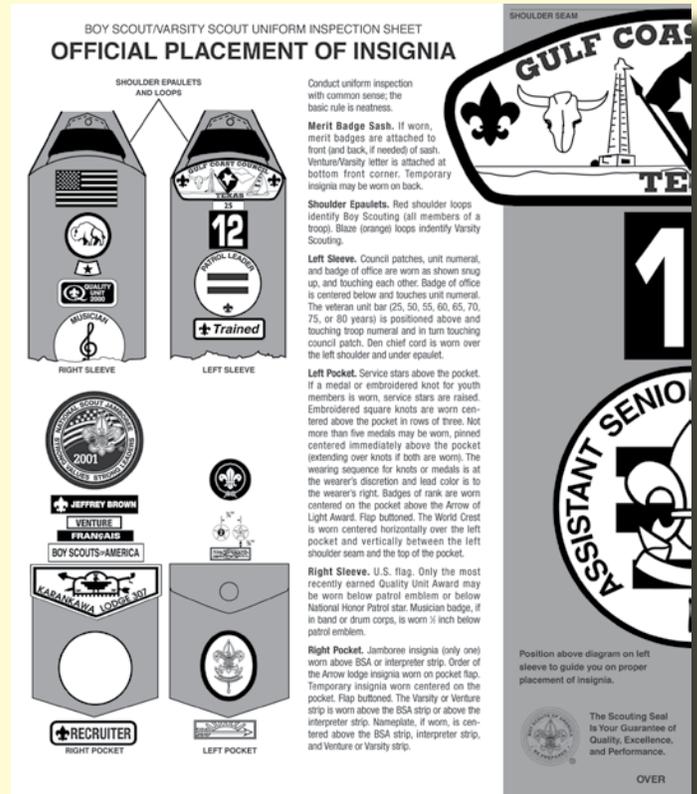
Key actions supported by commissioners in providing a quality program in each unit:

FALL SUPPORT. Monthly unit visits are conducted, ensuring all units start out with great programming. Support the fall recruitment drive. Assist the training team in encouraging all volunteers to attend Fast Start, Youth Protection, and basic leader training. Follow up on “unit health” plans to assist units in earning the Quality Unit Award.

OCTOBER—Uniform Inspection. The commissioner helps pack and troop leaders and lends dignity to a high-morale event. Encourage uniforms for all members. Develop unit pride.

NOVEMBER—Youth Protection Visit. Guide the unit in promoting BSA child abuse-prevention training at a meeting of all adults and have them set a time to show the training video to their youth members as a group.

NOVEMBER 15, 2006–FEBRUARY 15, 2007—New Centennial Quality Award Commitment. Beginning in 2007, there is a new award replacing the Quality Unit Award. Commissioners work with their assigned units to complete the commitment and turn it in to their district executive.



2007 Centennial Quality Unit Award Commitment

"To improve the QUALITY of program in every unit in America!"

Unit Type _____ Unit Number _____
 Chartered Organization _____

We, the youth and leaders, are committed to achieving the requirements for the 2007 Centennial Quality Award:

- We will have ___ percent of our direct contact leaders complete Basic Leader Training for their position, including Youth Protection Training.
 ___ Last year's percent ___ This year's percent
- As one of the committed units in our district, our goal is to retain ___ percent of our members, recruit ___ new youth, and recharter on time.
 ___ percent retained, ___ number new youth, and ___ rechartered on time
- As a participating unit in the national parent initiative, we commit to recruit ___ new adults to be active. ___ Actual number of new adults
- We had a minimum of 60 percent of our youth members advance in rank for Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting or earn Venturing recognition awards, or we improved by 10 percent over last year.
 Percent advanced/earned ___ last year and ___ this year
- At least 70 percent of our youth members had an outdoor experience or one activity per month, or improve the percentage over last year.
 ___ percent last year ___ percent this year
- We will conduct annual program planning and will provide the financial resources to deliver a quality program to our members.
 ___ Yes ___ No

In support of a quality program experience, we confirm:

- We received ___ visits from our unit commissioner this past year.
- We supported the council by participating in Friends of Scouting and the annual product sale.
 ___ Yes ___ No

Qualified for 2007: ___ Yes ___ No (Unit may qualify for the Centennial Quality Unit Award after October 31 in 2007.)

Reviewed and accepted by:

 Unit leader Unit commissioner District executive

Unit Commissioner Box Score

As of August 31, 2006

Region	Number of Units* This Year	Unit Commissioners Needed	Unit Commissioners Registered	Need to Recruit	Percent of Need Filled Last Year/This Year	Unit/Commissioner Ratio Last Year/This Year
Northeast	18,293	6,096	3,099	2,997	51.9%/50.8%	5.8/5.9
Southern	27,700	9,232	5,165	4,067	53.6%/55.9%	5.6/5.4
Central	25,038	8,345	5,178	3,167	63.5%/62.0%	4.7/4.8
Western	42,657	14,217	6,865	7,352	47.9%/48.3%	6.3/6.2
National	113,688	37,890	20,307	17,583	53.5%/53.6%	5.6/5.6

* Does not include Explorer posts or Learning for Life groups

2007 Calendar Dates of Interest

May 30–June 1, 2007

National Annual Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Atlanta, Georgia and a special commissioner elective

June 24–30, July 29–August 4, and August 5–11, 2007

Commissioner, District Operations, and Key 3 conferences at Philmont Training Center are offered. (We have added a new course in 2007: Advanced Commissioner Service.)

For comments or more information:

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Leadership Support Service

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