

Advancement News

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Prepared. For Life.®

As programs and opportunities modify over time, your friends at *Advancement News* will be here to share these insights with you in a new format. *Advancement News* will be published directly to the [Advancement Resources page](#) of Scouting.org. Each bi-monthly edition will be found at the [Advancement News site](#). As advancement changes regularly, note that the most current versions of items found in *Advancement News* supersedes previous versions.

On Increasing Advancement

Keeping Scouting Alive

During this time of COVID-19, unit meetings, and advancement in particular, have not been easy! Zoom style conferences are a reasonable replacement under the circumstances, but certainly does not fulfill the normal role of personal meetings and the interactions that result. So, how do units respond and keep their youth involved?

Well, the BSA has made lots of adaptations to assist during this pandemic! Check out the BSA national website under the heading [National Statement on COVID-19](#).



Here, you will also find a number of great ideas about how to [continue Scouting at home](#) and how to keep your youth engaged. There are 30-day challenges that units can use to help the youth keep engaged and advancing. Also, you will find an area called [BSA COVID-19 FAQ](#)

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When you click on that link you will find very clear descriptions and definitions of advancement requirements that have been RELAXED during this pandemic period. Be sure to check these out very carefully as they are designed to make completing requirements doable in a virtual setting while face-to-face meetings are not available.



What about training during this COVID-19 period? Well, for the troops and crews, check under the Scouts BSA and Venturing headings on the National website and you will find that there is now a virtual Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops (ILST) and Introduction to Leadership Skills for Crews (ILSC) which cover the same material, but in an online format. While these online courses do not replace the preferred face-to-face equivalents, they temporarily make available some needed training opportunities during a difficult time!

Also, be sure to check with your local council to find out what opportunities for unit activities, advancement, and training they have available. Many councils have built, or worked with other councils, to make available merit badge opportunities and virtual campout and campfire activities to assist units in promoting Scouting activities to our youth. And don't forget your local Order of the Arrow Lodges as many of them have designed small group and virtual service projects, conclaves, and induction activities.

Leaders are doing their best to find ways to keep Scouting alive and vital for our youth. Be sure you are looking for these opportunities, taking advantage of them, and sharing them with others! All of us will get through this and at some point, the lights will come back on and we will return to more normal Scouting activities! Hang in there, everyone!

Positions of Responsibility in Scouting Programs: The Den Chief

In this series of articles, we have been sharing some of the linkage between the Scouting aim of leadership development and the Scouting method of advancement via youth positions of responsibility.

An important position of responsibility throughout the entire 90-year history of Cub Scouting, one which is seldom mentioned, is the den chief.

In the early days of Cub Scouting, dens were actually led by a Boy Scout who was called a den chief. As Cub Scouting evolved, and den mothers and den leaders became the norm, the den chief position also evolved into the den leader support leadership position it is today.



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A den chief is a youth member of Scouts BSA, Venturing, or Sea Scouting who assists with the leadership of a Cub Scout den. But the story is far more important than those words suggest because the den chief:

- Serves as a Scouting role model for the Cub Scouts in the den, as well as the entire pack;
- Promotes Scouting in general and the local troop in particular;
- Encourages the transition of Webelos into Scouts BSA;
- Holds a leadership position in the troop, thus fulfilling an advancement requirement.

In addition, a trained den chief:

- Assists the den leader with planning and conducting den meetings;
- Understands the Cub Scouting program and the differences between Cub Scouts and other phases of the Scouting program;
- Understands the den leader's duties and confidently helps lead portions of the den meeting;
- Knows a variety of resources for age-appropriate activities for Cub Scouts in the den;
- Brings a repertoire of activities that Cub Scouts enjoy.

We encourage you to promote and use this especially important position of responsibility in your area of service. It will not only help strengthen the Cub Scouting program and give a den leader some help, it is a method that will give a youth leader valuable experience that fulfills an aim of the Scouting program.

Den Chief Training is available as an online training and can be a facilitated training opportunity.

Further [Information is available online.](#)

About Advancement News

(BSA Advancement Team, @AdvBSA)

Advancement News is the official e-letter of the Boy Scouts of America National Advancement Program Team. Its intent is to provide and clarify procedures found in the *Guide to Advancement*, announce various changes and updates in advancement, and to assist advancement committees in making decisions that can help increase the rate of advancement. Therefore, districts and councils may reprint articles from this publication. Our plan is to distribute six issues of *Advancement News* annually, but special editions may go out whenever there is important information to share. Feedback, suggestions, and letters to the editor are welcome at

advancement.team@scouting.org

Cub Scouts



Recognition of Advancement

Recognition is an important part of the Cub Scouting program. Child development research shows that acknowledgement using awards for children is a powerful tool in shaping positive behaviors. Recognition can be immediate, or it can be delayed. The timing has a big impact on reinforcing behavior that leads to character growth.

The design of the Cub Scout program is to establish good habits using positive reinforcement. The habits we want to shape are the aims of Scouting. They are character development, citizenship training, leadership, and mental and physical fitness.

In Cub Scouts, positive reinforcement occurs in two ways. The first is having **fun** with the activity. We recently witnessed a den leader with an innovative way to conduct the Wolf Germs Alive adventure. The den leader put a twist on the activities to demonstrate how germs spread. At the beginning of the meeting, she pulled aside a “mystery” Scout. A product called *Glo Germ* was applied to their hands. *Glo Germ* is a clear product designed to teach proper handwashing. No one else knew the Scout was “infected.” Everyone wore masks and gloves during the meeting. Towards the end of the meeting she shared with the den the lesson on how germs spread and then took out the black light to demonstrate how just one person can spread germs. All the other Scouts could see where the germs landed. The kids were amazed and laughed at how they each were infected so easily. They learned a valuable lesson while having fun.

The second component for reinforcing positive behavior is **recognition**. In Cub Scouts, after completing all the requirements for an adventure, Scouts are rewarded with a belt loop or pin. According to child development experts, the shorter the time between the behavior and the reward, the higher the likelihood of success. The longer the time between the behavior and the reward the less likelihood of success, to the point that when enough time passes there is no connection between the behavior and the reward.

This is why Cub Scouts should be rewarded right away when they complete an adventure by receiving their adventure loop or pin, preferably at the conclusion of the den meeting or when the activity occurred. **This is the preferred method.**

Some packs save the presentation of the adventure loops and pins for the pack meeting. The time between when the adventure was completed and the presentation of the adventure loop or pin at a pack meeting for many, is too long a period to be effective. Youth do not internalize the new habit, even if it was fun. Young Cub Scouts need immediate recognition to see the connection between the behavior and the reward. Time for them is about the here and now.

Our goal is to help build positive character in our youth. We do this with fun activities and recognition. To be effective, activities should be fun, and the recognition should be immediate so that our children can see the connection.

Special Needs Interests

Swimming and Advancement

For many leaders there has always been concern when working on advancement with Scouts with special needs in aquatics. Commonly we find these Scouts terrified of water and unable to complete the swimming requirements for swim tests at camp and the Swimming merit badge itself. For whatever reasons, these Scouts will not touch the water. Your council's advancement and special needs committees have probably assisted many leaders in finding alternatives to this conundrum. COVID-19 has given some of these Scouts a reprieve of sorts.

BSA has posted its decision regarding swimming and advancement for all Scouts (as per myscouting.org): *"Swimming remains a major health and safety concern and cannot be abandoned by Scouts BSA. With that in mind, the Swimming rank requirements for Second Class – (5b) Demonstrate your ability to pass the BSA beginner test: Jump feet first into water over your head in depth, level off and swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, then return to your starting place and First Class (6a) Successfully complete the BSA swimmer test may be deferred until each Scout's next rank, as necessary (through Life, but not Eagle).*

"This temporary deferment will allow Scouts to advance in rank up to, and including Life Scout, but not beyond. All other rank requirements must still be earned to advance. When conditions warrant and upon direction from the National Council, these requirements will be reinstated with 30 days' notice to our Scouting family via Workplace, Bryan on Scouting, Scouting Wire, social media, and any other means determined appropriate.

"For clarity, the following swimming requirements can be completed on dry land and are not a hindrance to advancing:

- *"Second Class requirement (5c) Demonstrate water rescue methods by reaching with your arm or leg, by reaching with a suitable object, and by throwing lines and objects.*
- *First Class requirement (6e) With a helper and a practice victim, show a line rescue both as tender and as rescuer. (The practice victim should be approximately 30 feet from shore in deep water.)*

For any aquatics activities, BSA notes: *Aquatic activities require current and valid swim testing for both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. If swim checks for these events cannot be done, then the aquatics activities cannot take place."*

This deferment for all Scouts may give you an opportunity to help those Scouts with special needs. Water terror issues may not be permanent. With creativity and patience Scouts can learn to tolerate, accept, and enjoy water activities. Find an instructor who is sensitive to the needs of Scouts experiencing water terrors and have him/her work with the Scout in ways acceptable to the Scout and the parent. Together, both parties may be able to help the Scout overcome his/her fear. Remember, that for Eagle required merit badges, hiking or cycling can replace swimming. This provides other opportunities to achieve rank. If it is not possible to help the Scout conquer his/her fear or sensitivity to water, an Individual Scout Advancement Plan can be written with the help of parent, Scout, educational personnel, and/or medical team. Refer to the *Guide to Advancement*, Section 10.0.0.0, for further information.

Sea Scouts

Contacts for Seabadge virtual training

In the last edition of *Advancement News*, we reviewed the recent addition of virtual Seabadge training courses. For those who are excited to be a part of this opportunity, here is the listing of contacts for currently scheduled events during the first few months of 2021.

Jan. 16-17 and 23-24, contact Doug Love, sss.chaser.xo@gmail.com

Feb. 27-28 and Mar. 6-7, contact Curtis Letson, curtis.letson@gmail.com

June 5-6 and 12-13, contact Emily Newell, emily99newell@gmail.com



Scoutbook

Please note the following:

Scoutbook can now be reached directly at Scoutbook.scouting.org.

Internet Advancement has also moved to advancements.scouting.org.

Worth Repeating

From the *Guide to Advancement*

Registered/Unregistered Merit Badge Counselor (November, 2013)

For most merit badges awarded, a Scout has completed the requirements, as written, with a registered merit badge counselor. We congratulate them and award the badge. At times, however, we find that a youth has worked with a person who is not actually registered as a counselor. Topic 7.0.4.6 in the 2013 *Guide to Advancement* addresses these instances with expanded guidance.

In these instances, our concerns are two-fold. Registered counselors are background screened and Youth Protection trained, which are critical safety considerations for our Scouts. Using registered counselors also improves the quality of the merit badge program through training and oversight. It is the leader's responsibility to educate Scouts about the blue card procedure (topic 7.0.0.2), which helps ensure Scouts only work with registered merit badge counselors.

In some cases, a youth may have used an un-registered counselor because of a simple administrative error, such as a mistaken deletion of a counselor from a district charter. If he has fulfilled the requirements as

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written, topic 7.0.4.6 instructs us to award the badge, but also to alert the council or district to help get the merit badge counselor properly registered. We also counsel the Scout to make sure, for his own safety and well-being, that he understands the process and agrees to follow it in the future.

On occasion a Scout may knowingly ignore the process, even after being made aware of the procedure as outlined. In these cases, where there is intentional disregard for the process, the unit leader may reject the blue card, alert the council or district, and require the Scout to work with a properly registered counselor to verify the requirements were completed as written. Just as in Topic 7.0.0.2, the unit leader provides the name of at least one registered counselor, but the Scout may choose to use a different one—as long as the counselor is properly registered.

Following this guidance provides a fair outcome for honest errors, while offering recourse for situations where there is intentional disregard. Doing so helps units better provide for safety and program quality through interactions with properly registered and trained merit badge counselors.

Editor's Note

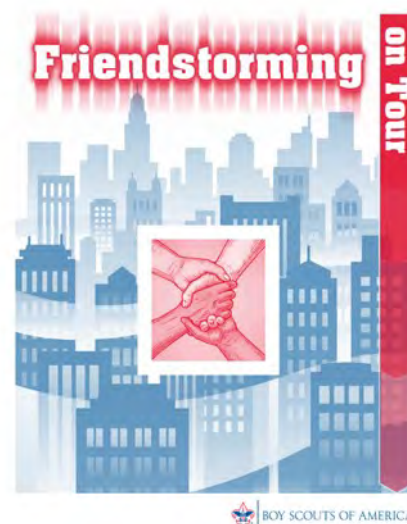
Editor Note: This article referenced was written before girls were introduced into Scouting programs. Therefore, minor modifications to the original article have been made to reflect gender references. The terminology Scouts BSA has been substituted for all references to Boy Scouts. As always, consult the [Guide to Advancement](#) found online for verification of current requirements.

Helpful Links

Three Resources to Support Recruiting Efforts

The most current materials of interest for Scouters who are involved in the administration of advancement are located in one handy place, the [Advancement Resources web page](#)

One useful resource is the information found in the booklet [Friendstorming on Tour](#), No. 510-003. This publication presents a process for nominating committees to use in creating a number of prospective volunteers for various levels of district service. It reviews a very detailed plan to help district leadership and those on a nominating committee to increase the prospecting of possible potential volunteers for recruitment. This process can be used for all types of recruiting, including individuals to serve on various advancement related committees.



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[Building Effective Advancement Committees](#) is another resource that will assist district leadership when the need arises to create effective committees. The document describes various areas of responsibility that advancement chairs might choose to delegate to committee members and provides suggestions on where and how to find and recruit volunteers. The first section explores organizing an effective advancement committee. The second section explores finding and recruiting volunteers for advancement committees.

“Developing Council and District Advancement Committees,” an advancement educational presentation, is available for use by councils and districts. The link to this presentation is available at from the [Advancement Educational Presentations](#) located under the General Resources category of Advancement Resources.

With these resources ready for your use, recruiting and developing your district and council advancement committees will be a straightforward process to yield beneficial results for everyone.

