

# Information for Webelos Leaders and Parents of Webelos

This year, your son will be making a decision that will have an impact on his Scouting career; the choice of which Boy Scout troop he will join. We are providing this guide to help you assist your son as he makes this important decision. It includes brief answers for many of the questions you may have for each troop and suggests other questions you and your son might want to ask.

Remember: *The choice of a troop is a personal decision for you and your son.*

## **Do I need to join the same troop my Webelos leader joins?**

No. All members of a den need not join the same troop, nor is there a “designated” troop that your boy must join, although some packs have close affiliation with a brother troop. Most troops welcome any new Scout that would like to join them.

## **What about Arrow of Light requirements?**

The Webelos Arrow of Light requires your son to visit at least one Boy Scout troop, attend an outdoor event with a troop, and complete an application to join. We recommend he visit several troops, so that he can see how different troops do things. Each troop has their own traditions, activities, and levels of adventure. You need to find one that is right for your son. If possible, you and your son should attend an overnight campout as a guest of the troop. You should contact the troops you are interested in to set up a visit and go with your son to help him assess the troop.

## **How do I contact a troop?**

A troop contact list will be made available to you. It will list the contact phone numbers, location, and meeting times for the troops in your Scouting district area.

*You may visit or join any troop in any district.*

If you need more information on troops, please visit the Thunderbird District website at <http://www.thunderbird-district.com/troops.htm> or call the Pacific Harbors Council office at (253) 752-7731. Most troops ask that you call one of the contact persons before visiting the troop. Sometimes troops have meetings off-site, and calling ahead will ensure that you do not miss them.

## **What should I ask when I visit?**

During your visit, there are many things to ask and observe. There is no right answer to these questions, but you want to find a troop where you and your son will feel comfortable. Do not be afraid to ask about the troop. They will be proud to tell you about themselves.

## **How many registered Scouts are in the troop?**

Troops come in many different sizes. Some troops have several dozen boys while others are smaller. There are no significant advantages/disadvantages to Troop size. Choose the size that feels correct to you.

## **How many registered Leaders?**

While troops vary in size, there should be ample leadership appropriate to the number of boys in the troop. Do the boys tend to stick

with the program year to year? Has the troop obtained Quality Unit Award status? As a parent, would you be interested in becoming a Patrol Advisor or Committee Member?

## **What is the age range of the Scouts?**

A mixture of ages within a Troop is generally a good thing as the younger boys learn from the older boys. Make sure that this Troop is able to accommodate the varying interests of the Scouts that they do have as well as any new Scouts that might join.

## **Do they (or do they plan to) offer any “High Adventure” Scouting?**

Younger Scouts traditionally work on their rank requirements so they can advance through Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First class in their first year of Scouting. Much of their attention in meetings and on campouts is devoted to their basic Scout skills for these requirements. As Scouts get into their teen years, it is necessary to challenge them in order to hold their interests.

Scouting has established “High Adventure” programs for Scouts who are 13 years of age or older. They may begin hiking, climbing, or Sea Kayaking locally. Troops may travel to Philmont Scout Ranch for rugged mountain backpacking or to a National Jamboree. The opportunities are endless.

## **Are the Scoutmasters and other Troop Leaders trained?**

Make sure that the Scoutmasters and other Troop leaders are trained for their positions.

# More Questions to ask of prospective Boy Scout Troops.

## **What is their activity program like?**

Ask to see a copy of their yearly program schedule. You will want to see how often they camp out. The outdoor program recommends nine to twelve campouts a year, including Summer Camp. Do they camp in the winter? Do they participate in the District/Council activities, such as Camporee and Scoutfest? Do they offer special activities at meetings?

## **What is a “typical” meeting like?**

Is it “boy run”? Is it “upbeat”? Are the boys kept busy? Is it fun? Do they show respect during the flag ceremony, to the program, to the adults, and to each other? Is good discipline evident within the program?

## **Observe how the boys interact.**

How do they treat visitors? You should join a Troop where your son feels comfortable. Does your son need a group where he already knows some boys? If he does not know other boys initially, do they seem like a group that will treat a newcomer well?

## **What are the uniform requirements?**

Most troops require full uniform for Troop meetings and District/Council sponsored campouts. Others require only the uniform shirt. Still others have designated uniform meeting days. Some wear activity shirts (red polo) or specially designed troop T-shirts. You will probably want to choose a troop that feels the same about uniforms as you and your son. Pacific Harbors Council has a uniform bank available if assistance is needed.

## **Does the troop attend summer camp? What percentage of the troop attended last Summer? Where do they go for Summer Camp? Do they always go to the same Camp? Are those leaders trained?**

Summer camp offers a tremendous opportunity for Scouts to experience the fun and excitement of camping, while affording them the opportunity to achieve merit badges and rank advancement. Our Council operates Camp Hahobas in Belfair, WA but it is not necessary that the troop attend this camp. Some troops attend Camp Hahobas every year for one or two weeks, while others go to Boy Scout Camps in nearby councils or out of state for a change of pace.

This is a very important area for parents to investigate. Boys who attend Summer Camp have a significantly higher chance of rank advancement and remaining in the BSA program. Troop attendance at Summer Camp is an excellent barometer of your Webelos' likely success in Boy Scouting.

## **How do they utilize the advancement & merit badge program?**

Some troops use the BSA advancement and merit badge program as the cornerstone of their program. Their campouts and meetings center on helping the boys advance within the format outlined by the Boy Scouts of America. Some troops focus meetings on merit badge work, while other troops may feel that rank advancements and merit badges are secondary and plan activities independent of them. Their Scouts earn all of their merit

badges on their own. Clearly either system can function well, and boys can work with either one to advance all the way up to Eagle Scout.

## **What can a parent expect in terms of fees?**

Fees vary from troop to troop. Most troops have an annual fee that covers membership and basic materials, including badges and awards. The annual fee usually does not cover uniforms, camping fees, meals, travel, or other special activity costs. You will want to know what additional fees will likely be charged during the course of the year.

## **What can I do to help?**

Troops require considerable adult support. There are different levels of involvement in a troop, from leadership roles to serving on the troop committee, to helping with campouts, to driving to events, etc. We hope you can get involved with your son as he continues on in Scouting. It has been our experience that successful Scouts and successful troops have parents who can make time to be involved.

## **What things are important to you?**

Obviously, there are many other questions you may wish to ask a troop relative to your son's interests or goals in Scouting. We hope this information gives you a starting point to help you assess the troops you visit.

Good Luck!