



February 28, 2017

Dear New Troop 300 Parents:

Welcome! We are very happy to have you and your Scouts in Troop 300!

Troop 300 has a fine tradition of Scouting in the Stroudsburg area. We have been around since the early 1980's and are a part of the Pocono District within Minsi Trails Council. The Council serves nearly 11,000 youth through the leadership of 5,000 adult volunteers. Our Council provides programs to youth throughout the Anthracite Region, Pocono Mountains and Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania along with western New Jersey and serves six-counties: Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe, Carbon, Luzerne, and Warren counties. The local Scouting heritage dates back more than 100 years to 1910 when the council's first Scout troops were established in the Allentown and Easton areas.

At Troop 300, we aim to provide a place where 1) our community's next generation of leaders is forged and 2) our Troop is known in our county, council and region as the leader for boy-led youth service to others. Through the collaboration of youth and adult members as well as the people of the greater Pocono area we create opportunities for boys to challenge themselves, build camaraderie and have fun in a safe environment. While I consider us in a kind of "building" phase, we are striving to establish a truly boy led Troop by using the eight "Methods of Scouting":

- The Ideals (as outlined in the Oath, the Law, the Motto and Slogan);
- The Patrol Method
- The Outdoors
- Advancement
- Association with adults
- Personal growth
- Leadership development
- The Uniform.

The biggest requirements for us as parents are then to **1) support each other as we guide our boys and 2) give the Scouts the freedom to make mistakes and learn in a relatively safe environment.**

### **Parent Involvement**

When a boy joins Scouting, his whole family joins in the experience. Scouting is a volunteer organization. Without volunteers to help challenge your boys, there would be no Troop 300. Parents and interested community members comprise the entirety of the Troop's adult members as Scoutmaster, Committee Members and Merit Badge Counselors.

We want EVERY adult who cares for a youth member of the Troop to be a part of the Troop. That begins with taking Youth Protection Training, at <https://myscouting.scouting.org/Pages/eLearning.aspx>. We also ask that you fill out a Troop Resources Survey (attached) so we can match your interests and skills to the needs of our Scouts. We are always looking for additional leaders. Of particular interest right now are Assistant Scoutmasters and Troop Committee Members. All positions are gender neutral so Moms, don't think you have escaped being an Assistant Scoutmaster!

***WE ARE THE SPARTANS!***

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Experience has taught us that the quality of the Troop and your son's experience in Scouting is directly related to the contributions of time and effort each scout's family makes. In addition, the Scouts themselves generally like having their parents involved in their activities. A Boy Scout Troop is not an extension of the Scoutmaster—it is a part of your son's physical and character development.

Troop 300 is open to all boys regardless of economic or social status, race, religious belief or physical or mental challenge. We take great pride in the diverse backgrounds of our Scouts. Unfortunately, however, no boy will be able to benefit from our program without his family's commitment to "help the Troop go."

### **Boy Scouts versus Cub Scouts**

When my son crossed over, the best advice I received was from Kara D'Amato who said that they are related in name and purpose only but the methods are completely different. Cub Scout meetings are parent led and mostly orderly, focused on learning the basic skills of Scouting and introducing areas of possible future interest. Boy Scout meetings are often chaotic affairs with the Troop going in different directions, looking like they are playing more than learning and on the border of safe and extremely dangerous. However, that is truly by design. As boys grow in the program, they become the masters of their own advancement, learning and fun. Us adults are there to provide boundaries and make sure everyone comes home. It will be very different but I guarantee you that the process works and has for more than 100 years.

### **Technology**

The Troop uses a number of technological tools to keep you informed and to track our Scouts' progress. Of primary importance to Parents are Scoutbook, Facebook, Remind and the Troop E-mail.

Scoutbook is a fantastic program that is free to Scouts and parents. Because it was created by and is managed by Eagle scouts and Scout parents, it not only is always up-to-date with the latest BSA information but also follows the Safe Scouting guidelines and even has automation for advancement, intra-Troop communication and calendaring. You and your Scout can real-time monitor his progress towards ranks and merit badges so you know what he can work on at home. You will receive an invitation from Scoutbook within four weeks of your Scout being accepted into the Troop officially. It takes a bit of time for us to set you up and to sync with the records from Council. If you do not receive an email invite by April 15, 2017, please let me know. Once you receive an invite, you can set up your Scout's personal account as well if you want him to have one of his own. You can also access Scoutbook via our primary external site at <http://bsa300.org>.

Many of our Adult members (and Scouts as well) use Facebook. While there are guidelines set by BSA on the posting of online information about Youth, we do have a private Facebook group: BSA Troop 300 - Stroudsburg PA. We try to post pictures of our events, reminders of upcoming activities and news you can use on the site. We also ask that you share pictures and news to the group. To join, search for our group name and ask to be let in. It may take a few days to verify you but if you do not gain access within a week, please send an email to [bsa.stroud300@gmail.com](mailto:bsa.stroud300@gmail.com).

Our Troop and several of the subdivisions within it (like our PLC or Patrol Leaders' Council), use the Remind application to communicate quickly and securely. It is particularly useful for sending important updates, assignments and information. If you have questions about a certain message or activity you can respond within the REMIND app. To join, simply go to <https://www.remind.com/join/bstroop300> and "join our class" (For reference, our class code is @bstroop300). We have (3) "classrooms"



@bstroop300 - for everyone  
@troop300pl – for patrol leaders  
@troop300al – for adult leaders

If you already use Remind (many teachers in the Stroudsburg School District use it), simply join one of the “classrooms” above. If you are new to remind see the attached instructions.

Finally, we do use old fashioned email to communicate as well. The [bsa.stroud300@gmail.com](mailto:bsa.stroud300@gmail.com) address is monitored by several of our Adult leaders so you can email us there if you have questions or concerns. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

### **Meetings**

Troop 300 typically meets every Tuesday year round. There is no meeting on holidays when the Stroudsburg School District is closed nor on inclement weather days that close the school district. Meetings begin with an opening ceremony, which usually includes the Pledge of Allegiance and recitation of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. There may be some brief announcements. The opening is followed by a program and, in most cases, games. The closing ceremony typically begins around 8:15; this is when most important announcements are made. Parents are encouraged to come inside to hear these announcements and participate in closing. Dismissal is between 8:30 and 8:45.

If you are not staying (and that is not required), please be prompt in picking up your son. Please come inside so we know he is being safely picked up and so you may hear the announcements of upcoming events or news. If you are late, two adults must wait with your son until you arrive. We never leave a boy alone.

As stated above, we are striving for a “boy led” troop in which many of the programs and activities at Troop meetings are organized and run by the scouts. This is different from most other youth activities, where adults decide what to do and structure the way the youth do it. In Boy Scouting, the role of adult leaders is to promote the “process” of Scouting—to provide a safe and healthy environment, along with the necessary training and resources that the boys need. It can be a very messy business, sometimes painful to watch. Meetings where the boy leaders are in charge can be chaotic. And it can be tempting for adults to jump in and sort things out, because that is what adults do. But we have to remember what Scouting is about. Scouts learn by doing—even from disorganization and failure. We just have to remember that our business as adults is not the same as the business of the boys. It is up to them to get things done. It is up to us to make sure they have what they need, but (within the bounds of health and safety) not what they do with it.

### **Adventure**

Everyone knows that one of the key draws of Boy Scouts is the chance for outdoor adventure. At Troop 300, we try to provide a program that includes those opportunities. We attempt to balance the program we want to ensure to provide (with appropriate learning opportunities) and events that today’s youth finds fun. That means that Scouting is not the same as it was in the 1970’s and 1980’s when many of us were growing up. It is not all campfires and corny songs. Our Adult leadership team looks for fun activities but also gets the feedback of our Scouts. We also try to remain flexible enough to take advantage of some of the great but often times last minute things being offered in our community. That means that not everything will appear on our calendar very much in advance. Sometimes, we will communicate with very short timeframes for turnaround from you and your Scouts. For that we



apologize in advance. Rest assured that we will attempt to give you as much warning as possible for any events that come our way.

Our goal is to offer an outdoor experience (hike, bike trip, float trip or camping), a volunteer experience and one other group activity each month in addition to our weekly meetings. We also offer at least one week long camping experience during the summer and both support and encourage our Scouts to attend additional weeks of summer camp through the provisional process. In order to carry this out, we need your assistance. Every Adult leader currently active in the Troop has a family and an employer just like all of you. That means that we cannot make it to everything. But since it requires two Adult leaders to do any event, the more available Adults we have, the better chance we have of doing things for and with the Scouts.

Sometimes there is a misperception that troops offer too many activities. Rest assured, there is no set minimum number of events a Scout must attend to be considered a Scout. We just need to know that a Scout is interested and involved on some level that demonstrates his commitment to his fellow Scouts. We know that our families have many commitments and we are glad our Scouts enjoy many pursuits. Don't feel as if your Scout must attend everything. Our aim is to offer a multitude of opportunities so that every Scout and every Adult can find something to do with the Troop each month.

If you ever need assistance with the cost or logistics of attending an event, remember that we are all in this together. Reach out to the Troop committee Chair or Scoutmaster. We will find a way for your Scout to attend if he wants to attend.

### **Uniforms**

The Boy Scouts of America is a uniformed organization. Wearing the Boy Scout uniform shows a sense of belonging and pride in the Scouting movement. All members of Troop 300 are required to wear the approved uniform and insignia to all troop meetings and scout related activities, unless otherwise permitted by the Troop Scoutmaster. Scouts are expected to come dressed in the Official Boy Scout uniform: shirt, pants, belt (some newer versions of scout pants have a "built in" belt), socks, and troop cap. All Cub Scout patches (except the Arrow of Light) should be removed. The boys are expected keep current on rank, patrol and quality unit patches. During the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day) scouts may wear a "Class B" uniform--the troop tee shirt (or other Scout t-shirt such as a Scout Camp tee shirt) and any pants or shorts that are neat.

We realize that the cost of the official Boy Scout uniform is not insignificant. You may be worried that your son will outgrow his pants before they are worn out. On the other hand, the Boy Scouts is no different from any sports team in which your son may participate; like those teams, we expect our "players" to wear a full uniform when they are doing Scouting, and to wear it properly. If finances are an issue, please contact the Troop Scoutmaster or Troop Committee Chair. We also will provide a number of the accessories.

### **Advancement**

Advancement by scouts through the ranks is strongly encouraged and necessary to help their development in scouting. The requirements for all of the ranks are found in the Scout Handbook. The first "rank" to be achieved is Scout. For a boy to earn this rank, a parent **must** discuss the pamphlet "How to Protect Your Child from Drug Abuse and Child Abuse" at the beginning of the handbook. Send in a note to the scoutmaster when you have done this. We try to have all boys ready for a Scoutmaster conference for the rank of Scout within a month or so of joining.



You can greatly assist your son by getting to know the requirements for the ranks. You may work on skills at home. Unlike cub scouts, parents do not sign off Boy Scout requirements. If you see an opportunity for your son to fulfill a requirement, point this out to him. For instance, encourage him to ask the Scoutmaster if he can help assist in preparing and cooking a meal (Tenderfoot #3). **While the leaders try to keep track of how each scout is progressing, the scout is ultimately responsible for his own advancement.**

As soon as a boy joins the troop, he may begin to work on any requirements; he may even begin to work on merit badges, although we strongly recommend that the boys focus on rank advancement at first. When a scout learns a skill or fulfills a requirement, he can get that requirement “signed off.” by a scoutmaster--or scouts who are two ranks higher than the sought after requirement (for example, a Star scout can sign off Tenderfoot and Second Class requirements). Boy Scouts of America does provide some alternative requirements for scouts with disabilities. Talk with the scoutmaster if this might affect your son.

Scouts are required to show “scout spirit” for each rank advancement. The Scoutmaster may ask the scout how he has shown Scout Spirit, or to give examples of how he has demonstrated some of the points of the Scout Law in his own life.

When a scout has finished all but the last three requirements for a rank (scout spirit, Scoutmaster Conference, Board of Review), he should request a Scoutmaster Conference. At the Scoutmaster Conference, the Scoutmaster will ensure that all rank requirements have been completed and that the Scout has shown scout spirit. The Scoutmaster may also ask about the scout’s experience with the troop and his advancement goals. The Scoutmaster conference may last from 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the rank.

The final step for any rank advancement is the Board of Review. The scout is required request a Board of Review, by contacting the Troop Committee Chair. Boards of Review are typically held on the fourth Monday of each month. It is conducted by three to six members of the Troop Committee, (Committee members may not participate in a Board of Review for their own son).

A Scout is required to be in full uniform for the Board of Review. He must be current on all dues and fees. He must also bring his Scout Handbook, with all requirements properly “signed off.” At the Board of Review, the Committee reviews the Scout’s progress and questions him about the rank and its requirements. They also assess the scout’s attitude toward scouting and his plans for the future. A Board of Review may take from 20 to 60 minutes. A unanimous vote of the Board of Review is required for the Scout to be approved for rank advancement. If, during the conference, a question arises as to the whether all requirements for rank advancement have been satisfactorily completed, the Scout may be asked to return at a later time to complete the process.

When a Scout wants to begin work on a merit badge, his first step is to get a “blue card” signed by the Scoutmaster. This card is the record for himself, the troop and the merit badge counselor. The scout should review the list of approved counselors for his merit badge and choose one. It is the responsibility of the scout to contact the merit badge counselor and discuss the process of earning the merit badge.

One way for parents to help the troop is to serve as a merit badge counselor. This requires the parent to register with Minsi Trails Council. Speak to a Scoutmaster about the procedure.



## Scoutmaster Minute

The Boy Scouts have a tradition of ending a meeting with some words from the Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster. It's not just the list of announcements but something to tie the meeting activities and the month's program together or highlight the aims of Scouting. So I end this e-mail with a Scoutmaster Minute. This comes from Clarke Green's excellent article, "What I Wish Every Scout Parent Understood", available at <http://www.scoutmastercg.com/what-i-wish-every-scout-parent-understood/>:

"What I wish every Scout parent knew is something they can't really understand until they have been through this process. I want them to step back, be supportive, understanding, and cooperate with the process. I want them to look for teachable moments and help their Scouts figure out what to do next not by supplying answers but by asking questions.

"If you cooperate with the process, if you keep your eye on the broader goal, you'll see your Scout start to grow and figure things out for himself. You'll find that your job is not so much telling and doing as helping him discover answers and how to things done. Your job is not making things easier but helping him look past the initial frustrations of not knowing. Soon he'll learn to ask those questions of himself, he'll grow in confidence and ability and surprise you as he does.

"It's hard for Scout parents to get comfortable with the idea of not knowing on purpose – but if they don't know a Scout has to figure things out for themselves. When parents get uncomfortable, when their Scouts get frustrated, they go after the Scoutmaster and complain about how chaotic, inefficient and needlessly difficult things are.

". . . [E]very Scout (and Scout parent) will experience frustration or discouragement from time to time. We embrace the challenge, the chaos; we take the inefficient, frustrating moments and turn them to our advantage to help our Scouts achieve those broader goals. When Scouts get discouraged or frustrated, (and they will), that's when we need a supportive, responsible parent to step up and help them overcome the discouragement or frustration and keep on trying.

"Scouting cooperates with parents who cooperate with Scouting. It gives them powerful opportunities to help their sons grow. What we do in Scouting is almost never about the immediate, practical goal. Boys don't always understand this and I don't expect them to, but I wish every Scout parent did."

We are constantly making changes and are currently doing a lot of the driving for the Scouts but our goal is to change that by teaching them to truly lead and plan. That process is like legislating or making sausage: messy. It may look chaotic or unorganized but most (if not all) of what you see is part of the plan. Together, Parents and Adult Scout Leaders, we can provide a safe environment for our sons to make mistakes, learn from them and try again all while they are having fun. It will make them better people, better citizens and better Scouts.



That's it for now. If you have questions or suggestions, please let me know.

Thanks,

Gavin Pinchback

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#### ATTACHMENTS

- BSA Permission Slip (New one required for each activity)
- 2017 Medical Forms (required for Summer Camp and to be on file for all outdoor activities – good for one (1) year)
- Remind app instructions
- Sample packing lists for outdoor activities (some equipment may be borrowed from the Troop)
- Sample Blue Card
- Uniform Inspection Sheet
- Troop Resource Survey

