

TROOP 76 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
ST. MARY'S PARISH
RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT



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Dear Families and Friends,

Welcome to Troop 76. We look forward to working with your sons as they progress through the Scouting Program. And we appreciate the trust that you have placed in us. As the Adult Leaders (“Scouters”) of the Troop, we are committed to a safe and active outdoor program. We strive to give each Scout the basic skills necessary to participate in monthly camping trips while meeting four overall objectives: advance in Scouting, develop leadership skills, understand and appreciate the environment, and have fun.

The first regular Troop meeting that your sons will attend is Tuesday, April 27. Meetings run from 7:30 to 9:00 PM, and are normally held in Martin Hall, Jesse Lee Methodist Church. They should wear as much of the Boy Scout uniform as they have, but there is no need to purchase any missing uniform parts yet. It is important that they have a Boy Scout Handbook before the first meeting, with their name and address written in the book. (The handbook can be purchased at the Scout Store in Norwalk or Joy of Movement in Ridgefield.) By that first meeting, the boys should have read and understood the requirements for the Scout rank (listed on page 4). In particular, you and your son must have completed the exercises in the front pamphlet “How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse.” After you have completed this requirement with your son, please sign your name in the handbook, on page 4, under that requirement, to show me that your son has met this important joining requirement.

During your son’s first Troop meeting, I’d like to meet with all of the New Scout parents; we’ll meet somewhere else in Jesse Lee. I have some materials to hand out including Troop Handbooks, calendars, phone lists and rosters, etc. I’ll also answer questions on how the Troop runs and how each of you can contribute your time to the Troop’s success.

Please also put on your calendars Friday, April 30, 8:00 PM, St. Mary’s Church Hall. That is our next Eagle Scout Court of Honor, for Dan Gxxxx and Miles Pxxxx. And there will be another Eagle Court of Honor on Friday, May 14, 8:00 PM, also at St. Mary’s, for Dan Gxxxxxxx and Brett Uxxxxx. The Eagle Scout Ceremony is very inspirational for new and old Scouts alike. I also think that it’s just as important for all parents to attend, as it is for your Scouts. Please attend, and help support our Eagles. They have earned it and they deserve it.

The first camping trip for your sons is our annual New Scout Campout, scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, May 22 and 23, at Camp Hoyt in the Lower Field. This trip is dedicated to teaching your sons some basic Scouting skills, using more experienced Scouts as instructors. Team building through the Patrol system will also be a focus of the weekend. We will have a signup sheet, and hand out a schedule, packing list, and permission slip at the first meeting. We'd like to see 100% of the New Scouts at this outing. In order to be able to attend this trip, we will require that your sons complete all of the Scout Rank Joining Requirements, including participation in the Scoutmaster Conference, to be held by either myself or one of the other Uniformed Adult Leaders.

We have another camping trip scheduled two weeks before, on May 8 and 9, focusing on rock scrambling. However, due to concerns about personal safety and maturity, and upper body strength requirements, we will not open this trip to New Scouts.

Shortly, Assistant Scoutmaster Mike Carpenter will be corresponding with all Troop families about Boy Scout Summer Camp. The Troop attends Camp Yawgoog in Rockville, RI, between July 11 and 18. There are a limited number of openings, but we need to know soon whether your son is interested in attending camp with the Troop. Mike's letter will address your questions about Camp, including schedule, activities, and Camp fees.

We are a boy-run Troop. That means that the boys develop and execute a program with the guidance and supervision of the Scouters. To carry out this plan, we strive to have all of the boys who are in leadership positions complete Junior Leader Training, conducted on a semi-annual basis. Further, we have an objective to have 100% of the Adult Scouters complete the formal Scoutmaster Fundamentals course (Mountain Man Training) conducted by Connecticut Yankee Council. The "Trained" patch on the sleeves of the Boy and Adult Leaders means those individuals have met the training requirements of the Troop and Council.

Additionally, the Scouts actively support and participate in an annual fund-raiser, selling holiday wreaths, that provides the majority of the operating funds for the Troop. Coupled with modest annual dues and periodic contributions from families through the United Way, the Troop is able to provide a cost effective but high quality year-around outdoor program.

A few words about advancement. The goal of the Troop and the BSA National Council is to have each new Scout attain the rank of First Class within 12 months of joining. We structure our program and organization to meet that goal, first by placing the boys in "New Scout Patrols", and second by making certain that adequate time is set aside during weekly Scout meetings, monthly patrol meetings, and monthly camping trips for training and advancement. But advancement is a shared responsibility. From the Troop 76 side, the Boy and Adult Leaders will make every effort to assist in the advancement of each Scout.

But we can only help so much. Each new Scout has to make an effort to participate and learn. As parents, we ask you to periodically monitor your son's progress. Please note though, that as opposed to Cub Scouting, parents are not permitted to "sign off" on a Scout's advancement requirements. This is normally handled by your son's Patrol Leader, a Scout Instructor, or an Assistant Scoutmaster. If at any time you feel that your son needs more assistance, communicate your concerns to any Adult Scouter. We will help.

Also, if you feel that your son is not advancing or having fun because of the Patrol to which he is assigned, let us know that also. We can then more closely monitor the situation and make changes as appropriate.

One final word on advancement. The **ONLY** official record of your son's rank advancement is his Scout Handbook. It should be protected accordingly. Please also make sure that his name and address are in the book. We suggest periodically making copies of signed advancement pages in the Handbook, in case a book is lost and must be reconstructed. And when your son starts to work on merit badges, the **ONLY** official record of the merit badge is the signed "blue card". I know some parents who store completed "blue cards" in a safety deposit box. Yes, they are that valuable. When your son comes up for Eagle (I did say when, not if), should there be a discrepancy in the Troop or Council databases, these blue card "official" records will need to be produced. Nothing else will suffice.

As we all are well aware, a successful organization such as a Boy Scout Troop needs the support of a large number of volunteers. That's you and I. With approximately 60 families in Troop 76, we have at least 60 different jobs to do during the year. I will be asking each of you to identify the capacity you can support Scouting.

For those of you wishing to join us as a uniformed Assistant Scoutmaster, the Mountain Man Training is a three-part program, next scheduled for September & October. I'll provide detailed information as soon as it's available. With approximately 30 New Scouts joining the Troop this spring, we need the commitment of **at least six parents** to join the Troop as Assistant Scoutmasters. Our experience has shown that we can have a successful Scouting program with this level of adult participation. Anything short of that, and we will be unable to support the level of Troop activity that our son's deserve. It's that simple.

I hope this letter helps you understand how we run the Troop, coupled with the material I will hand out at our meeting on April 27. But I am sure that you will have questions that aren't addressed in the material or during our meeting. Please do not hesitate to speak with me or any of the Assistant Scoutmasters at any time, with any question.

In closing, thank you for joining Troop 76. We will do our best to keep your sons interested and involved.

Sincerely in Scouting,

Jay