

How Scouting Works In a Northern Star Council Pack/Troop/Crew

Everyone is familiar with the idea that we must know something about history if we are to avoid mistakes in the future. That said, once we have a grasp of our history, we can all agree that the future is more important than the past, and that healthy change is key to getting there.

This, then, is a story about the future – only a short distance into the future – but a story that will come to pass because our new five-year Council Strategic Plan shows the way.

In the year 2015, the volunteers, parents and youth members of Pack/Troop/Crew 101 are very proud of their Scouting program.

By virtue of Scouting's and 101's good reputation, their chartering organization gives active support to the administrative decisions and goals of the "Collective 101 Committee", and the neighborhood/community are well aware that local kids who are in Scouting are children with a bright future.

The adult volunteers are respected and thanked for their mentorship to kids, and the adults also have fun and are a well organized team that emulates a "Model Unit" program collectively for 101 and within each "Core Committee" for the Pack, the Troop and the Crew.

The local schools are supportive of the informal educational benefits of Scouting, and they conduct school field trips to the Base Camp at Fort Snelling. The principal at the elementary school cannot allow recruitment flyers to be delivered to the classrooms directly, but she does support the Pack volunteers in staging a skills demonstration in the lunchroom over lunch periods, on the day before the Parent Open House. At the Open House, the Pack runs a pinewood derby track for fun, a rain gutter regatta, and a marshmallow catapult for all kids – registering new Cubs and taking names for an invitation to a pizza party to learn more about Scouting.

The Pack has grown steadily over the past five years, now at 80 boys since implementing the Lion Cub program for kindergarten boys. A larger percentage of the families that would have been interested in Scouting have a chance to join before they get too busy with other choices available to kindergartners, now that kindergarten is a daylong program no different than the other grades in elementary school. They join, knowing that Scouting is a K-12 program that seamlessly supports them as parents, without interruption or significant distinction between Cubs, Scouts, or Venturers in the 101 family and program progression.

The Troop has also grown steadily, with more Webelos to include, and more interaction between the Pack and Troop under the guidance of the “Collective Scouting Committee” that coordinates planning and administrative needs for the Pack/Troop/Crew 101 Scouting family. With a return to a one year Webelos program, and the transition of fifth graders into a New Scout patrol at the beginning of the fifth grade year, there is a clearer focus on the progressively challenging levels of program within the troop, with fifth graders learning basic skills and completing the Arrow of Light if needed, older Scouts getting more outdoor and merit badge work, and a strong Venturing program for the oldest Scouts and teen girls – siblings and friends of the Scouts in many cases, and several girls who are also Girl Scouts.

The Troop is strong, with 60 Scouts and 25 registered committee members. The Troop Committee Chair is also serving as the Collective Committee Chair this year, leading the “Unit Key Three” – the Collective Committee Chair, the Unit Trainer, and the Unit Commissioner. This steering committee meets quarterly or as needed to review Model Unit criteria for the Pack, Troop and Crew, and to ensure key program planning and administrative tasks are on track within each unit of the 101 family. They also provide a valuable link to members of the local District Committee and Commissioner.

Administrative tasks have been streamlined and greatly eased with the implementation of the “Program First!” unit management plan by Northern Star Council four years before. The nine-step recruiting and rechartering plan, beginning August 15 with recruiting planning and ending with recharter downloading on October 1 means that all new youth and all continuing youth are registered once, for one fee and one application, annually for all thirteen grades, and that all leaders are identified and registered, by role and even den assignment, at the beginning of the program year. All basic training certification is reported online, as required online training is completed by the Unit Trainer and the adult leaders within the unit.

Every volunteer looks forward to the monthly web link to the “Do Your Best” and “Be Prepared” program planning materials, customized for the volunteer position that they serve in, by age group for Den Leaders and SMs/ASMs/youth leaders, and by function for Treasurers, Camping Coordinators, Committee Chairs, etc. The fillable forms give lots of choices and discretion, but quickly produce a top quality meeting plan/task list, with links to lots of exciting resources.

Innovation flows up and down through the unit, district and council organization; application of technology improves every year; finances are strong with extra help going to those families who need it; every youth advances in rank every year; and every boy has a resident camp experience following completion of first grade.

Life is good in Pack, Troop and Crew 101 of the Northern Star Council!