



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

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# Cub Scout Adventure Clinic

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*An 8-week introduction to Scouting's adventure with a specific focus on children (and their parents) in grades K-5 not currently enrolled in Cub Scouts.*

Scouting offers the best adventure and character development program available to young people. Generating interest in Scouting among young families was a challenge for New Jersey's Garden State Council; in response, the council launched in the spring of 2015 a new program to introduce families to Scouting. This program was designed to cater specifically to the needs of a millennial family: working, non-nuclear, over-committed and heavily invested in acquiring any edge they can for their child's development.

The 8-week *Adventure Clinic* is used to introduce families to the core Scouting program. This clinic is designed to expose young people and their parents to the fun and excitement of the Cub Scouting through an intensive, 8-week program. The clinics are designed to give young people and their parents the absolute best Scouting has to offer, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) activities such as Cyber Chip and science experiments, fitness challenges like rock wall climbing, an outdoor experience which includes shooting BB & Archery, a "build-it" competition with a space derby, exposure to the advancement program through earning the Bobcat Badge, and an exploration of patriotism and community service with a flag folding session and visit from local first responders. At the conclusion of the eight weeks, each family will be presented with the option to continue with a local Scouting unit.

Within the Garden State Council, this program has achieved 3 outcomes:

First, it recruits 20 – 40 new Cub Scouts per session and provides them with active adventure programming; 65% of them will ultimately join a Cub Scout unit in their neighborhood. Second, it provides information, guidance and training to the parents of these youth. This training and leadership by example will compel them make the decision to include Scouting in their family, and encourage them to become active volunteers and leaders in their neighborhood Cub Scout unit. Finally, it provides a conduit to starting new units in areas that are currently under-served by providing the initial critical mass of Cub Scouts and volunteer leadership to begin a successful Scouting program.



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Since its formation through a merger in 2013, the Garden State Council has faced a handful of challenges related to growing new membership. Many of these challenges are a result of the traditional methods of BSA recruiting, which are not successful in many units.

The *Adventure Clinic* works to resolve the following problems related to membership growth:

### **Reluctance to commit**

Parents are often reluctant to commit to a year-long program they are unfamiliar with, and where schedules may not always be consistent. Scouting's request for a school-year long commitment is out of step with competing programs, which run in-line with four annual sports seasons that has a definite start and end date. Scouting needs to provide an immersion option at a commitment level comparable to sports or other youth activities such as arts classes or recreational activities.

*An eight-week clinic aligns Scouting with the programs parents are already joining. The time commitment itself is short enough that a family is comfortable trying Scouting, and the timing of each clinic start date (aligned with the sports seasons) allows parents to add Scouting to their young person's schedule as it waxes and wanes throughout the year.*

### **Time constraints**

Parents today have extraordinary demands on their time, which dramatically affects how they are able to balance work, home, and time with their children. Other programs rely on a core group of adults to deliver the program, where Scouting seeks parental involvement from all families on day one. Young people should be able to be exposed to the excitement of Scouting without adding another time commitment to parents' schedules that they're likely to resent.

*Educating parents about the value of Scouting, not only for their children but for themselves as a family, is essential to their commitment as volunteers. The Adventure Clinic is designed not only to give children a chance to have fun and learn about Scouting, but also to introduce parents to the "value" of being involved in a Scouting program and how being involved in Scouting can help them increase the amount of family time they have with their kids.*



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### **Uneven program delivery**

Each unit approaches recruiting with a different level of vigor and seriousness. Results in attracting new Scouts are often dependent on a unit's interest in pursuing them, and their retention of interested families is related to the quality of program the unit is delivering. In some cases, units are struggling to deliver program. This inability to deliver a great program leads to difficulty attracting new membership, which deprives the unit of resources to improve the program. The result is a cycle where struggling units are unable to improve or grow.

*The Adventure Clinic exposes new families to the absolute best of what Scouting can be. It supports the unit by introducing families to the program without introducing them to any challenges for a struggling unit. When the new families transition into the unit, they bring with them best practices, training, and example of how a great program might be organized, which will help improve the existing unit.*

### **Social Issues**

Controlling and managing outside societal influences on children is a major concern for today's parents. A 2007 Pew Research study found that nearly four-in-ten Americans (38% of parents and non-parents) said the "biggest challenge to raising children today is the dealing with the outside influences of society. Among the top concerns are substance abuse, peer pressure, the impact of television and the media." In addition and the ability to teach morals and values also topped the list of challenges to child rearing.

*Scouting addresses these concerns better than any other youth program. The Adventure Clinic will help positively address these concerns by introducing parents and children to the "Cyber Chip" program which deals with internet safety. The rest of the program will show parents how Scouting emphasizes the same morals and values that they are trying to instill at home and/or through their local religious institutions.*

## In-depth Program Information

### Site locations and timing

The *Adventure Clinic* is offered in two sites within the council's territory. The two sites selected meet the following criteria:

- A large mass of Scouting age population within a 5-mile radius
- At least five Packs within a 10-mile radius to give choice to families and ensure programmatic impact on as many units as possible.
- Access to a community center for weekly meeting space
- Served by units that are either stagnant or contracting
- Proximity to a Garden State Council camp facility for outdoor experience

The programs run concurrently with the spring sport season, which begins the first of April, and run through the end of May. Each of the two sites meet during the week on different nights, so the same paid staff may be used for each location.

### Promotion

Promotion for the *Adventure Clinic* is targeted to parents of Cub Scout-age children in the towns within a 5-mile radius of each meeting location. Because of the relatively small market for these pilot programs, promotion seeks to reach as close to 100% saturation of the potential market. Promotions take place through four main channels:

- *Community media:* The council uses the local media (both traditional print and online) to announce and promote the clinic in each town being served.
- *Social media marketing:* Using Facebook, the council bought ads that target parents of male children within the age range and geography to push them to sign up.
- *Local unit support:* This program ultimately benefits local units. The units in the market are asked to lever their school and community relationships to promote participation in the clinic as a spring recruiting tool.
- *Community boards:* Each community has gathering areas like the municipal building, and community centers. These locations have bulletin boards listing community events – the council posts information about the clinic on each board to encourage registration.



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The registration and promotional period aligns with Little League and other spring activities (opening in January, late registration in mid-February and closing at the end of March), so parents' attention should be naturally drawn to sources of youth programming.

### **Structure**

The *Adventure Clinic* is run as the model Cub Scout pack. Each session is headed by a Cubmaster, and the participating youth are organized into dens by age with a volunteer leader assigned to each den. This structure prepares families for transition to a permanent pack, and also exposes them to the key methods of Scouting.

### **Staffing**

The *Adventure Clinic* is run by a paid part-time Scouting program aid, who serves as the Cubmaster of the unit during the eight weeks. To meet proper youth to adult ratios, volunteer leaders from the membership and program committees participate each week to deliver specific programs. If the any site grows beyond 30 registered youth, an additional paid program aid should be added to the site.

During three of the eight weeks, commissioners work directly with parents while the youth program is being delivered. The sessions with commissioners focus on introducing parents to Scouting, explaining the program their children are participating in, and encouraging their involvement as volunteers.

### **Reach**

Each site should enroll a minimum of ten youth per session. The objective for each site is to serve in excess of 40 youth for the entire eight weeks.

### **Curriculum**

The eight-weeks of the *Adventure Clinic* follow a weekly curriculum designed to keep youth engaged, and expose them to a variety of Scouting related activities. Each week will bring a new focus for the youth and their families to keep things fresh and engaging.

*Week 1 – introduction to Scouting / Cyber Chip*

The *Adventure Clinic* opens with a ceremony that initiates each boy into Scouting. The



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ceremony introduces them to the Scout Oath, the concept of Akela, and teaches some basic information about Scouting and what kind of activities will happen in the coming weeks. After the ceremony, each boy will earn the Cyber Chip award (so they go home their first night already having accomplished something).

### *Week 2 – Space derby*

To introduce the Scouts to working together and doing hands-on projects, the second week is based around a space derby. Each youth receives a space derby kit and tools to build during the evening, and the meeting concludes with the running of a space derby competition.

### *Week 3 – STEM 1*

The first week of STEM programming is focused on basic science experiments. Each den works together on a science experiment that they show off to the rest of the Pack at the conclusion of the meeting. The experiments are be simple, fun programs like baking soda volcanoes.

### *Week 4 – Physical fitness*

The week 4 meeting occurs offsite at a rock climbing gym or roller rink depending on the site. This session opens with a brief period about being healthy and physically active, and follows with a long period of play and physical activity. The introductory exercise includes a bit on healthy eating, and preparing food, with a corresponding snack being ready after the physical activity.

### *Week 5 – STEM 2*

The second week of STEM programming focuses on robotics. Each den again works together to build a simple robot for a competition to be held at the end of the meeting.

### *Week 6 – First responders / first aid / safety*

In week six, the local fire and police department for each site participates in the fun. During this program, the guests talk about basic safety and first aid, and give each youth a chance to ask questions and have a hands-on experience with first responders and their equipment.



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### *Week 7 – Community service*

To build on the concept of community introduced in week 6, week 7 features a focus on community service. Scouts learn how to salute the flag properly, raise, lower and fold a flag, and some basic information about their community and the nation. This week also features an easy service project for the boys to complete, such as cleaning up the area around their meeting space.

### *Outdoor experience*

In between the seventh and eighth week, an outdoor experience at the closest Council Camp occurs on Saturday. The daily program includes a nature hike, a camping demonstration that includes a model campsite, shooting sports, field sports, and an opportunity to play with other camp facilities.

### *Week 8 – Court of Honor / pack fair*

Every boy in the program earns the Bobcat badge during the eight weeks. The final week program features a Court of Honor where each boy is recognized for earning his Bobcat and other awards from the weeks, and recognition for each den as a group. After the Court of Honor, each pack in the area is allowed to exhibit their unit and encourage families to continue on in Scouting.



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### **Cost**

The cost to participate in the program is \$25. This registration fee includes each participant's national registration, which will be transferred to their permanent unit once the eight-week program is completed.

### **Outcomes**

The expectation is that 60% of participants in the *Adventure Clinic* will choose to continue in the Scouting program. These youth will be placed with local units, and should provide up to 36 new Scouts who would not otherwise be in the program.

### **Communication**

The council maintains direct communication with participating families after the end of the program. That includes several follow-up communications (both by e-mail and phone) with the parents after the clinic has ended, even if they have signed up with a unit to make sure they are getting the kind of Scouting experience they were looking for.

The Council helps match these families with units to better ensure a good fit based on expectation as well as location and a families specific needs (ie: certain meeting dates, locations, etc). It is personalized service with the District Executive serving as their liaison with the unit they are going to join.

*The above resource was submitted by members of New Jersey's Council. The council has experienced tremendous success with this program and continues to achieve great results with its continued implementation.*