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Recruiting Tips in the Time of Coronavirus (And After)

Recruiting is an integral part of our service to the youth and units in our communities and can have its difficulties during a normal year, let alone during a pandemic. As Unit Serving Executives face an uncertain future of what recruiting may look like in the fall, I have compiled some information on recruiting Cub- and Scouts-BSA-aged youth, both during the virus and if/when we return to “normal.” The information below is a compilation of research, personal experience, and observations made as a public-school teacher.

Before we can talk about recruiting, there are some important things we need to keep in mind about youth today that relate to recruitment.

Information on Cub-Scout-Aged Youth

- This is one of the smallest generations, based on birthrate, compared with previous generations. In 2018, the birthrate in the United States reached its lowest level in 32 years.
- This is the most racially diverse generation in the history of the United States, so it’s important to make sure your marketing reflects that.
- Appeal to their flexibility by connecting through video stories (e.g. YouTube). Keep up with new social media platforms.
- Offer transparency. These youth will call you out on false promises that aren’t kept.
- Uniforms are fun and exciting for this age group. Their dream jobs at this age are typically something in a uniform (doctors, nurses, soldiers, police, fire, etc.).

Information on Scouts-BSA-Aged Youth

- Give them a sense of purpose. These youth want to change the world. Ask the question, “What do you want to change about your community or our world?” Talk about how joining Scouts offers a way to do that!
- Offer opportunities for growth.
- Get social and relatable.
- They want to see kids that look like them doing cool things via videos, pictures, and social media. They don’t just want to hear about it.
- They are building their personal brand already.
- If you remember being this age, you may recall that, at this age, the opinions of peers are incredibly important, whether they admit it or not.
- They are often mortified by public praise. Public praise works well with younger kids, but the older youth often do not appreciate this, and it could reduce their interest in joining.
- For older youth, be mindful of the negative effect that seeing adults in uniforms may have on them. It may be more effective to dress in something other than the full BSA field uniform when interacting with this group.
- Some members of this group may be interested in increased independence and pulling away a bit from their parents. Talk about the independence that Scouts teaches and the “Scout led” aspects of the program.
- Kids don’t care what you know until they know that you care. They can tell if you’re being genuine from a mile away, and that sticks with them.
- They want new friends, but they probably won’t actually say that. Talk about the opportunity to make new friends and go on adventures together.
- Members of this group often respond to challenges. For example, you might say something like “I don’t know if y’all could handle trekking in the wilderness for a week,” or “I bet this group is faster than this group,” etc. Have your sarcasm and wit ready, because they will make comments and fire back at you. But, being able to respond in a fun and relatable way is a quick way to build that trust and make them more likely to listen. The kid making

fun of you or the program at the table in the back may actually be the most interested and could get the most from the program.

Recruiting Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA Youth Virtually or in Small Groups (following CDC and local guidelines)

- Utilize online Facebook communities (such as “mom” groups, outdoor activity groups, local groups, etc.). You don’t specifically need to say “Hey, this is an ad for Scouts BSA,” but you can post things like “Thank you to everyone who came out with Pack ___ to help clean up the local park today while social distancing! If you’re interested in helping with our next project, contact ____.”
- Families and kids recruiting their friends is still the best way to get them involved! Make it a contest or game to bring in more youth to their unit.
- Whether online or in person, most schools use newsletters or something of the sort. Utilize connections with local schools to put a blurb in their newsletters!
- Youth organizations, religious communities, and charter organizations often have newsletters or bulletins that will allow us to promote Scouting.
- To hold parent sign-up meetings or get information out, utilize technology like video conferencing, or other platforms (following all Youth Protection Guidelines and guidance found in [this Safety Moment](#)).
- Make sure any group you are talking to or advertising toward knows Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA is for boys AND girls! Many in communities still don’t know this. And making sure both boys and girls are represented in photos, videos, and in language related to Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA is important.
- Using yard signs with a phone number, website, or email address for more information has worked well for many units! Nothing too wordy, just something someone driving by may see and call/visit a website for more info.
- (Socially Distanced) public appearances in uniform/something designating everyone as Scouts is a great way to let the public know we are still here and active! Whether it’s a single person or small group service project, let the public know these are Scouts and they are still helping the community!

Recruiting Cub Scouts and Scouts BSA Youth In Person in the Fall (following CDC and local guidelines)

- Where local guidelines permit, offer to be a guest speaker to specific classes or student groups with interested youth, such as gym classes, band, choir, orchestra, arts, after-school clubs.
- Set up an informational booth at Peewee sports team games! It’s a great way to get the attention of siblings/parents watching in the stands.
- At any show and sells, make sure that the adults there have information available about local packs and troops in the area for anyone who may be interested.
- “Wear Your Uniform to School Day” (for Cub-Scout-age youth, NOT Scouts BSA). Make sure it has been cleared with the Principal.
- Back-to-School nights
- When it is safe to do so, (especially when working with older youth) make sure that other kids their age are present to talk to them! They are more likely to listen to their peers than to you.
- Local neighborhood events – as long as they follow all local and national recommendations on social distancing, if necessary (e.g. carnivals, block parties, parks, food truck rallies, garage sales, etc.).
- If you are able to do school talks in the fall, utilize lunch room talks for middle school youth. The smaller crowds are more likely to listen to you, and sometimes you can even go table-to-table to talk with them and make that trust connection a little better. They may not ask questions in front of the whole lunch room, but they may ask those questions when at a table with some friends who seem interested.

Overall, when in doubt, ask the youth and families you already serve the best way to connect to their communities. We are in an uncertain time, so don’t be afraid to be creative and try new things as long as you’re focusing on the safety of youth, adults, and yourself. Our job is so unique and important, and we will come out of this stronger than ever.