BSA Troop 763
Mason, Michigan

Resource Book

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Introduction

We think we have a terrific troop. Most of the reason for that success comes from the strong and active participation of our scouts and their families. Communication is key to active participation, especially with families that are new to our troop. The purpose of this resource book is to provide information on how our troop does things. It is designed to answer questions that scouts and their parents have raised over the years.

We are part of the Ojibwas District, in Chief Okemos Council, Boy Scouts of America. Our troop was established in the early 1970's. Neighboring troops, with which we are a partner in a variety of activities, include 141 (Mason, chartered by the St James Parish), 21 (Dansville), 779 (Leslie) and several in Okemos. Most of our scouts come from the four Mason-area Cub Scout packs (chartered at Steele, Cedar, Alaiedon, and North Aurelius elementary schools), though we also draw from home school families and neighboring communities. Others join our troop without ever being in Cub Scouts.

Abbreviations and Terms

We use many abbreviations in this resource book and our meetings and activities. Here are the most common:

APL Assistant Patrol Leader: second highest-ranking scout in a patrol, elected annually

ASPL Assistant Senior Patrol Leader: second highest-ranking scout in the troop, elected annually

Blue Card A merit badge application, printed on blue three part card stock. It is an important document for scouts to keep for reference after they're earned the badge.

BSA Boy Scouts of America: Usually used when referring to the national program and policies.

Grubmaster The scout in each patrol who is responsible buying the food for a particular outing.

Instructor A scout with particular skills or knowledge who is appointed as teacher and reference for other scouts.

MB Merit Badge: scouts earn merit badges for demonstrating skill in various subject areas. Twenty-one are required for Eagle rank, including twelve specific ones.

Patrol Troop 763 has four patrols, each consisting of 8 or more scouts from mixed grades. This is the basic organizational unit within the troop. The Vikings, Flaming Arrows, and Ravens include 5th graders and middle school students. The Screaming Eagles are our high schoolers.

PL Patrol Leader: highest-ranking scout in a patrol, elected annually

PLC Patrol Leader Council: the boy-led decision-making body that directs most troop activities. Meets once per week and includes SPL, ASPL, PL, APL, Quartermaster and Scribe.

QM Quartermaster: scout appointed to be in charge of all troop equipment and the troop trailer.

SPL Senior Patrol Leader: highest-ranking scout in the troop, elected annually

I. Troop organization and structure

A. Troop Principles

1. Fun With a Purpose

Scouting is meant to be fun with a purpose and all activities are intended to be a combination of both fun and purpose. The fun is found throughout our activities, especially the monthly weekend outings. The purpose is reflected in advancement, the Scout Oath and Law, and the programs designed to help the scouts development leadership and confidence, outdoor skills, and a sense of citizenship.

2. A Boy-led Troop

Our goal is that virtually all troop activities and decision-making be led by the boys themselves, with adults playing only a supporting role. This means that these young developing leaders will make mistakes, that some programs may closely resemble chaos, and that Boy Scout activities are very different from the choreographed Cub Scout events they started in. It also means that we will be providing excellent opportunities for the scouts to develop the skills necessary to be successful adults. That is a major goal of our troop.

3. No One Left Out

Every eligible young man is invited to be a part of out troop program. No scout will ever be left out of any troop program for lack of funds (interested individuals can make confidential arrangements with the troop Treasurer or Scoutmaster). The only instance in which an individual scout would not be allowed to participate is because of behavioral problems, or because of specific BSA age and/or rank requirements (in these situations every effort is made to offer an alternative that is equally appealing). All events, meetings and activities are open to any parent or guardian. Troop adult leadership is provided by both men and women and we urge every family to become actively involved in the troop annual program.

There are no secrets, secret meetings, hazing, or initiation rites. Troop leaders, both boy and adult, are expected to make every effort to get everyone involved in all activities and pay special attention to scouts who seem to feel left out.

4. A Family Troop

When a young man joins Troop 763, his entire family becomes part of our troop family. We make every effort to open up our activities to troop families, including siblings, whenever possible. Our June picnic, August swimming party, courts of honor, and other special events are designed for full family participation. We especially encourage younger brothers to occasionally join our troop outings as visitors, regardless of whether they are registered Cub Scouts or not. We encourage parents to select a part of the program where they can make a contribution and become active in the troop leadership.

5. The Safety Plan

Our troop makes a commitment that activities will be conducted in compliance with the BSA Health and Safety Guide. This guide is available for review. For example, the use of liquor or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited at any scouting activity and tobacco use by adults is to take place out of sight of the scouts. In addition, there are limits on various types of equipment that may be used by scouts.

The BSA program, and our troop, take the threat of physical and emotional abuse very seriously. For example, the BSA Youth Protection program strictly prohibits situations where scouts and adults (except guardians and sons) are together in one-on-one situations out of public view. All adults who regularly participate in troop activities are expected to register as leaders. Registration includes a criminal history check by the Chief Okemos Council. All adults, whether registered leaders or not, are expected to comply with Youth Protection guidelines. Adults are also expected to recognize and deal appropriately with situations of abuse (either physical or emotional) among the scouts.

Inevitably, an active program will occasionally lead to injuries. There is a troop first aid kit on all outings and most leaders carry additional personal first aid materials. Leaders have received various levels of first aid training through the American Red Cross and BSA. Each scout should also carry a small first aid kit with essentials such as bandages. Troop leaders do their best to treat minor injuries on the spot and will attempt to contact parents when the injury requires medical treatment. Adult leaders may choose to seek medical treatment for an injured scout even if it is not possible to contact parents. The mandatory Class I medical form and troop permission slip provide important information that leaders need to have in these situations and need to be completed each year. Please be complete with adult leaders about medical or behavioral background information. It is held in confidence to the extent possible or appropriate. See the Scoutmaster if you have specific concerns.

6. Personal Conduct

It is expected that everyone -- boys and adults -- conduct themselves in accordance with the Scout Oath and Law. When minor problems do arise, boy and/or adult leaders will attempt to resolve the issue by working directly with the involved individuals. Parents will be contacted if the problem persists or is of a serious nature. The troop reserves the right to limit or prohibit participation by any individual if deemed necessary. Disciplinary action will not include physical contact unless necessary to restrain an out of control youth. Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited.

B. Joining Troop 763

1. Eligibility

Any boy is eligible to join Boy Scouts if he is (one of the following): is 11 years of age, has finished the 5th grade (or home school equivalent), or has earned the Arrow Light. Other boys are eligible to participate in troop activities as visiting guests, within certain restrictions. Webelo

scouts are actively encouraged to visit our troop at meetings and on outings. We also make special provisions for younger brothers of troop members. See the Scoutmaster for details.

2. Paperwork, Process, and Fees

Each new member of our troop needs to complete and turn in a completed Youth Registration form. This includes a Class I Medical form. New scouts need to pay a $10 registration fee that is forwarded to the Chief Okemos Council, unless they remain on the roster of a Cub Scout pack and can simply be transferred. Each new scout also has to submit a completed annual Troop 763 Permission slip (good for that school year) to participate in activities. Each scout in Troop 763 is charged an annual $75 troop dues payment. This rate is dropped to $50 for Webelo scouts crossing over in the fall and $25 for those crossing over in February. Other new scouts are assessed a fee, pro-rated for when they join during the school year. See the Troop Treasurer for details or if these costs present a family hardship.

3. Rechartering

Our troop is rechartered, or requalified, by the BSA each December. Each registered youth and adult also re-registers each December as part of this process. Registration dues (currently $10/per) are the responsibility of each individual. No special paperwork is necessary on the part of the scout. See the Troop Treasurer with questions.

C. Troop Organization and Structure

1. Chartering Organization Role

The First Presbyterian Church of Mason is our chartering organization. That means they vouch for our troop and its activities with the Boy Scouts of America. Without a chartering organization, a scout unit is not part of BSA. One of the registered leaders of the troop serves as Chartering Organization Representative and is the liaison between the troop and the church. The Presbyterian Church allows the troop the use of the facility, non-profit tax status, and official endorsement. In return, the troop respects church property and its reputation, performs service projects in conjunction with the church, and conducts itself appropriately. Though several troop families are active in the Presbyterian Church, there are no requirements that members of the troop attend the church or that church scouting youth belong to the troop.

2. The Patrol Method

The patrol is a key organizational level in the troop. Though our outings are usually conducted as a troop, duties such as cooking and cleanup are within patrols. Patrols also take responsibility for rotating duties at troop events such as courts of honor and community service projects. Patrols are also sometimes used as the basis for competitions within the troop our at larger scouts events such as camporees. Each patrol is headed by an elected Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol Leader. These leaders, and their key responsibilities are described elsewhere.

Each boy in Troop 763 belongs to one of four patrols. One of the patrols includes all the scouts in high school (Screaming Eagles) and the other three include middle schoolers of mixed grades

(Flaming Arrows, Vikings, and Ravens). For a few months each years, the middle school patrols also include the new 5th graders who have crossed over into Boy Scouting and joined our troop. There are no "new scout" patrols, our troop philosophy being that a new scout benefits from the regular interaction of being in a patrol composed of scouts of different ages and experience. A scout is assigned to one of the patrols and remains a member of that patrol until moving up to the high school patrol or leaving scouting, unless special arrangements are made. A new scout is usually assigned to a patrol along with at least a few of his friends from his previous den. Patrol assignments are made by the Scoutmaster and Senior Patrol Leader.

3. Communications

Every effort is made to keep scouts and their families up to date on the fast pace of our troop's program and activities.

- A tentative calendar is adopted and published each August for the following school year.
- The troop newsletter is published each month, available in both electronic and paper forms at the beginning of a month.
- Each scout family has a "post office box" (hanging folder) in the "troop post office" (file box). It is at every meeting and scouts are responsible to check them for handouts, etc. If a scout misses a meeting, materials in his folder are mailed.
- Detail sheets are developed for each outing and are generally distributed two weeks in advance.
- Reminders/confirmation notes are usually prepared for each outing and are distributed the meeting previous.
- An annual summer camp handout packet is distributed early each year.
- Electronic notes and reminders are frequently sent to those who provide an email address(es).
- Information on special advancement opportunities is copied and put in the newsletter and scout mailboxes.
- We have a troop website: http://www.masontroop763.com
- If a scout misses the Monday meeting, the contents of his post office box are usually mailed to him, though he is responsible to follow up with his patrol leader to catch up on what he missed.

Despite all of these forms of communications (or perhaps because of them) the ultimate responsibility for staying up to date rests with the scout, not his parents or the troop leadership.

D. Leadership

1. Boy Leaders and a Boy-led Troop

The goal of Troop 763 is that programs and activities be led by the scouts themselves. This provides the most enjoyment for the scouts and the most opportunities for developing and strengthening leadership skills.

a. Senior Patrol Leader and Assistant Senior Patrol Leader

The SPL and ASPL are the top boy leaders in the troop. They are elected by the scouts in late January and serve for one year. They are expected to provide troop leadership and be a positive example to the rest of the troop.

Primary duties of the SPL include:

- Run all troop meetings and chair the PLC.
- Direct the planning for outings and other troop activities
- Appoint scouts to various positions of responsibility within the troop and delegate to them whenever appropriate.
- Assistant the Scoutmaster with youth leader training.
- Set a good example and show scout spirit.

Primary duties of the ASPL include:

- Fill in for an absent SPL.
- Direct the activities of the Scribe, Quartermaster, Historian, Instructors, Quartermaster and OA Representative
- Help the SPL on special projects and as needed at outings and meetings.
- Set a good example and show scout spirit.

b. Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol Leader

The PL and APL are elected by the members of their patrol in late January, following the troop elections for SPL and ASPL. The PL leads patrol meetings and directs the work of the patrol on

troop outings and at other troop events. He and the APL sit in on the PLC and makes sure the views of his patrol members are represented. The APL fills in for an absent PL and provides other leadership in the patrol's activities as needed. A PL may choose to appoint other members of his patrol to serve certain functions such as patrol grubmaster. Except for PL, these patrol positions do not count toward advancement, but provide good opportunities for developing leadership skills and confidence. Patrol members may be selected to temporarily fill in for an absent PL or APL

c. Appointed Leader Positions

The SPL appoints interested scouts to a variety of troop positions, including Quartermaster, Historian, Instructor, Scribe, Chaplain's Aides, Den Chief, and Librarian. These all play an important role in the ongoing program and activities of the troop and count toward positions of responsibility for rank advancement. All are great opportunities for leadership development.

2. Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC)

The PLC is the primary decision-making body of the troop. It is run by the SPL and also includes the ASPL, PLs, APLs, Scribe and Quartermaster. The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters attend the PLC meetings and may be invited to comment, but their primary responsibility is to be a resource and support for the boy members of the PLC.

Typical subjects for decision-making by the PLC include:

- Outing details.
- Patrol responsibilities for outings, meetings, courts of honor, or other troop events.
- Monthly themes and integration of special programs and presentations as part of the Monday meetings.
- Discussion of scouts who are not advancing in rank and what the boy leaders can do to encourage them.
- Initial discussions affecting the organization and programs of the troop. These are then taken back to the patrols for more discussion and review.

3. Adult Leaders

Every adult who is active with the troop is encouraged to become a registered leader. Adult leaders fill a variety of positions, all designed to provide support for the boy leadership and troop activities.

a. Troop Committee

The Troop Committee is the adult board of directors for the troop. It selects the troop adult

leadership, provides support for the PLC, and fills an important role in fundraising, outing logistics, advancement support, etc. It is led by the Troop Committee Chair and also includes the Treasurer, Charter Organization Representative, and Committee Members. The Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters also sit in and participate. All troop parents/guardians have an open invitation to attend and participate in these monthly meetings. They are usually held on the Monday following the PLC, concurrent with the patrol meeting portion of the regular troop meeting.

One of the most important roles of committee members is to join the Advancement Chair for the rank Boards of Review. They participate as a panel in reviewing the fitness of individual scouts to advance to the next rank. Many of the Troop Committee members also serve as merit badge counselors or scout skill instructors.

Members of the Troop Committee also serve as a key resource for identifying and helping individual scouts with their rank advancement, scout skill development, leadership development, or special needs. As the troop continues to get larger, they play an important role to ensure that no scouts fall through any cracks in the troop program.

b. Scoutmaster/Assistant Scoutmasters

These registered and trained leaders work directly with the scouts on the program and are very involved in the monthly outings. Along with the other adults in the troop, they play a very important supporting role for the elected boy leadership, along with transportation and logistical support.

The Scoutmaster is expected to serve as a key advisor to the SPL and PLC, support the SPL on the plan for each meeting and outing, ensure that the troop program is consistent with the aims and methods of scouting, set an example of positive leadership and lead training for boy leaders, encourage and support individual scout advancement, and coordinate the support activities of the ASMs and other adult leaders.

The Assistant Scoutmasters play key leadership roles in the troop's activities, including substituting for the Scoutmaster as needed. Individually, the Assistant Scoutmasters tend to concentrate on particular aspects of the troop's program plan or a particular group within the troop. Collectively, the Assistant Scoutmasters form a core of adult leadership for outings and other troop events, manage most of the adult logistics for troop activities, work with individual scouts or groups of scouts on advancement or activities, and provide invaluable support to the SM and SPL.

4. Additional Adult Support

Our troop's success is keyed upon the active support of troop families. Adults who cannot be regularly active or registered also play vital roles by helping where possible with logistics, fundraising, program development, advancement, etc. Many adults serve as merit badge counselors (see section on advancement) or otherwise teach skills to the scouts. Most

importantly, the troop parents serve to support and encourage their own scout's active involvement in the troop by serving as taxi driver, ATM, uniform patch sewer, advancement prompt, etc.

E. Troop Families

All parents/guardians are welcome at all events and outings. There are many events at which it is also appropriate for siblings to attend and participate and every effort is made to accommodate them where appropriate. There are at least two distinctly family-friendly events -- the June troop summer family picnic and the August family swimming party. In addition, all family members and friends are encouraged to attend troop courts of honor and other advancement recognition events. Family members (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, older siblings, etc.) are also encouraged to lend their talents as merit badge counselors and otherwise help with advancement activities. Younger brothers are actively encouraged to join the troop as a visitor on an outing and to otherwise get an advance taste of what Boy Scouts is all about.

F. Program Planning

The annual program plan and calendar of events is adopted each August for the following school year and then modified and supplemented by the PLC and Troop Committee as the year develops. The plan is the result of a process that provides for lots of input from scouts and their families. The PLC develops and adopts a tentative program plan that is presented to the troop families for comment at the end of each school year. It is finalized by the PLC over the summer and presented at the August family swimming party.

Scouts and their families are encouraged to bring possible ideas to the attention of the PLC and Troop Committee. It is particularly helpful when scouts (with help as necessary from parents) agree to research and coordinate the details of a particular event that they encourage the troop to participate in.

II. Outings/activities

A. Weekly Meetings and Attendance

Troop 763 meets on Monday night throughout the school year, unless there is no school that Monday. Meetings are usually 7:00 - 8:15 p.m., in the lower level of the Mason First Presbyterian Church. Meetings usually consist of a short opening, a series of brief announcements or outing discussions, and then a special program and/or patrol meetings. The patrol meetings provide opportunities for leadership at the small group level and are used to determine some of the outing and program details. We try to end with a closing circle ceremony at about 8:10 p.m. Scouts who are eligible for a rank Scoutmaster's Conference or Board of Review sometimes need to remain after for that purpose. Every effort is made to be finished and out of the church by 8:30 p.m.

There is no regular troop meeting on the Monday following a troop outing since that is the

monthly meeting of the Patrol Leaders' Council. See your troop calendar for details.

We ask that each scout wear a Class A shirt to the regular meetings and bring his Scout Handbook, and paper/pencil. Sometimes the only way a scout can make a meeting is by coming dressed directly from another activity or needs to leave early and the uniform isn't possible. We'd rather have a scout present and out of uniform, than not there.

We take attendance at weekly meetings and have special periodic recognition for those who are regularly there and in proper uniform. There is no minimum Monday attendance since our goal is to make the meetings fun enough that each scout doesn't want to miss them. It is expected that all boy leaders will be present or have made arrangements with their assistants or designated replacements in advance.

Most of our scouts are involved in several youth activities -- scouts, sports, music, church groups, 4H, special academic programs, etc. We think this is a good thing and offers them a wide selection of activities to choose from. We do not believe it makes sense to force our boys into either/or situations, choosing between Boy Scouts and the other things. Most of our scouts have proven themselves able to combine many different activities. Because of other commitments, a scout will sometimes even miss several consecutive meetings and/or outings when another program (such as sports practice and games) falls on Monday night or weekends for a period of time. Please let the troop leaders know in advance since we make it a point to follow up with scouts and parents if participation is lagging.

B. Monthly Outings

We are reminded that three-quarters of "Scouting" is "outing." Our troop participates in at least one monthly special activity, usually a weekend overnight camping trip. These form the highlights of many the boys' scouting activities and are designed to appeal to a wide range of interests. The outings are determined by the scouts through the PLC and the annual program planning process. Some are annual traditions selected by popular acclaim, while efforts are made to include some different locations and programs each year.

In general, the tentative dates for each outing are set during the annual planning process, though sometimes changes are necessary once the school schedule is announced. We try to match up outing weekends with weekends when the Mason Public Schools do not have school on a Monday and/or Friday. This allows for more activities during the weekend by using the extra day(s). Otherwise the outings usually start after school on Friday and the boys return home Sunday afternoon. With the exception of the May Dorchester trip to Canada, we avoid having the boys pulled early on Friday for an outing.

Each patrol is responsible for its own food on an outing – everything from menu to shopping and preparation. Scouts receive help from their patrol leaders who are responsible to ensure that this process is functional. Every scout is expected to take his turn as the patrol food coordinator ("grubmaster"). Cooking, cleaning and other duties are assigned for each outing by the patrol

leader. The adults function as a separate patrol on each outing and are organized in a similar fashion.

The per person cost of each outing is a break even for the troop. Every effort is made to keep these affordable, ranging from $20 up to $100 for those involving great distance or special costs to the troop. Part of this is paid to the troop (transportation, admission, lodging, etc) and $10-$20 for food to the patrol grubmaster. Adults who accompany the boys usually also pay, since the costs reflect our actual costs, though the troop provides credit/reimbursement for driver's gas costs.

As with any other troop activity, financial help is available for any scout from a family facing financial hardship. We have never knowingly had a scout miss a monthly outing for financial reasons. Contact the Troop Treasurer or Scoutmaster if this is an issue with any outings. This extends to both the cost of the outing and any special gear or clothing that is needed for the trip.

C. Special Programs

Experienced scouts have opportunities to participate in special council contingents to high adventure opportunities such as Philmont Scout Reservation, Canoe Base, or Sea Base. There are also special troop programs that provide youth leadership training or chances to explore an occupation or develop a hobby. These are developed as part of the annual planning process, as well as when opportunities come along.

D. Community Service

Our troop makes a major commitment to community service, especially in partnership with our chartering organization. In the 2004-2005 school year, this included a fall church and manse outdoor cleanup, the annual holiday baskets for needy families in the community, and a spring partnership in the nation-wide Good Turn America. In addition, our scouts were involved in a multitude of programs with their scout groups, schools, churches, Eagle Scout projects, and community groups. Our goal is that each scout complete at least 10 hours of community service annually, beyond that required for merit badge and/or rank advancement.

E. Special Advancement Activities

We make every effort to present our scouts with special advancement opportunities through merit badge blitzes, special merit badge day programs, and other activities. Sometimes these are a troop-wide program, but more often individual scouts are provided with the information and expected to be responsible for follow-up and participation. Each month our newsletter features a different merit badge that can be earned by working with an adult in our troop and we are partners with BSA Troop 141 (also in Mason) on a community merit badge counselor list that is updated on a regular basis. It is up to the scout to take advantage of these opportunities, though troop leadership will provide encouragement and an occasional nudge to keep things moving along.

F. Summer Camp

Our troop spends a week at Northwoods Scout Reservation near West Branch each June, historically during the last full week of June. The week is full of activities and forms the highlight of a year's scouting for many of our boys. It is a great chance to have fun and earn rank advancement and merit badges. Summer camp is a special topic of discussion at troop meetings between January and May each year and one of the adult leaders serves as the troop camp coordinator. Every effort is made to work with our troop families to ensure that financial impediments do not prevent a scout from attending summer camp. Each year, several of our scouts benefit from camperships funded in part by the Chief Okemos Council BSA, Mason Presbyterian Church, Mason Optimists, Mason Masonic Lodge and troop families. Scouts are also strongly encouraged to use the Fall and Spring popcorn sales to earn funds for their individual accounts. Several scouts have completely paid for their annual camping through this program.

III. Equipment

A. Troop Equipment

In general, the troop provides tents for all outings or make arrangements if the lodging is indoors. There is sufficient troop equipment for patrol camp kitchens, dining fly, ax yard, first aid station, troop fire bowl, etc. We are always looking for donations of heavy-duty camping equipment, as well as adults who have special skills in the repair or construction of camping equipment.

Most of the troop equipment is stored in the new troop trailer. This trailer was purchased in November 2004, with funds from Dart Energy Corp., the Dart Foundation, and Farmer's Insurance. The trailer and all troop equipment are managed by the Troop Quartermaster. It is used for our regular outings. Our historical trailer, dating back to the early days of the troop in the 1970's, is used to store some of the larger (and infrequently used) equipment and is also brought out in its glory for parades, etc. Though not practical for regular use anymore, it is a hand-built large wooden trailer, beautifully decorated with an outdoor mural, and represents a lot of troop history.

B. Personal Equipment

1. Required Equipment

Each scout is responsible to have a minimum of personal equipment at all outings. This includes Class A uniform and Scout Handbook, as well as the following gear:

- Weather and activity appropriate clothing, outerwear, headgear, and footwear. No open-toed shoes except for sandals at the waterfront and showers.

- Labeled mess kit with mug, plate, bowl, and silverware. It's best if in a nylon dunk bag

- Flashlight for overnight campouts
- Sleeping bag or bed roll and pillow
- Small personal first aid kit and bathroom bag
- Small kit (large freezer ziplock is sufficient) for starting a fire to include matches, tender and small pieces of kindling.
- Water container such as a canteen, Nalgene or sports bottle.
- Sun screen and/or bug repellent (lotion or liquid is preferred), depending on the season
- Activity-specific equipment may be needed for particular outings (such as a helmet for the bike hike). Plenty of advance notice will be provided and every effort is made to minimize the need to purchase anything special.

2. Prohibited Equipment

The following personal equipment is not allowed at troop outings or activities and should stay at home:

- Weapons, including firearms, bows, slingshots, paintball guns, etc.
- Sheath knives of any length or type, unless told otherwise for purposes of cleaning fish or other food preparation. For safety reasons, scouts are discouraged from using a folding pocket knife or utility tool that does not have a locking blade, but they are not prohibited. Scouts should not bring hatchets, saws, or axes. The troop provides these tools as part of the ax yard.
- Any fire starting devices such as lighters, lighter fluid or other accelerates, fireworks, etc. An exception is made for a small fire starting survival kit that includes matches and natural tender such as lint, paper, straw, etc. (in other words, non-aerosol, non-explosive, and non-liquid).
- Electronic games, radios/TVs/DVD players, music devices, etc. are not allowed at any outing or activity. They may be used in vehicles while traveling to and from the outing, but must remain in the vehicles during the outing.

3. Everything Else

The troop provides all other necessary equipment for use at activities or outings. At the same time, each scout is encouraged to try different types of equipment or gear for camping, hiking, etc. Most of the time, this is simply practicing with gear that a leader or another scout brings for a demonstration. The troop, however, is supportive of the safe use of additional personal

earned the Arrow of Light as a Cub Scout automatically earn the Scout rank upon joining our troop. Scouts can complete any requirement for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class with no waiting time between those ranks. It is advisable to plan on earning First Class within the first year thereby keeping the fire going toward the higher ranks! Our troop has a lively program and reaching First Class in the first year is very feasible. Earning First Class solidifies your son's commitment to scouting and helps him set his sights on the ranks of Star, Life, and Eagle.

Learning is achieved through hands on, leader and boy lead activities and adventures which secure a sure and firm foundation in scouting that your son will never forget. Advancement requirements are as written in the Boy Scout Handbook and the Boy Scout Requirements book, nothing added or subtracted, though exceptions are sometimes made for scouts with special needs.

2. A Scout is Tested

When your son has completed an advancement requirement he must demonstrate and evidence to his leader his master of the requirement. Usually this consists of a check-off process rather than a formal examination, however it is easy to tell if the scout has or has not mastered his skill. At times, the scout must show his abilities.

3. A Scout is Reviewed

After a scout has completed all of the requirements for any rank from Tenderfoot through Life, his progress is reviewed in two stages: The Scoutmaster Conference and the Board of Review.

a. The Scoutmaster Conference

The Scoutmaster Conference is a meeting the Scoutmaster and the scout held each time he completes the requirements for each rank. During this conference the Scoutmaster discusses the scout's understanding and practice of the ideals of scouting, tests his knowledge of the requirements for the rank, and discusses goals for achieving future rank and position within the troop. The Scoutmaster will also determine the scout's readiness for a rank Board of Review. The Scoutmaster conference helps establish trust between the scout and Scoutmaster, reinforces the ideals of Scouting, allows the scout and Scoutmaster to share ideas and ask questions of one another, and sets goals and outlines steps for achieving these goals.

b. Board of Review

A Board of Review is then conducted by the Troop Advancement Chair and other troop adults. The purpose of the Board of Review is to ensure he has completed all of the requirements for that rank, to determine the quality of his troop experience, and to encourage him to advance to his next rank. The board will also ask the scout how he is living up to the Scout Oath and Law in his everyday life. A Board of Review lasts approximately 15 minutes. Items of discussion include the scout's accomplishments and goals. Board members determine if the scout has successfully completed the requirements of the rank and notify him of their decision that night. Our troop schedules Boards of Reviews on a regular basis, usually at Monday meetings. The Scoutmaster and Board of Review members may meet with scouts who are not advancing to find

our why and help the scout overcome obstacles that hinder progress.

4. A Scout is Recognized

Immediate recognition is a great method to ensure scout progress. The scout is accorded all the privileges and authority of each rank as soon as it is accomplished. A formal recognition with families and friends is accomplished at the next Court of Honor, held about three times per year. A special Eagle Scout Court of Honor is held for scouts attaining that rank.

C. Merit Badges

Through the Merit Badge program scouts may be introduced to life long hobbies or a career. Your son can work on a merit badge at any time with the approval of the Scoutmaster. Merit badges are not required for Tenderfoot, Second and First Class ranks, but are for Star, Life, and Eagle. Each scout works with a merit badge counselor, a registered adult who knows the subject well and has been approved by our Chief Okemos Council. Each merit badge has an accompanying booklet and follows these steps:

- The scout receives a signed merit badge application ("blue card") and contact information for a merit badge counselor from his Scoutmaster. The booklet contains requirements for the badge and additional helpful information.

- Each merit badge counselor has some flexibility in the process for completing the merit badge, but not the requirements themselves. The scout works with the counselor in person (with another scout or adult present), by phone, or through the mail or email. Many counselor use paper or electronic worksheets to facilitate the work. Our troop scouts also participate in merit badge blitzes, a good fast start to many of the possible merit badges. Many of our scouts also earn merit badges at Summer Camp.

- The scout works on and completes the badge requirements and receives a completed and signed merit badge card back from the counselor. This submitted to the troop advancement chairman for processing.

VI. The Uniform and Insignia

Please refer to the inside cover pages of the Boy Scout Handbook for placement of insignia. If you have additional questions, consult the BSA *Insignia Guide*, located in the Troop Library, or ask one of the leaders.

A. Why We Wear Uniforms

As with the philosophy backing all uniforms, Boy Scout uniforms give your son a sense of belonging and identification with our Troop 763, with our Chief Okemos Council, and with Boy Scouts of America. The uniform is an expression of a scout's friendliness to all other scouts and

represents Scouting's spirit of equality and democracy.

We recognize that boys like to make a statement of individuality with what they wear and not all are comfortable with the more formal look of a uniform. We also understand the financial cost associated with purchasing scout uniforms for growing boys. Just like every other scout unit, we have tried to strike a balance. **For purposes of Troop 763, the phrase *"Class A uniform"* consists of the tan shirt with proper up to date insignia and patches, along with the troop neckerchief and a slide of the boy's choosing. The merit badge sash is added for formal events such as Courts of Honor and other ceremonies. Neckerchiefs are optional for outings.**

Scouts are encouraged to also purchase and wear the green BSA shorts or long pants, but it is not required nor considered part of the Troop 763 Class A uniform. Many boys like to wear the BSA baseball style hat, or another hat from a scouting event. There is an official BSA casual golf-style red shirt that is often worn as an activity shirt at scout events. Likewise, there are many opportunities to purchase BSA or scouting event tee shirts or sweatshirts and these make good activity shirts for outings.

Refer to your Scout Handbook for examples of how patches should be placed on the uniform shirt or ask one of the leaders.

B. When We Wear Uniforms

We wear our Class A shirts at all troop meetings, while traveling to and from an outing, for colors and religious ceremonies, and when attending council events or merit badge blitzes. When activities are physically engaging, scouts may comfortable clothes, including teeshirts, shorts, etc. For example, we would wear our Class A shirts while traveling north for a canoe weekend and would slip them on for morning and evening colors, but wouldn't wear the uniforms while canoeing. We would put them on for Sunday morning Scouts Own Service and then for the ride home. We also usually wear the Class A shirt when visiting businesses that have given us a special Boy Scout discount.

To keep it fair, the uniform standards for adult leaders are the same as for the scouts. All active leaders, both boy and adult, are expected to set an example with proper uniforming.

C. Uniform Resources

Your son is not required to purchase a uniform to be a Boy Scout. If you have a financial need, our troop has "experienced" uniforms in good condition for your son, just see the Scoutmaster or troop uniform closet coordinator to obtain one. Uniforms can be purchased at the Chief Okemos Council Scout Store located at 4000 W. Michigan Avenue in Lansing (corner of Michigan and Waverly).

VII. National and Council Support and Opportunities

Our troop is part of a national movement called Boy Scouts of America. We are a movement, not

an organization. An organization is something that has been organized or made into an ordered whole. A movement is the activities of a group of people to achieve a specific goal. We are also part of a worldwide movement, composed of people who are dedicated to a common goal and who use organization as a means, not an end.

Boy Scouting was initially founded by Lord Robert Baden-Powell in Great Britain in 1907, a movement which spread like wildfire and has become an icon of developing and keeping boys physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight (and having a lot of fun doing it) for almost 100 years.

Scouting came to America because of a kind act by a Boy Scout in London, England. American businessman William D. Boyce who lost his way in the London fog and was helped by a scout doing his good deed for the day. Boyce was so impressed by this boy's kindness, and Baden-Powell's program, that he founded Boy Scouts of America on February 8, 1910.

The Boy Scouts of America is divided into Regions, Areas, Councils, Districts, and Units. We are part of the Ojibwas District of the Chief Okemos Council. Our Council is includes the Ingham/Clinton/Eaton tri-county area, plus Portland School District. Our Council has three districts: Ojibwas, Mawanjidiwin, Migisins. Each district has a paid professional called a District Executive who oversees all volunteer leader and scout activities. The District Executive answers to the Assistant Scout Executive and the Scout Executive, the CEO of the council. These professionals are supported by popcorn sales, corporate and United Way donations, the proceeds of the Friends of Scouting annual fundraiser.

Volunteers play a critical role in the success of Boy Scouts. In addition to the adult volunteers in each unit, there are many who provide key support through Council and District programs. For example, unit adult leaders are supported by volunteer commissioners who serve as resources at the Council (Council Commissioner), District (District Commissioner and Assistant District Commissioner), and local (Unit Commissioner) level. For example, our ADC and Unit Commissioner regularly visit our troop to ensure that the scouts are advancing in rank, learning, going on outings and having fun. These commissioners are a valuable link between the troop and the council in regard to maintaining open communication and is concerned with maintaining our troop's program health by playing the following roles: Friend, Representative, Doctor, Teacher, and Counselor to the volunteers within our troop.

There are many other volunteer positions at the district and council level that oversee finances, program activity, advancement, recruitment/retention, and a plethora of other things. These are all opportunities for troop parents to become involved in the different ways to support their son's scouting.

VIII. Resources

The best local resource for information is "Troop Tattler," our monthly newsletter and the troop website (www.masontroop763.com). The "Troop Tattler" is distributed electronically to all names on the troop email directory and in printed form in the Troop Post Office to everyone else. In addition to keeping troop families up to date on activities, it usually contains information and sources about BSA policies, advancement opportunities, background on why we do things in a certain way, etc. An updated Troop Roster is provided periodically to all troop families. Similarly, updated MB Counselor lists and Troop Leader lists are distributed as needed.

Our Troop Library is being improved by the addition of various resources on Scouting, outdoor activities, nature, citizenship, etc. Feel free to check these titles out. The library is located in the green file cabinet in the church youth room. See the Troop Librarian for more details.

Our Chief Okemos Scout Shop has many excellent resource books plus expert staff to help you with many of your Scouting related questions. The Scout Shop is located in the back of the Council Office, 4000 West Michigan Ave, Lansing, MI 48917 (corner of Michigan and Waverly). The Council's phone number is 517-321-9400. There is also information posted on the Chief Okemos Council's web site: chiefokemosbsa.org.

There are several other great websites for scouts and their families:

- http://www.ussscouts.org (Scouting Service Project)
- http://www.macscouter.com (MacScouter)
- http://www.scouting.org (National BSA)

As usual, please feel free to ask questions of Troop 763 leaders in person or by phone. Remember steel sharpens steel, therefore your questions and comments are encouraged to further aid in the development of our troop!