## **Scouting's Secret:**

## A PARENT SPEAKS OUT IN A CHALLENGE TO SCOUTERS

Hi. I believe that I am a typical Scout parent. Like many, I'm probably a little lazy, a little to uniformed about Scouting, and a little too busy to help with Scouting. But I do a fairly good job of getting my kid to Den meetings, and making sure he doesn't lose his Webelos book or whatever. And I try to make the Pack meetings if he is getting a patch.

For the most part, I am extremely satisfied with the Cub Scout program. No, I'd make it stronger - my wife and I are delighted. During my son's three years in Scouting, we have seen Scouting benefit him in solid, visible, tangible ways - in his sense of self-esteem, his self-confidence, maturity, his know-how in various areas.

Today Jeff is looking forward eagerly to becoming a Boy Scout. But in one respect, as a Scout parent, I'm kind of upset at Scouting. I'm upset that Scouting hasn't really let me in on what just might be one of the best kept secrets anywhere.

That so-called secret about which I'm talking is the set of ideals and attribute that you have worked so hard to instill in my son. Character development, leadership, and a sense of accomplishment, a stronger family bond.

As a parent, I like my kids to have those things. I want them to have all those traits when they grow up. I know darn well that if my boys assimilate those ideals, they are going to have a richer and more rewarding like now and when they become adults. I also know that if my boys gain those ideals that my wife and I will find that being parents is a lot more rewarding - not to mention easier.

I don't think that I'm the only parent who reacts this way when he finds out what Scouts are trying to do - really trying to do - for young people.

Now this being the case, why in heaven's name haven't you told me all about this? Sure, you're thinking, Scouts put all that information in their literature. There's that find print tear-out booklet in the front of my son's Wolf and Bear and Webelos books. And sure, you're right, the volunteers in my Cub Scout Pack are supposed to be telling me all this.

But remember, I'm a typical Scout parent, I'm a little busier and a little lazier than probably I should be. I'm not going to seek out all this information. Like it or not, it has to be delivered to me, and delivered in such a way that I have to go out of my way to ignore it. What's more, I need to hear it not just once, but over and over again, and in a variety of ways.

My first experience with Cub Scouts as a parent came when I attended a Cub Scout orientation meeting. That meeting had all the earmarks of a shotgun wedding with the volunteers telling us in not uncertain terms that unless we volunteered that night to work on Cub Scouts that our sons would have not Cub Scouting program. Those volunteers made a mistake. They assumed that I and the other parents had brought the Cub Scout program for our sons. Those volunteers were sold on Cub Scouting, so they concluded we must be sold on Cub Scouting too. Wrong.

We were window shopping. After all, there is a YMCA in our neighborhood, too. They have a nice building. They teach swimming and other sports. And all they want from me is my money, not my time and support.

Or the Little League. With Little League, all I have to do is cough up a \$25 or \$30 fee, or somehow get rid of \$25 worth of raffle tickets. They don't ask me to sign off achievements, attend monthly meetings, build things with my boy, or help a Den mother with her meetings.

My point is this. Don't assume that when I walk into a School Night for Scouting event or any other orientation meeting that I understand what Scouting really is. I don't.

You and your fellow volunteers must work have during that initial contact to educated me, to sell me. To give me a good first impression of what it is you are all about. Separate yourselves from the competition. Make Scouting stand out above those other things.

Don't try to sell me by talking just about the Den meetings, or the badge earning or the Pinewood derby racing. And for heaven's sake, don't try to sell me Cub Scouting by threatening to cancel my son's program unless I volunteer to run it!

instead, tell me why you have those activities. Tell me what the real importance of those badges is. Tell me that the Pinewood Derby is held because it gives me a chance to do something with my sons. And tell me about all the successes you have achieved through the years with literally millions of boys using those very same methods.

Then, and only then, tell that you cannot do all these things for my son by yourselves. Tell me that you and I need to form a partnership. Tell me that, together, we can accomplish all these things for my son. And another thing...tell it to me with enthusiasm. You've got a program for my son that no one else can even try to match.

## Be proud of it - brag about it - Drive it home loud and clear.

-South Eastern Massachusetts Cluster Council Pow Wow 1997