

September 2009: Recruitment / Getting & Keeping New Scouts

Facilitators: Dave Oster (dbmnooster@yahoo.com) – Webelos Transition Co-Chair
Jim Schuster (schust4@att.net) – 2009/2010 Boy Scout Roundtable Breakout Commissioner

Recruitment: Getting New Scouts

- 4 Types of Boy Scout Recruiting
 1. Existing Cub Scouts (Webelos Transition)
 2. Former Scouts (Re-registration)
 3. Non Scouts (Enticement)
 4. Current Scouts (Retention)
 - Need to have a great program to keep "winning over" the Scouts you already have
- Items to Consider for Webelos Transition

It is no longer adequate to simply wait for the boys to join a Troop. We need to actively pursue them.

Our shared goal is to get the boys to join a Troop SOMEPLACE and stay in Scouting – regardless if he joins our Troop or a different Troop – let's just get him signed up for a Troop that will serve him and his family well.

- Video: Webelos Transition to Scouts Video:
<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/ImprovedWebelosTransition/WTSvideo.aspx>
- Connecting With Webelos
 - How Do We Reach Out to Webelos???
 - Letters / email
 - Need email addresses for Webelos
 - May be a privacy issue to get names/addresses of current Webelos
 - For some reason, we can get that info for boys who don't cross over, but not for boys who are still active Webelos.
 - Dave Oster will look into this to see if Troops can get Webelos contact info.
 - Work through Webelos Leaders to relay communications.
 - Use the new Google Map (on the District website) to get Unit contact information.
 - Anyone running into an uncooperative Webelos Leader should work through the Cubmaster, Committee Chair, or Unit Commissioner to try to ensure open and viable communications.
 - Ask Webelos Leaders to relay Troop communications to the Webelos families, and ask the Webelos families to respond (to the Troop) if they'd like to get on the Troop mailing list.
 - Constructing the mailing
 - Neighboring Troops may wish to do a joint letter.
 - It would be great if the District could prepare an envelope stuffer that would promote Many Waters Scouting in general, and list all the Units.
 - It would be even better if the District could mail a Webelos Transition letter to all Webelos II families.
 - Troops could still reach out to the Webelos too, but it would be IN ADDITION to the District-wide mailing.
 - Advertise On-Site to the Cubs & Webelos
 - Promote Boy Scouting (Troop level) at the Blue & Gold Banquet.
 - Troops could/should have more of a presence than simply helping serve the food and helping to clean up.
 - Promote Boy Scouting (Troop level) at the Pack FOS presentation.

- Schedule a designated recruiting visit for the Troop to visit the Pack and promote the Troop.
 - One Unit has actually shown their camping video as part of a Troop recruiting visit to the Pack.
- Is there any interest in having all the Troops in the District set up displays prior to an upcoming Roundtable meeting and then inviting the Webelos families to stop by and check out each Unit?
 - General reply: it gets too late on a school night and it would be hard to get enough families to stop by to make it worthwhile, so we agreed to not pursue this option.
- Utilize Den Chiefs
 - This is always a wonderful option, provided the Den Chief makes a good impression and has enough time to be a reliable and valuable contributor to the Den or Patrol.
- When We Reach Out to Webelos, What's the Message?
 - Invite them to go camping / hiking with the Troop
 - Fall Camporee
 - The perfect time to invite a Webelos II to check out the Troop is Fall Camporee
 - One unit actually pays the registration fees for Webelos II boys and adults if they check out the Troop during Camporee.
 - Encourage Webelos II boys to bring a non-Scouting friend with them to the Camporee. It may lead to both boys joining!
 - Webelos Woods (Springtime)
 - This is on the calendar for Spring 2010. Still need someone to coordinate.
 - Springtime is a great time to try to connect with the brand-new Webelos II boys.
 - May entice them to stay in Webelos Scouting until the following Spring.
 - Day Trips / Court of Honor
 - If not inviting them to a full campout, including the Webelos in a day-hike or other outdoor activity may help entice the boys to stay active in Scouting. Similarly, inviting them to the fall COH may help too – especially if it is held outdoors or in conjunction with a campout.
 - Invite them to co-locate their Webelos Patrol meetings with the Troop.
 - If Units have space to share, getting the Webelos to start meeting in the same place/time and involving them in the opening / closing activities and associated games may help the idea of crossing over into that Troop seem a bit less intimidating.
 - Schedule & Conduct the "Official Visit"
 - Have boys discuss their adventures with the boys while adults explain the Troop to the adults.
 - It helps to show photos or video.
 - It helps to have Troop boys share their fun stories to entice the Webelos.
 - Having the boys in the Troop show the visitors how to make dutch oven cobbler and then eating it at the end of the visit is a nice touch.
 - Include the Webelos in a Troop-wide game that the Webelos can do well at.
 - Tent relay?
 - Other?

Additional Webelos Transition Resources:

Troop Open House:

<http://www.northernstarbsa.org/Forms/Recruitment/Resources/TroopOpenHouse.pdf>

Year Round Guide to Boy Scout Recruitment:

<http://www.northernstarbsa.org/Forms/Recruitment/Resources/YearRoundGuidetoBoyScoutRecruitment.pdf>

Webelos to Scout Parent FAQ:

http://meritbadge.org/wiki/images/b/b1/Webelos_to_Scout_Parent_FAQ.pdf

Webelos Transition to Scouts Video:

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsources/BoyScouts/ImprovedWebelosTransition/WTSvideo.aspx>

Improved Webelos Transition:

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsources/BoyScouts/ImprovedWebelosTransition.aspx>

Webelo to Scout Transition:

http://www.buckskin.org/Resources/Forms/Webelos_to_Scout_Transition.pdf

Webelos Transition

By Todd N. Tingblad

Elements of this Webelos Transition Plan come from many sources. You can implement the program at any time throughout the year. However, no matter when you begin, you must do Step One at least two months before you start.

I will follow the "Scouting Calendar", August to July.

Step One:

Have both Pack & Troop Committees and Program Staff (SM, ASM, CM, DL, WDL) meet to review and approve the plan. Repeat this step once a year.

August/September:

School Night -- Have Boy Scouts (Den Chiefs) do the Opening. Have a Boy Scout sign-up table at School Night. Advertise both Boy Scout and Cub Scouts School Night. The Boy Scouts may get one or two new scouts in a year or two at this time. The Big item is the Cub Scouts seeing the Boy Scouts. Seeing that there is life beyond Cub Scouts. See the BSA's Flagship Camping Program -- Boy Scouts. After all, the number one reason boy's join Scouting at any level is to go camping. Work to get every den to have a Den Chief. The Den Chief is a troop's number one recruiter.

Younger boys love to follow the older boys. As the Den Chief "tells the tales" of Scouting from his adventures in the troop and some past cub Scout adventures, these boys will follow. It is how Cub Scouts was originally designed. Note: Your DE will be very surprised that a Boy Scout troop wants to do School Night recruitment. Your DE may even work extra hard to help it along.

September/October:

Go to your district's Fall Camporee. Hopefully, all 5th grade Webelos are also invited to this event. This is a great time for the Webelos and their parents, to see Boy Scouting working. When Webelos going camping like this, they must follow the Cub Scout Camping requirements in the "Guide To Safe Scouting". This is a good thing for troops so that they do not have to watch over the Webelos, and their parents get to see Boy Scouts camping. They see local and District Scouting happening. Webelos and Boy Scouts must not compete with each other on events and possibly should have a related program of events of their own (National Guidelines & Policies, talk to your DE about it if you have questions).

October:

I like taking the PLC out for Leadership Training and Calendar Planning. I send the remainder of the troop off camping somewhere else with the APL's running the patrols and the ASPL running the campout. Both groups are getting Leadership Training...directly or indirectly.

November:

Court of Honor and Family Feast. This campout, the Webelos are again invited to stay the weekend, but not required. They and their families are all invited to the troop's Pot Luck & Turkey Dinner...Family Feast This is held at the local Scout Camp. Many times, this is the only time the parents get to see the facilities in full operations. Most see them as you arrive or packed up to leave. Following Family Feast is a Troop Court of Honor. All Webelos get to see the types of advancement awards in the Boy Scout program.

January:

5th Grade Webelos Dens start meeting on troop nights with the troop. Once the opening is done, the Webelos move to their own room for their regular meeting. At the January Pack Meeting, Webelos get awarded the Arrow of Light. Many packs award this at the same time as Webelos Graduation. The AOL award seems to get lost. By awarding it one or two months before graduation, the award now has importance, all the Cubs get to see the award, and all the Cubs get to see it is not required to join Boy Scouts...but it helps. Also important is, earning the AOL does not mean the Webelos stops earn Activity Pins. They can continue to earn them until they graduate. For those who still have not completed the AOL, now is their chance.

January/February:

Invite the Webelos to the next Court of Honor and Summer Camp Promo Night. Here the parents of these soon to be New Scouts, will get the answers to their question about this week-long campout. Sometime before Webelos Graduation, meet with the Webelos parents and answer even more of their questions through a Troop Orientation. If your troop has a Troop Handbook with the troop's Rules, Policies, and Operational Guidelines, hand it out to them then.

Get them to feel good about how the troop operates. They should have seen how a boy led program works now, but you will need to revisit this at this meeting. More details on how it works will be needed.

February/March:

Now is Blue & Gold time and Webelos Graduation. The Troop is present for the Graduation. Limit the Boy Scouts to the Den Chiefs, SPL, ASPL, Troop Guide, Scoutmaster and New Scouts Assistant Scoutmaster (Webelos Den Leader). Have the BSA Applications available and get them filled out that night. Troops should pay the one dollar transfer fee. Make those New Scouts welcome as soon as they cross that bridge. Have the parents, New Scouts, and the other troop members present meet for 5 to 10 minutes after the B&G to make sure everyone is on the right page and to get the applications. Make sure they all know when the next troop meeting is (this should be the same as their old den meetings since January). Make sure they have a troop calendar!

April

Scouting For Food time again and the troop and the pack should be doing this together. A great service project for all to work together. Some councils do this in the fall. Same thing, do it together. Time for the Boy Scouts to do another Leadership Campout like done in October. I personally like to get 18 months of troop calendar planning done at these outings so that we have one year done and are only adding another new six months.

May/June

Now the other Cubs graduate to the next level: Tigers to Wolves, Wolves to Bears, Bears to First Year Webelos, and First Year Webelos to Second Year Webelos. For all except the new Second Year Webelos, a new neckerchief is part of the graduation. It is a major symbol of moving forward. However, Second Year Webelos don't see this type of change. Their uniform stays the same unless they move up to the tan uniform. Step in the Boy Scout Troop again. For the Second Year Webelos, the troop presents them with a Boy Scout Handbook. In the book is the names and phone numbers of the key people Webelos and/or parents can contact about questions about Boy Scouts. Most important, include the troops calendar. With 18 months of planned activities, these Webelos and parents know the troop's plans through October of next year. Start working to recruit that Webelos Den Leader to become the New Scouts Assistant Scoutmaster when their Webelos graduate in Feb/Mar of next year.

June/July/August

Boy Scouts go to Summer Camp and other summertime adventures. Cub Scouts go to Day Camp, Resident Camp, and other pack summertime adventures.

That's it. The parts all come together and make the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts easy. It is also very important to invite all Webelos to any and all Eagle Courts of Honor. A big and important show of Scouting. It also seems to keep more boys in Cubs Scouts and Boy Scouts.

An important note about Den Chiefs. I like having a Scout commitment to a two year stay if he is with a Second Year Webelos Den. The first year, he is the Den Chief for the Second Year Webelos starting in May. When these Webelos graduate into the troop, he becomes their Troop Guide. Now the New Scouts really know someone from the troop that is their friend. I like to make a major thing about this at the first troop meeting of the New Scouts in the Troop. Have them all come up as a patrol, bring up their old Den Chief and have them (the New Scouts) award him his new Troop Guide patch and job. I also see the Troop Guide as the third Scout in Command of the troop behind the SPL and ASPL's. This makes an even bigger thing of the Troop Guide position and the New Scouts see that they are so important that the Third In Command is their friend.

The New Scouts Assistant Scoutmaster is an important position. I like getting the Webelos current Webelos Den Leader to take this position. With proper recruitment and the help of the Troop Guide and other Asst. Scoutmasters, this Assistant Scoutmaster position is a easy position. It becomes more of a progress tracking position since the Troop guide is doing most of the teaching, training, and requirement testing. These are important selling items. Once these New Scouts are First Class, this Asst. Scoutmaster gets to enjoy the full fun of a regular Asst. Scoutmaster...the easy life...ha ha!!

We were seeing big drops in Webelos numbers from First Year to Second Year Webelos, almost 50%. Now it is only a 10% drop. We were also seeing the same big drop from Webelos to Boy Scouts that too is now only 0%-5%. New Scout to Regular Scout drop is in the 20% range. Still looking for a good way to change that without pointing the finger at program because 80% are staying.

It has been my personal view that Boy Scout Troops must do most of the work to recruit these Webelos. It is not a given that Webelos will simply come walking through the door looking for you. You must find them and earn their trust for them to join you. Even on a single pack & troop town, it is still important to work hard to keep the boys in scouting. More and the longer boys are in scouting, the better they will be in the long run (national surveys have shown this too).

Hope this has answered the many folk's questions on how I've been doing Webelos Transition and I hope you too can use this information to help make your Webelos Transition even better. Remember, you can change this as needed to fit your local unit needs.

We're all in this together. We're all pulling for you. -- Red Green

Yours in Scouting,

Todd N. Tingblad
tingbltn@hudson.k12.wi.us