

Championing Adult Recognition

A Commissioner's Duty



Adam J. Clinkenbeard

Asst. District Commissioner

Trailblazer District - Dan Beard Council

Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Adult Recognition History	3
The Unit Committee’s Role	4
Awards – BSA/Council/District/Unit	5
Volunteers & The BSA	7
Why They Join	7
Keeping Volunteers.....	8
The Carrot Principle	10
The Accelerator.....	12
What’s In It For Me?	13
Commissioner’s Role.....	15
Become a Friend to the Unit & Unit Leaders.....	15
Lead By Example	16
Leadership Inventory	18
Recognition Follow Through	19
Building a Culture of Recognition & Appreciation	20
Conclusion.....	22
Works Cited.....	24
Appendix A.....	26
Appendix B.....	27
Appendix C.....	30

Executive Summary

As humans, we're all wired to respond to stimuli. When it comes to motivating factors, we want to feed our self-worth, self-confidence and we want to feel good. When we're recognized and appreciated, those needs are met. When it happens in public and in front of our peers, those needs are exceeded and we start doing more without even thinking about it.

Robert Baden-Powell created the Scout Movement with the idea that all participants would be actively engaged in the program. Both youth and adult members would work towards types of advancement and earn awards. Over the years, the number of awards available to adults increased dramatically. The National Office, councils, districts and units all proudly present their own unique recognitions.

Scout leaders and volunteers join the BSA to give back. They also crave self-worth and personal growth just like their counterparts in other organizations. The BSA boasts a comprehensive training and recognition program aimed at meeting volunteer needs. The unit holds the responsibility for delivering recognition. Unfortunately, overwhelmed unit leaders forget to say "Thank You" and present recognition for milestone achievements. When this occurs, units generally see high volunteer attrition which leads to youth membership declines.

The Unit Commissioner plays an important role in helping the unit and unit leaders develop a culture of recognition and appreciation. By befriending the unit leaders and leading by example, commissioners can expose units to BSA Best Practices. In addition, the commissioner can set a standard of appreciation by personally showing gratitude at each meeting; to unit leaders, volunteers and Scouts. Unit Leadership Inventories provide valuable data that will assist the commissioner in determining which volunteers are eligible for awards. Guiding unit leaders to see that volunteers crave appreciation and recognition can happen through the course of meetings and culminate at a major event, like a court of honor or blue and gold banquet.

Accountable commissioners assume the duty to spread a culture of recognition and appreciation. In doing so, commissioners uphold the Scout Law and Oath while succeeding in their mission to better serve more youth through Scouting.

Adult Recognition History

Scouting's earliest adult leaders were military veterans, as most adult men had served their country in World War I. The Boy Scouts of America actively recruited these veterans to serve as Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters. The first Boy Scout uniforms resembled military uniforms, so it was common for new adult leaders to wear their earned military decorations, generally ribbons, as medals were worn only for special ceremonies. The earliest Scouting awards dating from the 1920's-1930's mimicked those of the military featuring both ribbons and medals. Nine awards were available to adults by the mid 1930's: Leader's Training Award, Scoutmaster's Key, Quartermaster Award, Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, Medal of Merit, Honor Medal and the Eagle Scout Award.

In 1946, the BSA transitioned from ribbons to embroidered square knots on dark khaki cloth. Scouting lore suggests that the square knot was selected by James E. West, former Chief Scout Executive, prior to the end of his term in office in 1943. It is believed that he chose the knot to remind Scouts to continue in the service to others.

Today, there are 34 award knots that can be worn on the adult uniform, 3 of which must have been earned as a youth. The knots are representative of the plaque, medal or certificate awarded to the recipient. Annually, the National Office reviews the current adult awards and a selection of potential new awards. In 2012, the BSA added the Commissioner's Award of Excellence in Unit Service, the last award knot to be added.

Local councils and districts create their own awards for presentation to valued adult volunteers. Generally, nominating committees are formed and review and approve nominations for major awards. Earned awards are processed by the council and facilitated by the professional staff. Many districts and councils present awards at formal recognition ceremonies such as council banquets and district dinners. Some of Scouting's most prestigious awards may be presented at an exclusive ceremony.

Scouters enjoy receiving awards, which is why so many have been created at the National, Council and local levels. Both adults and youth earn awards and 'advance' together.

The Unit Committee's Role

The unit committee plays an important role in adult recognition. There are opportunities for recognition woven through the entire Scouting program, from simple learning moments at unit meetings to large-scale award celebrations. All unit leaders have the chance to earn recognition, including the BSA's formal awards; and the unit committee is charged with encouraging and tracking progress towards recognition. The Unit Committee Guide explains the following:

The Scouting leader who has shown interest and dedication by giving up personal time to attend a learning event should be properly recognized. Whatever format the recognition takes, it should be sincere and impressive, and the participants should be made to feel that they have accomplished something worthwhile. Occasions for recognition include meetings with the chartered organization, roundtables, and council and district meetings. Recipients of awards might be recognized at the annual meeting of the district or council as well. The training committee should encourage Scouters to qualify for the various awards, provide opportunities for completing their requirements, and see that proper records are kept. Give recognition that will establish status for the awards in the eyes of all Scouters, chartered organizations, and the general public.

Trained leaders have the knowledge and self-confidence needed to provide young people with a quality program. It is important to the recognition plan that all awards be presented in a dignified manner at an occasion befitting the achievement. Immediate recognition of achievement should be given by presentation of the award in the presence of the unit membership and representatives of the chartered organization. Announcement in the council newsletter and in other news media is also recommended. In addition, announcement at a major event in the district or council is desirable. Keep in mind that an important objective is to encourage other leaders to strive to be fully trained. Properly handled, the awards presentation can serve to prompt others to seek training and recognition.

Successful units build their leadership group through training and development. As the unit strengthens, new adult leaders become the bench strength for the future and the individual load lightens on each volunteer. Healthy units with passionate adult volunteers invite their leaders to participate outside of the unit. Staff positions at district and council events are open to these volunteers. This commitment creates greater exposure and more opportunities for recognition.

Awards – BSA/Council/District/Unit

While recognition can take any form, from a simple pat on the back to formal ceremonies, the most notable and noticeable awards are the square knots worn above the left pocket of the official BSA uniform. The BSA authorizes 34 award knots and a host of other recognitions. Most Scouters consider award knots to signify major Scouting achievements. There is no official classification for award knots and unofficial online guides divide the award knots in various ways. The list below contains 27 of the most prominent award knots designed for eligible adults – organized by whether the recipient can earn the award or must be nominated:

- **Honor Awards (nomination only)**
 - **Order of the Arrow Distinguished Service**
 - **Heroism Award**
 - **Honor Medal**
 - **Medal of Merit**
- **Adult Earned Awards**
 - **Leader's Training Award**
 - **Cub Scout Den Leader Award**
 - **Scouter's Key**
 - **William T. Hornaday Award**
 - **William D. Boyce Award**
 - **BSA Alumni Award**
 - **Philmont Training Center Master Track Award**
 - **International Scouter Award**
 - **Commissioner Excellence in Unit Service Award**
 - **Doctorate of Commissioner Science Award**
 - **James E. West Fellowship**
 - **Asian American Spirit of Scouting Service Award**
 - **iScouting...Vale la Pena! Service Award**
- **Adult Honor Awards (nominated)**
 - **Unit Leader Award of Merit**
 - **District Award of Merit**
 - **Silver Beaver**
 - **Silver Antelope**
 - **Silver Buffalo**
 - **Distinguished Commissioner Service**
 - **Religious Awards (Domination Specific & Non-denominational)**
 - **Community Organization Awards**
 - **George Meany ALF-CIO Award**
 - **Whitney M. Young Service Award**

The BSA authorizes several other awards, such as the 50-miler, Mile Swim, Emergency Preparedness, Messengers of Peace, Veteran Award, Lifeguard Award, and the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award. A complete list of BSA awards can be found on the Awards Central page within the BSA site; http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Awards_Central.aspx.

Scout leaders can be recognized by induction into the Order of the Arrow which is signified by a pocket flap and a white sash with a red arrow. Within the Order of the Arrow, there are many opportunities for adults to earn or be honored with recognition. In addition, all leaders are eligible to attend Wood Badge. Those who complete their Wood Badge tickets earn a set of wooden beads and a unique neckerchief. Adults can also attend High Adventure camps, the National Jamboree, Powderhorn or serve as staff members for a variety of high profile national, regional and local events like NOAC, NYLT, Philmont training, Cub day camp and district camporees. Each of these platforms offers volunteers a chance at receiving appreciation and earning recognition.

Most of the award knots are presented during council or district ceremonies or events. Councils also present awards for philanthropy; such as the Dan Beard Council Eagle Patrol (Friends of Scouting) and Dan Beard Council Second Century Society, for service; such as the Meritorious Service Award and the Silver Beaver, and for impact; such as the Dan Beard Good Scout Award – presented at the annual Good Scout Award Luncheon. Districts, like Trailblazer, also present awards for some of the same reasons, such as the Golden Eagle for community impact, the Order of the Heart, Service to Youth Award, the Camp Michaels Award and the Trailblazer Legacy Award.

Typically, units create their own awards over the course of time. Some awards are based on unique or memorable moments from past campouts, events or activities. Recipients of these types of awards may receive a certificate, a plaque or a unique totem to represent the spirit of the award. There is no shortage of recognitions to bestow on worthy volunteers at any level.

Volunteers & The BSA

Why They Join

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 62 million Americans participated in volunteer work in 2015. Those volunteers each gave over 50 hours annually to their organizations (BSA volunteers give an average of 240 hours each year). Why would so many people spend over one work week giving their time and talents away for free? Simple, it feels good.

Volunteer expert, Thomas W. McKee, believes that that we volunteer for our *own* reasons – it comes from the inside. He describes the basic level of motivation as ‘self-serving’, meaning that we’re looking to fill a need. Three of the basics needs that must be met on this level are: feeling needed, building job/career skills, and a sense of belonging. These folks are not particularly vested in the organization itself and usually have a short tenure. In Scouting, this may be the volunteer who shows up for about a year and doesn’t reregister.

The second level of motivation is ‘relational’. These volunteers are seeking meaningful friendships and alliances. They’re looking to network with a new group of people or to deepen their connection with the existing leadership core. Most of these volunteers seek leadership roles with greater responsibility and exposure to help solidify their position within the network. Relationally motivated volunteers are like shooting stars – they arrive and blaze a bright trail for a few years and flame out. This Scouter gets heavily involved very quickly. He attends many events, gets trained and earns awards but moves on to something else just as quickly as he arrived.

The third, and final, level of motivation is ‘belief’. Belief is passion. Passionate volunteers are easy to spot. They’re humble and helpful. They fill every role that needs to be filled. Sometimes they’re in major leadership roles, but other times they’re comfortable fulfilling minor roles that don’t require expertise. Because they believe in the mission of the organization, they feel good no matter what part they play. Typically, these volunteers are lifers. These Scouters are the ones that are steadfast and loyal to the program. They help with any and everything and they’ve fulfilled just about every role. They enjoy giving to Scouting and they receive acclaim from their unit, district or council.

Scout leaders named the following specific reasons for volunteering with the BSA: be close to their child, help develop leaders, outdoor conservation and making a difference. Amazingly, these same volunteers get much more from Scouting. In the 2003 BSA Outcomes Study, over 80,000 surveyed leaders said they received the following benefits: enhanced personal value/traits, heightened communication skills, better relationship-building skills, practical outdoor/survival skills, and developed management/leadership skills. Simply put, Scout volunteers get real skills that are applicable to their lives and they become more fulfilled and improve their self-esteem.

Keeping Volunteers

Volunteers leave organizations when their needs are not fulfilled. The top two specific reasons are poor leadership/communication and a lack of praise and/or recognition. Typically, non-profit organizations rely on only a handful of paid staff responsible for carrying out large-scale initiatives with teams of volunteers (Litch, 1). When resources are stretched thin, communication breaks down and leaders struggle to pull the group together. Similarly, an overwhelmed leadership team quickly forgets to say 'Thank You' to the ones that make progress possible. If an organization doesn't have a robust recognition program and a culture of praise and appreciation, volunteer turnover will skyrocket.

When volunteer retention is low, the entire organization suffers. Worse yet, the people aimed to be impacted fail to receive the support promised by the organization. Keeping volunteers should be a top priority. It is difficult to quantify the value of a trained leader, but experts believe that each loss costs thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours to replace.

By meeting a volunteer's need for self-fulfillment through recognition and appreciation, retention will improve. GuideStar USA Inc., an information service specializing in reporting on U.S. nonprofit organizations/companies, offers these details:

Another integral part of volunteer retention is recognizing and appreciating the time and effort volunteers bring to your organization. Emphasize to your volunteers the importance of their contributions; volunteers who stay are ones who feel they are making a significant impact. Of course, there are many ways to say "thank you." Informally, something as simple as "You're doing a great job!" can be a big morale

booster. Making snacks available during projects or meetings is another way to show your appreciation. More formally, consider a once-a-year volunteer appreciation night to award certificates, etc. Although this latter idea seems obvious, a recent study by the Urban Institute found that just 30 percent of charities actually follow this practice. It is important not only to recognize volunteers within an organization but also to promote their accomplishments within the community. Consider using the same methods your group already uses to publicize its programs to acknowledge your volunteers' important work and accomplishments as well. In addition, you may want to ask volunteers if they would like their employers to be made aware of their contributions to your organization. Even though volunteers are not compensated monetarily, your organization should definitely consider rewarding them in other ways. Effective rewards can include such simple, no-cost things as reserving parking spaces for volunteers or giving them their own desks or workspaces. As far as actual tasks are concerned, volunteer jobs can be designed in hierarchical levels, allowing a volunteer to advance over time and acquire a higher "status." With each level, an organization can allow for increases in self-direction and decision making. Not only will the added responsibilities make the volunteer feel "promoted" but he or she will also feel more engaged. Volunteer coordinators may also want to reward well-proven volunteers by allowing them to train or mentor new recruits or by assigning them special projects.

Thankfully, Scouting boasts a wide-ranging formal recognition program and provides ample opportunities for praise and appreciation. Units must be aware of the available resources and then encouraged to utilize the programs. In addition, units should challenge leaders with new roles and positions to feed the need for personal achievement and perceived advancement. Adults want to be working toward something and by 'advancing in rank' that intrinsic need can be fulfilled.

The Carrot Principle

People are motivated by a variety of stimuli. Famous psychologist, Fredrick Herzberg, is known for his Motivation-Hygiene Theory where he unveiled six major motivating factors:

Achievement, Advancement, Growth, Recognition, Responsibility and the Work itself. We, as humans, are motivated by one or a combination of these factors when at work and in volunteering. Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton take the motivating factors one step forward – they assert that all humans have an intrinsic desire to be recognized and appreciated. This is the Carrot Principle – recognition and appreciation used to inspire results.

Research shows that 79% of employees who quit their jobs cite a lack of appreciation as a key reason for leaving. Similarly, 69% of volunteers who leave organizations cite a lack of appreciation. These statistics point to the paramount importance of recognition and appreciation within the Scouting program. Simply, if we want to retain our unit leaders and adult volunteers we must recognize and appreciate them.

Imagine being a volunteer, joining Cub Scouting when your son is a Wolf. You're interested in spending more time with him and you think that Scouting will be fun for you both. In the first year, you attend all the meetings and you help your son and other Cubs with completing requirements and achieving the Bear rank. When year two starts, you become the Den Leader. You're told that all the information you need is in the program book. You follow it and make your way through and get all the boys to Webelos. You're a bit relieved, as you're ready for a break from leading the boys and their parents. However, no one steps up to be the Webelos Den Leader, so you serve two more years because no one else will do it. In all this time, you've only heard thanks a few times and it seems the Cubmaster is getting all the glory. You're not jealous, but you feel like the entire pack took advantage of you. When it comes time for your son to cross over into Boy Scouts, you've decided that you can do no more. You nudge him to get more involved in sports so that you can sit on the sidelines. You burnt out.

This story and thousands like it have played out in Scouting and other organizations for decades. It doesn't have to be this way. If Scout leaders would have simply used the resources at their disposal, this outcome may have been avoided. "The simple transformative act of a

leader expressing appreciation to a person in a meaningful and memorable way is the missing accelerator that can do so much and yet is used to sparingly...This is purpose-based recognition (Gostick, 9)."

Recognition is the missing ingredient. Aside from the inherent parental involvement, people come to Scouting to feel good and to fulfill their needs for belonging, for relationships and for self-actualization. If the Den Leader in the story above would have been thanked at each meeting, recognized during pack meetings, received the Den Leader Award and the Adult Leader Training Award, would the outcome have been different? Most likely. Recognition plays to our internal feelings of achievement, self-esteem, self-worth and satisfaction. When we feel better about our inner self and what we're doing, our quality of work improves, our tenure lengthens and our overall commitment deepens.

The Carrot Principle does not work in a vacuum. Simply saying "Thank You" and handing out awards will not inspire people to do their best and won't lead Scouting to new heights. Unit leaders must provide four other pieces of the puzzle: Goal-setting, Communication, Trust and Accountability.

Goal-setting – Unit leaders must sit down with each volunteer and facilitate an open dialogue to discuss roles, expectations and goals (both for the unit, the Scout and the volunteer). Effective unit leaders will work to align all the goals so that everyone is moving in the same direction.

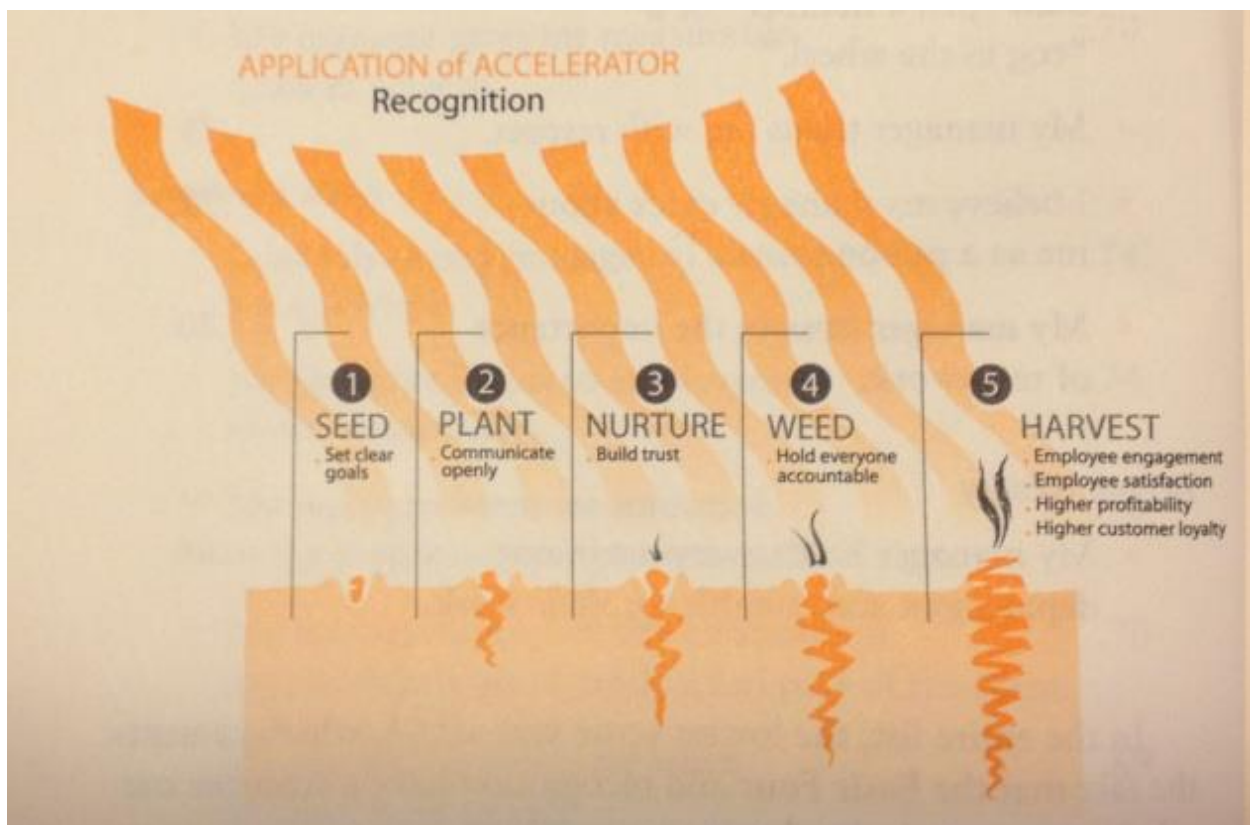
Communication – Open communication is critical for all organizations and for all leaders. When unit leaders communicate frequently, openly, transparently and lovingly, volunteers will feel valued and part of the team. A free exchange of ideas among all unit leaders and volunteers will result in stronger relationships and a foundation for trust.

Trust – All unit leaders should build trust – it's the first tenant of the Scout Law. Trust builds when leaders do what they say they will do. It strengthens after failures when leaders take accountability for their mistakes. In addition, acting with integrity and dignity grows trust.

Accountability – When mistakes are made, they must be made right – and quickly. Unit leaders and volunteers must own failures so that those affected can heal and be made whole again. When the unit and the associated adults are known to be accountable, the people on the inside of the group become closer and work better together.

The Accelerator

These four factors of effective leadership standing alone make a solid foundation for any leader and organization. But, when recognition is introduced, everything changes for the better – everything is accelerated.



When recognition is woven into goal-setting, volunteers have something to work towards. They reach milestones along their journey and receive recognition when appropriate. The recognition could take the form of a small certificate or a simple 'Great Job – Keep It Up, You're Almost There!' "By lifting the spirits of people [through recognition and celebration], we heighten awareness of...expectations...such that we motivate at a deep enduring level. Public recognition encourages others to duplicate the actions they see rewarded (Kouzes)."

Communicating to unit leaders and volunteers can prove challenging. By injecting recognition into our communication, leaders can translate goals and missions into digestible chunks that reinforce aligned behavior. This can happen in many ways. In its most simple form, a volunteer is recognized immediately after displaying a desirable behavior. Maybe this happens after a leader helps a Scout tie a knot over and over until the skill is mastered. The Scoutmaster approaches the adult and tells him what a great job he did working with the youth. The personalized recognition can be taken a step further if the Scoutmaster gives the same recognition in front of the group. That praise not only feels great to the volunteer, but it motivates others to perform so they too can receive recognition.

Amazingly, as soon as you publicly recognize someone for their contributions, the trust meter shoots off the scale (Gostick, 46). It is at that moment that the entire group realizes that the named unit leader can be trusted to share the spotlight – it's a galvanizing moment for the team. The frequent act of recognition also bonds individual team members to the unit leader and to each other (Gostick, 46). When specific, sincere praise and appreciation is given, it reaches people on an emotional level. This type of recognition is not a means to an end. It's the right thing to do – it's a duty.

Finally, add recognition to accountability standards. When a volunteer goes above-and-beyond, unit leaders should offer praise and recognition. A failure to do so serves as a de-motivator for all the volunteers. Recognizing accelerates engagement because all volunteers will know their accomplishments and efforts will be noticed and rewarded. They will own their actions and look to hold others accountable too. Recognition is a very visible, very positive way to hold people accountable for performance (Gostick, 51).

What's In It For Me?

Everyone wins when a unit embraces recognition. In theory, there are countless benefits to the unit, to the volunteers, and to the Scouts. The 'feel-good' feeling that volunteers get when they experience a boost of self-esteem and self-worth acts as a positive change agent. That positivity is contagious, infecting everyone. Volunteers will become more engaged and they will raise the

level of the program being delivered to the youth. The list below outlines potential tangible and intangible benefits.

Tangible/Measurable

- Greater Adult Volunteer & Youth Retention
- Membership Growth - more Leaders , Volunteers, and Youth
- Higher Youth Advancement Rates
- Financial Stability
- Higher Activity/Event Frequency
- Improved JTE Performance

Intangible

- Escalated Adult & Youth Self-Esteem
- Greater Adult & Youth Skill Development
- Volunteers Assume Greater Responsibility
- Higher Quality Events
- Effective Communication
- Culture of Trust & Accountability
- Quality Adult Networking

The case is compelling for building a culture of recognition and appreciation. Units that use recognition regularly and with authenticity can attest to the value. It is those units that keep volunteer attrition in check and grow their membership bases.

Commissioner's Role

Commissioners are friends to the units – friends to the unit leaders. Effective commissioners are great listeners, good coaches, and loyal Scouts. They visit units with a single purpose – helpfulness. A commissioner's duty to help takes many forms; from counseling sessions with leaders to roll-up-your-sleeves tasks at unit meetings. Ultimately, commissioners seek to help units succeed by ensuring leaders are trained, growing the youth membership base and providing compelling program. The achievement of these three goals can be accelerated if the commissioner nurtures an environment of recognition and appreciation. According to the Commissioner Fieldbook, *"People who work directly with youth are the most important adults in Scouting. Find ways frequently to recognize them for their good work."*

In order to fulfill the stated purpose, a commissioner should follow these steps:

1. Become a Friend to the Unit and Unit Leaders
2. Lead by Example – Show Appreciation and Earn Recognition
3. Take a Leadership Inventory & Identify Opportunities for Recognition
4. Recognition Follow Through
5. Guide the Unit as it Builds a Culture of Recognition & Appreciation

These steps are not a departure from the expectations of a commissioner; rather they are the manifestation of action. The first three steps are listed specifically in the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service* and the final two steps are touched on in *Commissioner Helps*. By following the existing best practices, a commissioner can deliver on his mission and positively impact a greater number of youth and adults.

Become a Friend to the Unit & Unit Leaders

"I care, I am here to help you, what can I do for you?" These are the words commissioners speak when meeting a new unit. Commissioners are helpers. Their motivations are altruistic – they seek to serve the unit, the unit leaders and Scouts. When personal desires are pushed aside, commissioners can build incredibly strong trusting relationships. Unit leaders can sniff out ulterior motives, so starting on the right foot is paramount. Unless an urgent issue arises,

commissioners begin their unit relationships by attending meetings and getting to know the unit leaders and volunteers. They help when needed and share basic information.

By taking it slowly and building trust first, commissioners create a platform which will allow for a free exchange of ideas that leads to positive changes in the program. Trust and open communication will serve as the foundation for a culture of recognition and appreciation.

Lead By Example

Commissioners offer their best counsel when they ‘walk the walk’. In order to begin developing a culture of recognition and appreciation, commissioners should earn recognition and offer appreciation. The former may be more difficult, or at least more time consuming, than the latter for commissioners new to Scouting. When unit leaders see visible signs of Scout awards, the credibility of the commissioner is enhanced. In addition, the commissioner can speak with integrity and authority about the influence of awards.

All Unit Commissioners should work to earn the Arrowhead Honor during their first year in service. The requirements ([Appendix A](#)) are merely a reflection of the primary duties of the commissioner. The District Commissioner or Assistant District Commissioner should track and record the progress of all commissioners providing direct service to the unit. Once earned, the white Arrowhead Honor Award is worn on the left sleeve under the ‘Trained’ strip.

Arrowhead Honor



Award of Excellence in Unit Service

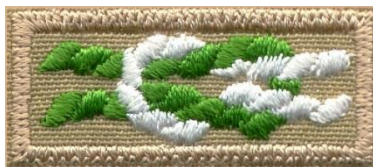


Commissioners that take their duties seriously and follow the Best Practices in the Commissioner Fieldbook can earn the Award of Excellence in Unit Service ([Appendix B](#)). Aside from a two-year service requirement, this award obliges a commissioner to address a specific

performance gap in the unit by performing a unit self-assessment. Working collaboratively with unit leaders, the commissioner will author a plan to improve one of the target areas all while completing charter renewal on time, retaining youth and growing youth membership.

After three years in the role, a commissioner can earn the Commissioner's Key (see Arrowhead Honor in [Appendix A](#)), a role-specific version of the Scouter's Key. The Scouter's Key is one of the oldest adult awards in Scouting and dates to the 1920's. It is signified with a green and white square knot on a khaki backing and is worn above the left pocket on the Official BSA uniform. Awardees also receive a medal for wear at formalized Scout events like courts of honor and awards banquets.

Commissioner Key



Scouter's Training Award



Doctorate of Commissioner Science

Commissioners should wear other applicable awards and forms of recognition on their uniforms. Scouters with two years in a previous leadership role may have earned the Scouter's Training Award ([Appendix C](#)), signified with a green square knot on a khaki backing (and medal). It is also recommended that commissioners attend Wood Badge and wear their beads as both a sign of their advanced training and as a visible promoter of the pinnacle of leadership training.

Finally, beyond personal recognition items, a commissioner should show appreciation and recognition to the unit leaders being served. During and after unit meetings, commissioners must seize the opportunity to reinforce good practices and positive experiences. Taking mental notes of the high points at meetings and the tangible signs of youth skill development and advancement will provide plenty of substance. The *Commissioner Fieldbook* offers this commentary:

Unit leaders are often taken for granted by youth members, parents, and the community. You can boost leaders' morale with frequent praise, thank-you's and congratulations. Good recognition is simple but genuine. When visiting a unit meeting, pick out something you see as good and congratulate the leader. Whenever leaders have advanced in their training programs, or the unit has earned a ribbon or award at a District or Council event, be sure that the committee, chartered organization, and parents know about it so they can congratulate their leaders.

As a representative of the Boy Scouts of America you will have opportunities to present recognitions to unit leaders. Make the presentations dignified and sincere. Let leaders know that the Scouting movement appreciates their efforts.

A Scout is helpful. A Scout is friendly. A Scout is cheerful. By demonstrating helpfulness, friendliness and cheerfulness, plus an awareness of good works, a commissioner can successfully extend recognition and appreciation at every meeting and event. With each successive meeting, unit leaders will experience heightened self-worth and self-confidence. They will feel good! And, when unit leaders feel good, they will increase their efforts and the quality of the program will improve.

Leadership Inventory

One of the stated duties of a commissioner is to meet annually with the unit committee and conduct a Unit Leadership Inventory. The inventory serves several purposes: reconciling registered adults with active adults, setting a baseline for new adult volunteer recruiting, and establishing training needs for all registered adults. In order to accurately assess training needs, the unit committee should maintain a physical or digital database featuring leader names, Scouting tenure, positions held, Scouting experiences and training certifications.

While assessing training needs, commissioners should pay special attention to how the current training courses completed and major Scouting experiences fit into existing adult award recognitions. Commissioners are active participants in the meeting and they have a duty to help the unit match adults with earned recognitions. By staying aware of the qualifications for the basic award knots and district awards, the commissioner can help the unit identify and recognize those deserving.

Recognition Follow Through

The act of performing a Unit Leadership Inventory and identifying candidates and awardees is not quite enough. Commissioners need to follow up with units to ensure the recognition takes place. Often, unit committees may not see all that is happening within a unit to understand the awards themselves and the urgency to present them. Awards and recognition should be given shortly after the service is rendered so that the volunteer feels the appreciation as quickly as possible. Waiting too long to say 'Thank You' will turn off volunteers. Less formal recognitions and appreciation should take place at meetings and during events. The unit should present major awards at planned events where many peers can bear witness. It is acceptable to advise a recipient that an award presentation will be saved for major events. This gives the awardee time to make preparations to attend and it reinforces the both the appreciation for service and the significance of the award.

As units follow through with formal recognition, they must be aware of three main points (Hoell, 2):

- Consistency – presentations should be similar so that all volunteers feel both appreciation and equality
- Timeliness – presentations should happen swiftly, shortly after the award is earned or the noteworthy service is rendered
- Sincerity – presentations should be genuine and authentic

Once the inventory is complete, the commissioner should inquire about the presentation of the awards and recognition. "What's the plan?" Since the inventory typically takes place in April, it would be appropriate for the Unit to use the blue and gold Banquet and the spring court of honor as the pedestal for adult volunteer and unit leader awards, other formal recognitions, and appreciation for service.

The commissioner should offer to take award knot forms to the local council office for processing. Since the District Executive helps to facilitate award processing, a proactive commissioner will conduct the necessary follow up. By cooperating with the District Executive, the commissioner should also ensure all award regalia and certificates or plaques are ready and present for the ceremony. Failing to secure the requisite items can ruin an award presentation and destroy the trust between unit leader and the unit.

Planning the presentation of adult awards should not be taken lightly. The unit committee, advancement chairperson and the unit leader should meet to make the preparations. In time, a specific volunteer should serve as the awards chairperson. The Unit Committee Guide suggests that the format should be “sincere and impressive”. The commissioner should encourage the unit to use a formal ceremony script at the awards presentation. Some scripts can be obtained through the council office or on the BSA website. Many variations of award scripts are available online or the Unit may choose to write their own.

Finally, invitations should go out to the Chartered Organization Representative and the Chartered Organization (C.O.) itself. The people involved with the C.O. should see the good works of the volunteers. Such acts will strengthen the relationships between the unit and C.O. and will bring greater awareness to Scouting.

Building a Culture of Recognition & Appreciation

Once unit leaders have experienced a taste of the recognition and appreciation at a formal event in front of their peers, they often seek more. The recognition has quenched a desire and fulfilled an intrinsic need. It is at this point that the entire unit leadership needs to jump on board. Appreciation cannot continue to only stream from the top, it also must come in the form of peer-to-peer gratitude. When the appreciation is genuine and comes from different people within the organization and in a variety of ways, more people are positively impacted.

Baden-Powell created the Scouting program for all ages and he expected adults to seek achievements too. As the ‘recognition fever’ catches, unit leaders may start a friendly competition amongst themselves to earn adult award knots. They also will look for additional training and experience opportunities to fill their uniforms – and their hearts. This behavior should be encouraged as long as it does not interfere with the mission of Scouting and the advancement of the Youth.

When unit leaders get excited, the commissioner should meet with the unit committee and ask how he can help set up a more formal and regularly occurring recognition plan. At first, this may be a simple plan with unit-level awards and appreciation at meetings and events. Commissioners should encourage the unit to seek additional awards such as knots and

district/council awards. By acting as a champion of recognition and appreciation, the commissioner can help the unit leaders begin building a culture that recognizes and appreciates all volunteers.

Here are a few best practices that will set a course for success:

- Write 'Thank You' notes
- Include a 'Moment of Gratitude' at every event
- Find a way to thank every leader for something specific at every meeting
- Name an award after a volunteer
- Ask a volunteer to serve as an official mentor (to a Scout or another adult)
- Formal recognition items such as badges, pins, patches, certificates and plaques
- Public acknowledgement in the local paper or magazine
- Offer for more responsibility or a new position/higher rank

After each meeting or event that features formal recognition and appreciation, the unit leaders should conduct a Stop-Start-Continue analysis. By evaluating what went well and what didn't, the unit leaders can establish benchmarks in how they deliver recognition and appreciation. In addition, they'll learn valuable lessons through experience. As often as possible, the commissioner should be present to offer objective feedback. When the commissioner can sit back and let the unit solve their own problems and set their own standards, everyone wins.

Over time, recognition and appreciation become the norm. Unit leaders and volunteers consistently say 'Thank You' both publicly and privately. Adults regularly earn awards, award knots and attend major training and Scout experience events. The unit nominates deserving adults for district and council awards and attends the formal district awards ceremony. The culture exists and the commissioner continues to monitor the unit and helps ensure it stays healthy.

Conclusion

Commissioners play a key role in the success of units. However, understanding the impact of a few simple actions can be difficult. Every touchpoint a commissioner has with a unit leader or adult volunteer has the chance to make the program infinitely better, meaning that we can positively influence more youth through organizational growth. When we say “Thank You” and offer a pat on the back along with a certificate or plaque, we say “You’re valuable. You’re needed. We like you and want you to continue giving.” In turn volunteers think, “That was worth it. I did well. They need me and I feel good about it.” It’s that ‘feel-good’ feeling that Scouting must get from every volunteer and unit leader in order to increase leader retention and grow the youth membership base.

One of the most important duties of a commissioner is to ensure that unit leaders, adult volunteers and peripheral parents receive appropriate recognition and appreciation. All too often units fail to recognize the contributions of adults that make the program run successfully. Overwhelmed unit leaders tend to forget the people behind the scenes. They get wrapped up in performing multiple duties and they begin directing tasks instead of asking for help and creating buy in.

During unit visits, commissioners should look for signs of both formal and informal recognition and appreciation. Informal signs include saying ‘Thank You’ after tasks are fulfilled and pointing out success on-the-fly to the group. Award knots on leader uniforms and presentations at major unit meetings would be examples of formal recognition. If commissioners don’t see these signs of a healthy unit, it’s time to act.

Commissioners who’ve earned the trust and respect of the unit can exert positive influence over the culture. First, the commissioner should lead by example. He should earn recognition and seek out major Scouting and training experiences. The commissioner should showcase appropriate awards on his uniform and promote participation to his units. Second, by meeting with the unit committee, the body with the responsibility to recognize and award, the commissioner can unveil how the unit can shine a spotlight on deserving volunteers. Finally, commissioners should evaluate the leadership landscape, conduct an inventory, identify

opportunities for recognition and begin affecting change. Partnering with the unit committee will enable the commissioner to lay the foundation for formal and informal recognition and appreciation to become the norm. Over time, with some trial and error accompanied by Stop-Start-Continue evaluations, the unit will establish its own benchmarks and begin to nurture a culture that embraces recognition and appreciation.

Outward signs of such a culture include; unit leaders with multiple award knots on their uniforms, major unit meeting/event formal adult award recognition ceremonies, adults in the Order of the Arrow, adults volunteering at the district or council level, and hearing the words “Thank You” many times at meetings and events.

Once a unit has built a culture of recognition and appreciation, it can begin to enjoy the fruits of the labor. There is a direct correlation between fulfilled volunteers and volunteer retention. In the BSA, when unit leader retention increases, youth retention increases, as does youth membership growth.

The mission of commissioners is to better serve more youth through Scouting. When unit leaders are recognized and appreciated, they are actualized – their work means something and they experience an internal fulfillment. Commissioners who champion recognition and appreciation with their units will complete their mission and their units will succeed.

Works Cited

- "Benefits of Volunteering." *National Service*. Corporation for National and Community Service, n.d. Web. 1 March 2016.
- Blair, Jill. 2003. "The Cost of a Volunteer." The Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service. California. Web.
- Boy Scouts of America. *Administration of Commissioner Service*. Texas: BSA, 2011. Print.
- Boy Scouts of America. *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*. Texas: BSA, 2012. Print.
- Boy Scouts of America. *Commissioner Helps For Packs, Troops and Crews*. Texas: BSA, 2011. Print.
- Boy Scouts of America. *Leadership Training Committee Guide*. Texas: BSA, 2010. Print.
- Boy Scouts of America. *Unit Performance Guide*. National Alliances Team. Texas: BSA, 2015. Print.
- Carpenter, Talon. "Awards and Recognitions for Adult Leaders in the Boy Scouts of America." 28 November 2014. Web. 25 February 2016.
- Central Region Area 5 Commissioners. "Unit Leadership Inventory." *Commissioner Comments* April 2012: 1. Web.
- Chase, Larry. "Why Recognize Commissioners?" *The Commissioner* Spring 2013: 2. Web.
- Crowl, George. "Illustrated History of BSA Square Knot Evolution." Version 15.0, 15 January 2016. Web. 25 February 2016.
- Gostick, Adrian, and Chester Elton. *The Carrot Principle*. New York: Free Press, 2009. Print.
- Harris Interactive. (2003). Boy Scouts of America Volunteers Outcomes Study. Texas. Web.
- Hoell, Anthony. "How To: Provide Ongoing Volunteer Recognition All Year Long." Hands On Suburban Chicago Blog, 20 January 2011. Web. 1 March 2016.
- Knoepke, Diane. "Time is Money: How to Measure the Value of Volunteers." The Chronicle of Philanthropy. 14 March 2013. Web. 1 March 2016.
- "Knot Awards." *Scouting BSA*. Viking Council (North Star Council). Web. 1 March 2016.
- Litch, Christine. "Volunteers, Part II: Why do they leave?" Volunteer Hub. 2007. *Guidestar*. 1 March 2016.
- McKee, Thomas W. "People Don't Quit Volunteering Because They Are Too Busy They Quit Because ...The Top Seven Reasons Volunteers Quit." Volunteer Power, n.d. Web. 1 March 2016.
- McKee, Thomas W. "Why People Volunteer - The Top Three Reasons People Volunteer." Volunteer Power, n.d. Web. 1 March 2016.

The Official Website of the Boy Scouts of America. Awards Central, 2016. Web. 24 Feb 2016.

Scott, Christopher L. "10 Reasons Your Last Volunteer Might Have Quit." Biblical Leadership Blog, 6 April 2015. Web. 1 March 2016.

"Square Knot Insignia." *Wikipedia*. Wikipedia. Web. 25 February 2016.

United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics – United States Department of Labor. "Volunteering in the United States, 2015." 25 February 2016. Web. 1 March 2016.




Walton, Mike. *The Badge and Uniform Site*. Version 3.0. Web. 1 March 2016.

Appendix A

UNIT COMMISSIONER PROGRESS RECORD FOR THE COMMISSIONER KEY/ ARROWHEAD HONOR AWARD

Cut along solid lines; fold along dotted lines.
(Reproduce locally.)



<p>ARROWHEAD HONOR RECORD</p>  <p>Name _____ Address _____ City _____ Council _____ District _____</p> <p>Complete basic training and the following projects:</p> <p>1. Visit each assigned unit eight or more times throughout the year. Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>2. Fill in and follow up on Unit Commissioner Work Sheets or self-assessment forms for each assigned unit. Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>3. Conduct membership and leadership inventories in each assigned unit. Approved _____ Date _____</p>	<p>TENURE</p> <p>Complete 3 years as a registered commissioner within a 5-year period. Tenure for one award cannot be used for other training awards.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>PERFORMANCE</p> <p>Earn the Arrowhead Honor Award</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>COMMITTEE ACTION</p> <p>The leadership training committee has reviewed this application and accepts the certifications as to the candidate's meeting the required standards. The award is approved.</p> <p>Chairman _____ Date _____</p>	<p>TRAINING</p> <p>Complete the three-session training program outlined in <i>Commissioner Basic Training Manual</i>.</p> <p>Date and Initial _____</p> <p>"Why Commissioners?" First visitation _____ "Units: The Commissioner's Greatest Priority" Second visitation _____ Third visitation _____ "How to Help a Unit" orientation projects.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p>
<p>Arrowhead Honor (cont.)</p> <p>4. Attend six district commissioner staff meetings and provide the training topic for one meeting.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>5. Participate in a charter renewal meeting that results in on-time unit reregistration.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>6. Participate in a charter presentation.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>7. Attend a council commissioner conference or planning conference, or actively participate in a major council event.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p>	<p>8. Help a unit resolve a specific problem or improve some aspect of their unit operations.</p> <p>Approved _____ Date _____</p> <p>When completed, clip Arrowhead Honor portion and send to council service center.</p> 	<p>UNIT COMMISSIONER PROGRESS RECORD FOR THE</p>  <p>COMMISSIONER KEY/ ARROWHEAD HONOR AWARD</p> <p>Name _____ Address _____ City _____ Council _____ District _____</p> <p>BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA</p> <p>2006 Printing</p>

Appendix B

Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service Requirements



All applications for the Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service must be approved by the district commissioner or assistant district commissioner, council commissioner, and council Scout executive.



Applicant's Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____

Email address _____

Council name _____ District _____

Based on the requirements below, complete this application for the Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service and submit it to the district commissioner or assistant district commissioner for approval and subsequent review and final approval by the council commissioner and council Scout executive.

I. Requirements

Any registered commissioner who is providing direct unit service is eligible, through unit service and a project that results in improved retention of members and on-time unit charter renewal, over the course of two consecutive years.

If a commissioner who is not registered as a unit commissioner wishes to earn this award, he or she must work with the district commissioner where the unit(s) is/are registered.

Date started _____ Unit type _____ Unit No. _____

Youth retention at last charter renewal _____ % (See Journey to Excellence form)

II. Technical Skills

The commissioner shall consistently demonstrate the following:

1. The ability to use the Unit Visit Tracking System to log unit visits
2. The ability to provide Unit Visit Tracking System visit reports to an assistant district commissioner or district commissioner

III. **Performance** *(Complete each item below.)*

A. Performance Goal

Date completed

Through utilization of the annual unit self-assessment tool, identify a specific goal in a specific unit that would result in higher quality unit performance. The goal should target improvement in at least one of the unit self-assessment target areas.

B. Action Plan

Provide a written plan to achieve the goal identified in item A above. Have the plan approved by the unit leader, and obtain the unit leader's signature.

C. Results

#1 _____ #2 _____

#1 _____ #2 _____

1. Unit self-assessment: Conducted twice a year for two years

1) Year 1

2) Year 2

2. Unit retention: On-time charter renewal for two consecutive years

1) Year 1

2) Year 2

3. Youth retention: Youth retention percentages must show improvement. (See the Journey to Excellence form.)

1) Year 1: _____%

2) Year 2: _____%

IV. **Participation** *(Complete each item below.)*

1. Be a participant or staff member in **ONE** continuing education event for commissioner service.¹ For example: district, council, area, regional, or national College of Commissioner Science; commissioner conference; Philmont; Sea Base; or Summit training.

2. The commissioner shall make at least six physical visits to each assigned unit per year. All visits must be logged in the Unit Visit Tracking System. Examples: unit meetings, unit activities, leader meetings, and summer camp visits.

3. The commissioner shall make at least six significant contacts (in addition to those made in item 2) for each unit served, by telephone, two-way electronic communication, or in person. These contacts must be logged in UVTS 2.0.

V. Training and Experience *(Complete each item below.)*

1. Unit Commissioner Basic or New-Unit Commissioner Basic Training
2. Provide charter renewal service by holding membership inventories, training verification, and Journey to Excellence² progress review meetings. Perform charter renewal presentations for the chartered organizations of the units you serve.

Unit Type and Number	Date of Charter Renewal	Date Charter Presented

¹ Participation or staffing in a continuing education event as noted above prior to the start date of this award shall not be applied. Participating in or instructing during training sessions as part of regular staff meetings may not be applied.

² Unit-specific requirements and performance criteria are founded on the BSA's Journey to Excellence guidelines. As changes are incorporated, the council commissioner must scope impacts and adjust expectations as required.

Recognition Items

A commissioner may earn this award up to three times while registered as a commissioner at any level. Once approved, the council or district will provide a Commissioner Award of Excellence in Unit Service square knot, No. 613223, for presentation by the council or district. Knots may be ordered through the local Scout shop. These items should be sold only to those who are on record as having received this award. Added devices are awarded for the second and third achievements.

Approval

I hereby sign this application in testimony that these requirements were completed in full.

Applicant's signature

Date

District commissioner or assistant district commissioner's signature

Date

Council commissioner's signature

Date

Scout executive's signature

Date

Appendix C

Scouter's Training Award for Boy Scouting Progress Record



Candidate's Personal Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
City State Zip
Email: _____
Troop No. _____ District: _____
Council Name: _____

Tenure

Complete at least two years of tenure as a registered adult leader in a Boy Scout troop.

From _____ to _____
From _____ to _____

Training

- ☐ Complete basic training for any Boy Scout leader position. ☐ Attend a university of Scouting (or equivalent), or attend at least four roundtables (or equivalent) during each year of the tenure used for this award.
- ☐ Complete This Is Scouting training.

Approved by:

Troop Committee Chair Date

Performance

Do the following during the tenure used for this award:

- ☐ Participate in an annual troop planning meeting in each year. ☐ Give primary leadership in meeting at least one troop Journey to Excellence objective in each year.
- ☐ Serve as an adult leader in a troop that achieves at least the Bronze level of Journey to Excellence in each year. ☐ Participate in at least one additional supplemental or advanced training event at the council, area, region, or national level during the two years.
- The Quality Unit Award is acceptable if the tenure used is prior to 2011.

Approved by:

Troop Committee Chair Date

Training Committee Action

The leadership training committee has reviewed this application and accepts the certification that the candidate meets the required standards. The Scouter's Training Award is approved.

Approved by:

District or Council Training Committee Chair Date



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

511-058
2012 Printing