

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



SCOUTING PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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Table of Contents

- I. The VFW Scouting Program**
- II. Organizing the Team**
- III. Team Duties**
 - a. Scout of the Year.**
 - b. Organize Scouting units.**
 - c. Communicate Scouting objectives.**
 - d. Meetings, Training and Awards.**
 - e. Participation in VFW Youth Programs.**
 - f. Department and District Officers.**

I. THE VFW SCOUTING PROGRAM

The close relationship between the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Boy Scouts of America dates back 100 years when VFW Post 2100 teamed up with another civic organization to establish Troop 1 in Everett, Washington. That century-long affiliation has fostered true patriotism, community service and strong, moral character throughout the ensuing decades. During World War I and II Boy Scouts played a major part in helping collect food and other items to support the troops in the war. Since that time scouting has continued to be a supporter of the VFW and scouts have grown up, joined the military, fought in wars and subsequently become members of the VFW. It is a natural effort therefore that we focus the efforts of those who have been scouts to continue and guide the VFW posts in the support of the Boy Scouts of America.

The BSA has and continues to provide a first-class youth development and education program for use by qualified organizations. The VFW is an ideal organization to incorporate the BSA program into our planning for youth in our local communities. Every VFW Post has the opportunity to work in partnership with the BSA when they sponsor/charter a scouting unit. Direct involvement in the Scouting program presents the VFW Post with the opportunity to positively affect the lives of the youth in our communities while developing positive youth/adult partnerships.

Through scouting, VFW Posts have the opportunity to expand their community outreach while developing a clear resource for veteran's families and their children. The State/Department Scouting Team's primary objective is to encourage local Posts to incorporate Scouting into their Youth Activities Programs. Department Scouting Chairpersons must help Post recognize the value of scouting by pointing out the following advantages:

- a. Scouts are often willing to do service projects that benefit the Post directly such as Flag retirement, maintenance of Post facility and grounds, assistance with Buddy Poppy distribution, color guards, and participation in Post community activities and events.
- b. Working with scouts provides incentives for veterans with young families to join and become active members.
- c. Post members can serve as mentors and provide a positive image to a new generation of potential service members.
- d. Recognition of scouting provides Posts with positive public visibility.
- e. Scouts often join the military, become eligible and become members of the Post.

II. ORGANIZING YOUR DEPARTMENT TEAM

The Department Scouting Chairman is responsible for organizing and managing scouting within their Department. These appointments are only for the administrative

year to which you were appointed. In addition to being a VFW member (mandated by the National By-Law), the Department Scouting Chairman should:

- a. Demonstrate a history of B.S.A. participation and adult leadership experience.
- b. Demonstrate a history of commitment to the VFW as indicated by successful leadership positions held.
- c. Be the Department “expert” on all phases of Scouting.
- d. Must cooperate with Department, District and Post leaders and B.S.A. leadership.

The Department Scouting Chairman is the State/Department Scouting Team Leader. They are responsible for recruiting, organizing, training and maintaining an effective team for the Department. This begins with recruiting and building of your State/Department team. There is no required number of State/Department Scouting Team members, the Department Scouting Chairman will need to determine the appropriate number to effectively cover your Department. Those selected should demonstrate the same attributes as listed above and as required by the National by-laws, all State/Department Scouting team members must be VFW members. They may be members of troops/posts/packs sponsored by VFW posts or units sponsored by other activities or at district or council level.

The Department Scouting Chairman should maintain copies of all applications and approval status for all his team members. He should publish a list of all State/Department Scouting team members and make it available to Posts throughout the Department. He is also responsible to insure that all new State/Department Scouting team members take the BSA Youth Protection class on line and maintain a current Youth Protection Certificate and remain current with other certifications as required by the BSA for positions held. The Department Scouting Chairman should coordinate with other Department Chairmen on activities that may affect programs in his Department

The Department Scouting Chairman is responsible for working with the Department Commander and Quartermaster for a budget for the team and scout recognition. To be more efficient and effective, the Department Scouting Chairman should communicate regularly with the Department leadership as to status and progress of the program. Additionally, they should provide quarterly reports and be prepared to present the report at their Department Council of Administration meetings. The Department Scouting Chairman is also charged with initiating award recommendations for the VFW Scouters Achievement Award and processing these recommendations through the Department Commander to VFW National HQ.

III. TEAM DUTIES

a. SCOUT OF THE YEAR

Each department may select an Eagle Scout, Girl Scout Gold Award, Venture Summit Award, or Sea Scout Quartermaster Award recipients as the department Scout of the Year and provide the application to the National Headquarters for judging.

Eligible Scout of the Year applicants can be recruited from individual units, visits to round tables or other Scouting functions in the community. It should be remembered that the VFW is not the only organization seeking to recognize these young people. Because there is a lot of competition from many organizations for recognizing these Scouts, BSA councils often will not be able to take active action to distribute literature for any one organization. The VFW Scouting team should be in the active mode, visiting round tables, camporees, and individual units where the program can be presented by a VFW Scouting team member.

The ideal process is to have each Post in the Department select and recognize a Scout of the Year; submit the winners to District level for judging and forward those winners to the Department judging. Following the selection of Scout of the Year by Posts, if practical, a District level judging should be conducted. The District Scouting lead or Youth Activity Chairman can organize a judging team consisting of local teachers, religious leaders, school teachers, or utilize members of the State/Department Scouting Team. Again, the winner should be recognized at a Post/District meeting and the application forwarded to the Department for their Department judging process.

The Department judging can be done by the Scouting Team or by a board of people appointed by the Scouting Team. Awards and presentations to the winning Scouts should come from the Departments. Recognition of this winner at the Department convention is a great opportunity for the Scout to see the VFW in action. The Department Scouting Chairman is responsible to insure that this is a great moment for the Scout and the VFW.

The application for Scout of the Year can be online at www.vfw.org under the login in *My VFW*. After you log in, click on *VFW Training and Support* listed under *General Tools & Resources*, then click on *Community Services, Youth Scholarships and Activities*.

b. ORGANIZE SCOUTING UNITS

Using the BSA steps to organize a unit, the State/Department Scouting team should work with Posts to determine if the Posts have the available resources to organize units. The unit Chartered Organization Representative (COR) must belong to the sponsoring post and work to make the unit successful. It never hurts to engage with the new parents coming into the unit for possible eligibility to the VFW. The Scouting team members should work with these units to help them be supportive of their VFW

sponsor. Scouts are an excellent resource for flag retirements, road clean up, grounds clean up, parades and many other areas of support to the sponsoring post.

c. COMMUNICATE SCOUTING OBJECTIVES

The Department Scouting Chairman should participate in the annual Department School of Instruction for new commanders and officers and make a presentation on the scouting team and scouting objectives. This is a great opportunity to inform commanders and others on who to contact for support and assistance, but more importantly, it gives the Team the chance to promote the program and encourage participation.

d. MEETINGS, TRAINING AND AWARDS

The Department Scouting Chairman is responsible for training his team members. An excellent opportunity would be to have scouting training the same weekend your Department is holding their School of Instruction or at your Department Convention. If these are not options, someone can arrange for a military base, local Scout camp, hunting club or other area where the team can get together to develop a plan for your team over the next year.

There are lots of diverse ideas on what can be done and the team can develop a team strategy and plan that will work in your state. There should be an annual team meeting to insure the team is on track and that all team members understand what to do and fully understand their roles. Additionally, your scouting team members should gather at Department Convention and winter department meetings to follow up on progress and planning.

Also available are the Wood Badge and Sea Badge programs. These are the highest level of advanced adult leadership training provided by the Boy Scouts of America for adult volunteers. The VFW National Headquarters, as part of its longstanding commitment to and support for the Scouting program, provides scholarships for eligible VFW members who are active in scouting to attend the Wood Badge or Sea Badge training course. Applications from interested members are countersigned for approval by the local BSA council and forwarded to VFW National Headquarters for consideration and approval. Scholarships have historically been for an amount not to exceed \$150.00, which is in most cases sufficient to cover the course fees incurred by the participant. A copy of the Wood Badge Scholarship application form is available on-line.

Additionally, the VFW National Headquarters, in cooperation with the Boy Scouts of America, has developed a VFW Scouters Achievement Award for those individual VFW members who have been active and dedicated volunteers within the Scouting program. Those VFW members eligible to receive this award must have been registered and active in the Scouting program, have been a member of the VFW State Scouting team for at least three years, have completed the requirements for the award as

outlined, and have the recommendation of the Department Scouting Chairman and the Department Commander. Eligibility and applications for this award are processed through the Department's Scouting Chairman through the Department Commander to VFW National HQ. Recognition items for recipients will be provided by VFW National HQ.

Requirements for the VFW Scouters Achievement Award and additional information about the VFW Scouting program can be found online at www.vfw.org under the login in *My VFW*. After you log in, click on *VFW Training and Support* listed under *General Tools & Resources*, then click on *Community Services, Youth Scholarships and Activities*.

e. PARTICIPATION IN VFW YOUTH PROGRAMS

Scouters are excellent candidates for Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy contests. The team should take the opportunity to advertise these to the scouting community and scout troops with which you work directly. The VFW Youth Activities Chairman's Manual has information about these programs as well as the Scout of the Year program.

f. DEPARTMENT AND DISTRICT OFFICERS

As the Department Scouting Chairman, you are an integral part of the Department Commander's staff. You are responsible for working the Department Commander and the Adjutant/Quartermaster to insure that any department funds allocated to Scouting programs are budgeted and available to support the scouting program. As mentioned earlier, you should be prepared to report to the Commander on the status of the scouting program at Department Council of Administration meetings and also to ensure proper expenditure of any Department funds for the program. The Department Scouting Chairman should also work with District Commanders as necessary to insure implementation of the program at all levels. In short, they are responsible for communicating and promoting the scouting program throughout the Department.