

## Welcome New Scouts to Troop 486

On behalf of all the Boy Scouts and leaders of Troop 486, I want to take a minute to tell all of our new scouts and parents that we extend our warmest welcome to you for choosing our troop as your Boy Scout home. I look forward to meeting each of you individually soon, and I encourage each of you to ask me or any of the assistant scoutmasters of our troop any questions that you may have. I hope in this letter to help you in understanding what the Boy Scout experience is like, which you will find is much different than that of cub scouts.

We hold our weekly meetings at the Grace Episcopal Church in Glendora, located at 555 E. Mountain View. Our meetings are held in Baxter Hall which is a large meeting room located at the N/E corner of the church. Our meetings are held every Tuesday evening from 7:15 PM to 8:45 PM. We ask that you have your scout at the meeting a few minutes before the start time so that we can keep to our timeline at the meeting. Your son will be assigned to one of our four patrols (similar to a Den in cub scouts). Each patrol has a patrol leader and an assistant patrol leader. Our Senior Patrol Leader, who is a tenured, older scout in the troop, and who has a broad knowledge of the Boy Scout experience directs the meetings.

We expect that each scout be in full uniform at each meeting unless directed otherwise in advance. Full uniform is the scout shirt and neckerchief and slide, black "Dickie" brand or similar style pants with the Boy Scout green belt and buckle, white socks and comfortable, closed toe shoes like tennis shoes or hiking boots. The Boy Scout baseball hat is optional.

Every month, the Senior Patrol and the patrol leaders of each patrol meet with me to discuss in advance what will be presented at the meetings. The scouts with adult supervision run the weekly meetings. We always start our meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance, and the recital of the Boy Scout Oath and Law. We then have a "skills" section where training or other information is presented to the scouts. We also have a "patrol comers" time where each scout is expected to pay \$1.00 in dues per week to the troop. The dues are collected by the patrol leaders and recorded. The money then gets deposited into the troop checking account and is used to purchase troop equipment, such as tents, camp stoves, butane fuel, etc. The scouts also play a game for about 15 minutes. At the conclusion of each meeting, we retire the flags, have a scoutmaster minute where I discuss a point or read a short story to the scouts who gather in a circle with me. We then all recite the Boy Scout benediction (a non-denominational request for our safety) and the meeting is concluded.

Our troop is a backpacking troop. This means that our troop prefers to hike to campsites with our backpacks versus driving our cars to a campsite (base camping). We plan some type of weekend outing every month with the exception of August and December where we plan no outings. We do base camp at times during the year depending on where we may go on an outing. Being a backpacking troop also means that we do not take ice chests with food or drink. We pack freeze-dried backpacking food and lots of water and hike to remote places. We sleep in sleeping bags and carry tents which some of our scouts prefer sleeping in while others prefer to sleep out under the stars during good weather. Your scout will need a quality, lightweight sleeping bag and a backpack. Before you buy anything, talk to one of the scout leaders first! We do have some loaner

backpacks, but due to the number of new scouts coming to our troop, we will not have enough to loan one to every scout.

Your son will be working on various ranks and merit badges through his scouting career. The first rank is "Scout", followed by "Tenderfoot, Second class, First class, Star, Life and then Eagle". Each scout will work at a different speed depending on his enthusiasm and desire. Our older scouts and leaders will be there to help your scout along the way, but it is your sons' responsibility to know where he is at in relation to requirements needed for the next rank advancement and to seek help from the older scouts and leaders. We want your son to be successful in his scouting career, but unlike cub scouts, a Boy Scout is encouraged to be self-driven and self-motivated. When your son has met all the requirements of a rank advancement, it is his responsibility, not yours, to contact me for a scoutmaster conference where he will meet with me to discuss his scouting experience. After the scoutmaster conference, your son, not you, will need to call the designated assistant scoutmaster to arrange for a board of review. A board of review is a panel of three assistant scoutmasters who will talk to your son about his advancement to the rank he is seeking. Your son is expected to be in full Boy Scout uniform during both the scoutmaster conference and board of review. In addition to rank advancement, your son will have the opportunity to work on merit badges. A merit badge is similar to getting a belt loop in cub scouts, but requires much more work and diligence to achieve. Some merit badges are easier than others and can be completed in a few hours, while others may take several days or up to a few months to achieve. We will talk to you more about merit badges later.

I have given you a lot of information about the Boy Scout experience that your son will be having. There is much more that we do as a troop than what I have mentioned here. Again, I encourage you to ask a lot of questions. We all want your son to have a positive experience with scouting. During this period in his life, we will be working on honing your sons' skills so that he can be successful in life and be able to handle situations better. We will be working on developing his leadership abilities during this period and will be providing him with the training to become an excellent, responsible citizen.

Yours in scouting,  
Mike Ferrera, Scoutmaster, Troop 486  
Glendora, California  
Valle del Sol District, San Gabriel Valley Council, Boy Scouts of America