

Troop 45 Annual Program Planning

1. The program year runs from March through February. This calendar is predicated on the occurrence of Crossover each April, when the character of the troop changes dramatically. During the spring and summer, the New Scouts gradually mature and advance through the basic ranks. By the following spring, they are all First Class, and fully integrated into the troop operations. Then the cycle begins as the next batch crosses over.

2. The program year divides naturally into four phases delineated by three Parents' Nights and Crossover. The timing of Crossover is at the discretion of the Cubmaster, but generally occurs in April. The dates of the three Parents' Nights are set by policy as the third Wednesdays June, October, and March.

- **Crossover to June PN.** The emphasis is on New Scout training. The first troop meeting after Crossover, the New Scouts are formed into a New Scout Patrol, and introduced to the Troop Guide. During that meeting and the next several, the troop activity each night is conducting a comprehensive Tenderfoot Training Program under the supervision of the Troop Guide and a corps of Instructors (ideally drawn from the second-year scouts). We also conduct the annual Tenderfoot Skills Camp to meet many of the outdoor requirements for Tenderfoot. The objective of the Tenderfoot Training Program is twofold: to get all the new scouts off on the right foot with a clear understanding of how the troop works; and to advance them all to Tenderfoot in time for the June Parents' Night.

When the weather warms up, we move the troop meeting site from the Community Center to Storrs Pond.

- **June PN.** The June PN is generally held at Storrs Pond, where we have usually been able to get permission from the HIS to build a campfire at Area 5. A key feature of the Court of Honor is the induction of New Scouts and their assignment to patrols. This is a formal ceremony in which each new scout is introduced, awarded Tenderfoot (if he's earned it), issued a Neckerchief, and "Called" to his patrol. Although the New Scout Patrol remains active throughout the year, it is used only for specific new scout training activities and gradually fades in importance over the months from June to March.
- **June PN to October PN.** The New Scout Patrol continues to function as a vehicle for training the new scouts for advancement through Second Class and First Class, but the scouts are expected to increase their level of initiative. Summer activities include the Summer Adventure and the annual Summer Camp Expedition. The Summer Adventure policy is that on even-numbered years we plan our own major expedition, and on odd-numbered years we exploit a BSA adventure facility like Philmont.

Troop meetings are held at Storrs Pond until the end of August when it starts getting dark before the meeting is over.

- **October PN.** The October PN is our opportunity to consolidate the summer's gains in advancement and to recall the summer's activities. It is also our opportunity to educate parents on the troop's operations. Most of the new scouts will receive Second Class, and a few will receive First Class. There will be many merit badges from camp and from our other activities over the summer.
- **October PN to March PN.** The troop meetings are indoors at the Community Center, so activities tend towards the academic. We often dedicate the month of November to first aid, conducting a comprehensive First Aid Training Program that includes all basic first aid requirements, First Aid Merit Badge, and the CPR training that is necessary for most outdoor merit badges. Despite a general indoor orientation, the proximity of the Dartmouth playing fields and the Velvet Rocks Trail invite outdoor troop meeting activities as well.

We have an extensive repertoire of winter outings that keep us busy outdoors during the cold months.

By mid-winter, the new scouts are very much losing their identity as new scouts, and the New Scout Patrol is being used less and less. Nevertheless, many popular winter activities will have participation prerequisites that new scouts will not have met. Troop meeting and outing activities should aim to help new scouts meet the qualifications for these activities. Some winter activities may well be conducted on two tracks--one for new scouts and one for experienced scouts. A final push to finish off the last First Class advancements is often necessary before the March PN.

The Annual Program Planning Conference should be held in January. This timing allows a few months between the time of the conference and the beginning of the planning period, so that we are never without an APP in place, and there is time for modifications after the plan is published.

- **March PN.** The March PN marks the culmination of the year's activities. The last of the Second Class and First Class advancements are awarded, so there are no more new scouts in the troop: all are experienced scouts. The New Scout Patrol may be formally disbanded, with thanks to the Troop Guide. (If the New Scout Patrol had a flag, they can cut it up with each scout keeping a scrap as a souvenir.)
- **March PN to Crossover.** During this brief period the troop prepares for the arrival of the next crop of new scouts. The key events are the Webelos Hike and the Webelos troop meeting visit. This is also a good time to conduct troop-wide JLT.

At Crossover the cycle begins again.

3. Conduct of the APPC. The Annual Program Planning Conference (APPC) is held in January. It is open to all scouts and scouters in the troop. As with the PLC, the SPL conducts the

conference with guidance from the scoutmaster. All attendees have voting privileges. The scoutmaster may, of course, veto any proposal.

In order to avoid overwhelming the scouts with decisions, the best approach we have found is to start with a skeleton or template APP that includes all the necessary components, and then have the scouts fill in themes and activities. It is also very useful to have the previous year's APP for reference. The scoutmaster may also want to annotate the previous year's plan with observations of things that did and didn't work well, or that are impractical for some reason.

Along with the APP itself the troop also maintains an "Outing Repertoire" that the scouts find very helpful in filling in activities during the year and as a springboard for inventing new outings. In using the Outing Repertoire, the scoutmaster should encourage the scouts to think for themselves about what did and did not work well so that the new APP can improve on the old one. The idea of using the template and the repertoire is not to suppress creativity or new ideas, but simply to provide structure and focus.

Even under the best of circumstances, an hour and a half is the maximum time the scouts can be expected to be productive during an APPC. We have successfully completed a conference in as little as an hour, but we have also needed to convene two sessions to complete the plan.

4. Structure of the Plan. The APP Template is posted on the troop website. A review of previous plans reveals that the conference has often deviated from the basic template in order to try new ideas. Whatever form is used, the basic idea is to identify a monthly program theme, and identify the key events that support the theme that month. It is not necessary to choose specific dates for specific outings--those decisions will be made in the PLC throughout the year. It is not even necessary to select specific outings for every month; a category of outing will often suffice, leaving the detailed decision to the PLC. Still, it is a good idea to be more specific than less, so the PLC can concentrate on the details of planning any specific outing. There's no problem with being too specific in the APP: the PLC can modify as necessary.

In addition to the monthly theme concept, the structure of the APP must also reflect fixed annual events, and the monthly cycle of troop meetings.

5. Publication and Revision. Once the conference is complete, the plan is posted on the Calendar page of the troop website. At its monthly meeting, the PLC consults the plan in order to guide its decisions, plans the details of each event, and posts the dates on the Calendar and the detailed plans on the Outings page. Typically, the PLC should be looking about three months into the future at every meeting, assigning detailed planning activity for each outing to a planning committee. By policy, an event without an approved plan posted on the website at least a week in advance may not go forward.

If the PLC wants to modify the APP to deal with any emergent opportunities or situations, it can always do so, but without formal action the PLC is expected to adhere to the plan as published.