

SCOUTS BSA

Rutherford welcomes all-girl Boy Scouts troop

Nancy DeGennaro
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MURFREESBORO — Members in a new scout troop made history this month when they took an oath to become the first all-girl Scouts BSA unit in Rutherford and Cannon counties.

Troop 2019 joined thousands across the country celebrating with ceremonies to mark the Boy Scouts of America's inclusion of girls the Boy Scouts program.

"We're changing the name of the Boy Scout program to Scouts BSA," said Larry Brown, chief scout executive for the Middle Tennessee Council of Boy Scouts of America, the parent organization of Scouts BSA.

Scouts BSA will be for girls and boys ages 11 to 17, but troops will not be co-ed, said Brown, who spoke at the ceremony.

Each of the 16 girls of Troop 2019 signed a charter document that listed them as founding members of the troop. After signing the charter document, each girl was presented with a neckerchief by their parents and a copy of the new Scouts BSA Handbook by Scoutmaster Kevin Phillips.



Chief Scout Executive Larry Brown of the Middle Tennessee Council of Boy Scouts of America brings greetings from scouts across the region at the charter ceremony for new Troop 2019. ERIC SUTTON/MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

MTSU represented

Three Eagle Scouts with MTSU ties took part in the inaugural ceremony: retired Army Lt. Gen. Keith Huber of the Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center; alumnus and Rutherford County Mayor Bill Ketron; and Board of Trustees member J.B. Baker.

MTSU signed a partnership agreement with the council in March 2018 that allows the university to be a greater resource for scouting programs, particularly in science and technology.

Although MTSU will provide program support to the troop through its partnership with the council, the men's ministry of Trinity United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro is the unit's chartering organization and will provide meeting space and oversight for the unit.

Programs offer choices

While ceremonies like the one in Murfreesboro were held nationwide,

the launch has been building over the past year, with leaders putting together families interested in the new venture, Brown said.

Scouts BSA is the fifth Boy Scouts of America program to allow girls.

Previously girls could join male counterparts in four of the Boy Scouts of America programs: Cub Scouting, Venturing, Sea Scouting and Exploring.

"The programs are all different. They have different methods. But the goal is the same: teach character, citizenship, mental and physical fitness," Larry Brown said.

Exploring focuses on career interest and development. Sea Scouting teaches aquatic skills. Venturing takes scouting to the edge with high adventure. Cub Scouting has served the younger girls and boys with leadership and outdoor programs.

Scouts BSA offers a blend of survival education, outdoor adventures and leadership skills.

"The Boy Scout program is built on troops working together ... to learn leadership skills through camping and working on different rank advancement

and merit badges," Brown explains.

With the new Scouts BSA rebrand, girls will have the opportunity to earn Eagle Scout rank, too.

Brown said BSA doesn't see the membership change as a competition between organizations.

"A lot of families have wanted their daughters to have the same experience in the same programs that the Boy Scouts have. We see it as a program that gives families a choice," Brown said.

'I'm proud to be a part of it'

Morgan Phillips and Lindsay Parker, both leaders and charter members of Scouts BSA Troop 2019, have been involved in scouting long before this month.

Before they joined Scouts BSA, Parker and Phillips participated in the Venturing scout program, which took them on rock climbs, scuba dives and numerous camping excursions over the years.

Knowing they could achieve the same goals as their brothers drew Parker and Phillips to join the Scouts BSA program.

"We have brothers who are Eagle Scouts. We know what Boy Scouts is and we've seen how it's helped them leadership wise. So we to be a part of that. When we found out we could I was really excited for everything we'd get to do," Lindsay Parker said.

"Now I can wear the uniform and I'm proud to be a part of it," Morgan Phillips said.

David Parker, Troop 2019 committee chairman, said now his daughter will be "able to be recognized for doing the same work the boys are doing."

Each Boy Scouts of America program offers different rewards, from rank advancements to level awards and badges.

"But they all use the core principles of the scout oath and scout law and outdoor codes. I think those are the components of the building blocks of the scout program," said Kevin Phillips, scoutmaster for Troop 2019.

To learn more about Scouts BSA Troop 2019 or how to join, email Scoutmaster Kevin Phillips at scoutsbsa-troop2019@gmail.com.

Reach reporter Nancy DeGennaro at degennaro@dnj.com.

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