

Troop 874

Ellicott City, MD



Prospective Scout

Parent Handbook

with credit to Troop 8 & Bob Geier

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What is Troop 874

Troop 874 is owned and operated by Glen Mar United Methodist Church as part of its service to youth. The Church provides meeting places and other resources to the troop, and the pastor oversees troop operations, including the approval of troop adult leaders. Like other Glen Mar youth programs, it is open to youth from the greater community who want to participate in our program. As a religious organization, Troop 874 reflects the mission and character of the church, and supports the moral teachings of the church in its program, along with the character and skill building aspects of the worldwide scouting movement.

The program is supported and overseen by the troop committee, a group of dedicated parent and community volunteers who believe in the mission of scouting and the benefits it provides to young men. They provide logistical support and fundraising help, approve policies, and select adult leaders.

The scout program itself is overseen by a group of adult scoutmasters, consisting of a mix of parents and community volunteers. One of these is appointed to serve as Scoutmaster by the Troop Committee.

For the scout program to run well, the regular participation and volunteer efforts of parents are required. Every parent is expected to participate in troop fundraisers and outing transportation. Each parent must also sign up for a troop support job of some sort; these run a range from serving on the troop committee to working as a part-time assistant scoutmaster or patrol coach.

In boy scouting, though, the real organizers, planners, and leaders are the boys themselves, represented by their elected Patrol

Leaders Council (PLC) and the “head scout,” the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL). Scouting teaches responsibility and leadership by giving responsibility and leadership of its programs to boys and scoutmasters of many faiths, which makes for interesting and reflective sharing of perspectives, particularly among the older boys. Your son may be exposed to alternative viewpoints. For the most part, though, troop activities are generally non-religious in nature. For religious instruction, we’d encourage you to consider some of the other Glen Mar youth programs.

This notion of boy leadership distinguishes scouting from many other youth programs. If you're new to scouting at this level, it may take some getting used to. Troops run more like a "pick up game" than an adult-run league, because we feel it's important for kids to learn how to organize a team, officiate & settle disputes, decide on positions and work out strategies. We don't take that away from them by having the adults do it all. That means troop operations will carry a distinct "kid-print" and not always be "organized" in an adult way. It also means that troop boys end up being better at managing themselves and others than most other young adults, because they have had the real life experience of doing it themselves.

AIMS AND METHODS OF SCOUTING

Boys join scouting to have fun, especially in the outdoors. Few boys would join if the program was sold to them as a character building exercise or a leadership training vehicle. Scouting uses fun activities as the framework for its goals. To be a more effective patrol coach you need to know what Scouting is trying to accomplish and how. The program has three basic

goals or aims which have been its direction since way back when, even as far back as when you were old enough to be a boy scout. They are:

- To Build Character
- To Foster Citizenship
- To Develop Fitness

A boy's character is defined by his personal qualities, his values, and his beliefs. Scouting builds character by promoting self-reliance, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-respect.

Scouting promotes good citizenship. It includes duty to country, to other people, and to himself.

Finally, Scouting promotes fitness, not just in the typical physical area, but also mentally and emotionally. A well tuned and healthy body, the ability to think, to solve problems, to have self-control, courage and self-esteem are all part of fitness. Although Scouting has no alliance to any one religion, it definitely values belief in God.

As in any leadership role, it is vitally important for you to understand the goals of scouting. If you are ever unsure of these goals, all you have to do is read two Scout sayings, the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

The Scout Oath is:

On my honor, I will do my best, to do my duty, to God,
and my country
And to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

The Scout Law is:

A Scout is;
Trustworthy
Loyal
Helpful
Friendly
Courteous
Kind
Obedient
Cheerful
Thrifty
Brave
Clean
Reverent

Scouting accomplishes these goals through eight methods. They are:

- Ideals
- Patrols
- Outdoors
- Advancement
- Personal Growth
- Adult Association
- Leadership Development
- Uniform

Do we have to be Methodist to join?

No! Troop 874 welcomes families of all denominations into its program. At present, about half of our scouts and half of our scoutmasters come from other religious traditions

We're strong and active in our Church. Does the troop support the faith, and reflect the teaching authority of only the Methodist Church?

No. Adult leaders and troop operations reflect the moral environment appropriate for the Boy Scouts of America which is faith neutral. Troop activities are not religious education, and we do not provide religious instruction, prayer groups, retreats, etc. as part of the troop program, except for those boys who are pursuing religious awards. The troop welcomes boy and their families from all faiths.

Will my son be able to attend services on weekends?

For car-camping outings (and other outings when possible), the boys provide a service on Sunday morning known as the Interfaith Service. This service is led by the Troop Chaplains Aide, a Scout, and planned in concert with the Troop Chaplain, an adult.

We're not Methodist. Does my son have to go to the Interfaith Service with the troop?

Yes. Those that choose not to participate are asked to come without objection and sit quietly. Most boys and scoutmasters from various faiths view this as their religious service for that weekend, and participate accordingly.

Will my son be able to earn religious awards for our denomination?

The troop encourages boys to be involved in their church. We gladly work with any boy interested in achieving any of Scouting's religious awards.

What is the Troop Committee?

The troop committee is the group of volunteers who help support and run the troop program. Members of the committee also oversee parent volunteer efforts.

I would like to help out, but I don't like going camping. What can I do?

Only a special cadre of wild and crazy adults go camping with us and eat with "Mom". You are invited to attend, but be prepared to have fun. If this is not your cup of tea, there are a number of other positions that are as valuable. Most of these help with various logistics – fund raising events, troop notes, equipment, billing, transportation, scout advancement, merit badge counseling and the like. Come to a troop meeting or Committee meeting, talk to a scoutmaster... we will find you a job that will match your interests and talents.

I'm pretty busy. Do parents have to take volunteer positions?

Just as the boys who join scouting agree to be true to the Scout Oath & Law, parents who have children in scouting agree to support the program with their talents and energies. There are a variety of jobs that need doing, some with short-term commitments like running a video camera at an Eagle Court of Honor, bringing refreshments to a standard Court of Honor, the others with longer, steady commitments like coordinating transportation. You should sign up for a job that fits your time

schedule and interests. Parents who do not sign up will be assigned a job. Parents who refuse to do a job will be asked to find a different troop for their son. In exceptional circumstances, this requirement can be waived for a family by the troop committee.

How are Assistant Scoutmasters selected?

Adults who are interested in working with the boys in the troop speak with one of the current Assistant Scoutmasters, and are invited to help out at meetings and at campouts. After some time doing this, if the boys and the adults feel there's a "good fit," the Scoutmaster will make a recommendation to the troop committee. The committee chair will then contact references and approach the whole committee for approval. In order to guarantee to the boys and their families the best program, when there is a vacancy in the Scoutmaster position, it is filled from the ranks of the active scoutmasters.

Why do the Scoutmasters and boy leadership always call and ask for my son, and seem reluctant to answer my questions?

Scouting is about boy leadership. Unlike cub scouts, the leadership is composed of boys and works directly with boys, to develop participation and responsibility. The leaders will always ask for your son and give him the information, expecting him to pass it along to you. When you have questions about an outing or event and call a Scoutmaster or Patrol Coach, the first thing they are going to do is ask if your son has called his patrol leader or the scout trip leader. Kids learn responsibility by being given responsibility, and occasionally making mistakes. We'd ask you to help your son be responsible by working through the boy leadership, rather than doing his work for him as an adult.

I called one of the boy leaders to ask a question. Why did he refuse to speak with me?

We encourage your son to call his patrol leader or the event trip leader with questions. If you have an adult-level question about troop operations, please direct it to the Lead Assistant Scoutmaster. As part of the BSA's youth protection rules and to avoid misunderstandings, the boys are generally instructed not to take phone calls from adults other than the Scoutmaster staff.

I've got a great idea for an event or service project. How do we schedule it?

"We" don't. The boys do. All the troop activities and events are planned and approved by the boy leadership at monthly PLC meetings. Adult suggestions should be passed along to the Scoutmasters or to one of the senior boys. If it's approved and checked by them, they will assign a trip/project leader and the Scoutmasters will assign an adult coordinator.

I don't like something about the way the troop operates. Who should I talk to?

This depends on the topic. If it's an operational matter, the boys are in charge. This means that things won't always be run as well or as smoothly as we as adults might expect, but that's how young leaders learn. Sometimes, actually, it will run better! Pass your suggestions along to your son to share with the patrol leaders. If the issue is of more concern, please find the time to speak with the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster is the final say in troop operations and should be able to answer your questions, or pass your concern along to the appropriate person(s). If the matter affects the health and welfare of boys in a serious way and the Scoutmaster's response was not appropriate, call the Troop Committee chair.

My son says he doesn't have to bring a jacket and I don't believe him. What should I do?

Trust your son. Because scouting relies on boy leadership and makes boys responsible, your son will typically have more information on troop procedures and events than you will. That's quite a change from the little boy who was always dependent on you. It means your style has to change a bit. You have to ask him for information and listen to the answer, rather than the other way around. Instead of doing things for him, wait and be ready to help when he asks (and perhaps offer an occasional suggestion). Instead of telling him his schedule, ask what events are coming up that he plans on attending. Include him in decisions about family activities, and plan these in advance so that he can see how they fit in with scouting events. It'll be hard, sometimes. As adult leaders, it almost kills us, but it makes for self-directed, responsible young men.

Ranks and Merit Badges

During their time in the scouts, boys progress through seven ranks, finishing with the rank of "Eagle Scout." In order, these ranks are Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle.

Scout ranks reflect increasing level of skills, maturity, and leadership. The Scout rank is earned as part of the joining requirements. Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks are earned by completing a "laundry list" of requirements that include basic camping skills, first aid, and citizenship. The ranks of Star, Life, and Eagle require completion of merit badges, leadership within the troop, and service to the community. In order to earn a rank, a boy must complete all of the requirements by having them "signed off" by an adult leader. Next, the boy must have a

personal conference with a Scoutmaster, where he must demonstrate his knowledge. Finally, the boy must appear before a "board of review" composed of troop adults and satisfy them that he deserves the change in rank. It's a great experience for developing confidence and interviewing skills.

Merit badges are recognition of advanced skills in a particular area. Merit badges are awarded for outdoor skills, citizenship, hobbies, and career-related achievement. Twelve merit badges are termed "required," because they must be earned in order to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout (citizenship, camping, first aid, etc.). To earn a merit badge, a boy must fulfill all the requirements for that badge and be "signed off" by a merit badge counselor who is knowledgeable in that particular field. Counselors are always troop adults, either Scoutmasters, Patrol Coaches or parents. In addition to ranks and badges, scouting and Troop 874 each have a number of additional awards and recognitions for boys who have developed particular skills or participated in noble activities. One of the highlights of scouting are troop award ceremonies, called "Courts of Honor," where boys receive recognition for their achievements.

Can my son work on more than one rank at a time?

Yes. In particular, the requirements for Tenderfoot, 2nd Class, and 1st Class ranks can be earned out of order. The ranks, however, must be completed in order. Typically, when a boy earns one rank he will already have about half of the requirements done for the next rank.

When can a boy start working on merit badges?

Right away. Merit badges can be earned at any time. Usually, we recommend that new scouts concentrate on the Tenderfoot and

2nd Class requirements, though, because the skills required for most merit badges are beyond their level of physical and mental maturity.

Can I sign off the requirements when my son earns them?

No. This is a big difference from cub scouts. In boy scouts, you as a parent can NEVER sign off your own son's requirements, or serve as his merit badge counselor. Scoutmasters and other adult leaders are the ones who can do the signoffs for rank requirements, and your son must use someone other than a relative for a merit badge counselor.

They taught first aid requirements at the meeting. Why didn't they sign my son's book?

Most of the scout requirements say "demonstrate," as in "demonstrate first aid for..." To meet the requirement, a boy must be able to do a good job at the task on his own, without help or prompting, usually "in the field." He must really have mastered the skill. For this reason, the troop will never sign off a requirement at the same time it is taught; the boy must come back at least a week later and demonstrate the skill without help. In many cases, the skill must be demonstrated in the field at the right time (like a particular canoe stroke), not just when being tested for the merit badge.

How does my son earn the "Show Scout Spirit" requirement?

Scout spirit is a behavioral requirement, which reflects enthusiasm, participation, and good "expedition behavior" on campouts and outings. The requirement is different for different ranks. At 2nd Class, participation and cheerfulness are key. For Eagle, leadership, character, and integrity are the deciding factors. A Scoutmaster will sign off this requirement when he sees your

son demonstrate the appropriate level of maturity and behavior on outings. This is often the last and toughest requirement for rank.

What's so different about ranks after First Class ?

The requirements for the ranks of Star, Life, and Eagle are very different from the "laundry list" of items for the lower ranks. These boys must demonstrate leadership within the troop and community service. They are allowed to act as an adult in teaching skills, planning outings and events, etc. For the rank of Eagle, a boy must (on his own) put together a large community service project: soliciting funds, directing adults and younger scouts, etc. to help a community agency. These boys are usually eligible to participate in the troop's high adventure program.

Can a boy "fail" a scoutmaster conference or board of review?

You can't fail a conference. The Scoutmaster may, however, send a boy "back to the books" before letting him go to a board of review. To pass a board of review, the decision of the adults must be unanimous, so it is possible to be turned down by a board.

How long does it usually take for a boy to move up in rank?

There's a wide variation in times, depending mostly on how often the boy comes to meetings and on troop outings. As a rule of thumb, one rank per year is pretty good. Rank advancement in Troop 874 is pretty steady; each boy moves at his own pace and we don't pressure kids unduly. The Scoutmasters do keep track of how kids are doing via the Troop database advancement system, Troopmaster. This system is managed by the advancement chair and Life to Eagle coordinator. While we hope that you will encourage your son in all his scouting endeavors, and occasionally help him keep track of requirements, we would ask

that you not impose any deadlines or rules that aren't imposed by the troop.

What's a "partial" merit badge?

Quite often, a boy may complete some of the requirements for a merit badge but not finish. This can happen when he misses some part of the instruction, or when he completes the book work for a badge but hasn't achieved the level of physical skill, or when he's demonstrated the skill but hasn't done the book work. The troop keeps track of merit badge "partials" and will try to remind boys to finish up. Sometimes, merit badge partial lists or "blue cards" may be brought home, and you can help with the encouragement.

Can I sign up to be a merit badge counselor?

Absolutely! Contact one of the Scoutmasters or the Advancement Chair.

I've been called to serve on a Board of Review. What should I know?

A board of review is the "interview team" that evaluates a scout for rank promotion. If this is your first time on a board, let the other adults know that and you'll be put with experienced hands. An adult board of review guide and requirement "cheat sheet" will be available at the board.

At a court of honor, they pass out a number of small cards for merit badges and rank. Should we keep these?

Yes! In addition to being nice awards, the cards are your son's proof of achieving those things. Our experience has been that the Scout Council is not the best at keeping accurate records. So if you move to a new troop, or when your son is applying for the Eagle rank, he may need those cards.

Where on the uniform do I put the badges?

Well, your son should be putting the badges on the uniform, but... Rank badges go on the left pocket. Merit badges go on a green merit badge sash. A guide is available in the Scout Handbook.

What is the troop neckerchief, hat, and uniform?

Troop 874 wears a neckerchief, and a uniform hat. Your son was provided a neckerchief when he joined the Troop or at his bridging ceremony. The hat is available for purchase from the Troop treasurer. Troop 874 wears the complete uniform at every meeting. This consists of the uniform shirt, pants, Scout belt, neckerchief, slide and Scout socks.

What do I do with the activity patches my son gets at courts of honor?

Activity patches are generally given for coming on camporees, summer camp, and other events. There is a time-honored tradition of trading activity patches between scouts, particularly scouts in other troops. Boys are encouraged to bring them along on camporees and other scout events. One badge may be worn over the right pocket of the uniform; boys sometimes put these in easy-to-swap plastic protectors.

Meetings & Participation

Troop meetings are held Thursday nights, from 7:30PM -9PM in the Glen Mar Fellowship Hall. Meeting opening happens at 7:30. The events and program at any given meeting vary extensively, depending on what the boys decide at the Patrol Leader's Council.

Often they will include some skills instruction, information and signups for upcoming events, and some fun time.

Does my son have to wear his uniform to the meeting?

Yes! We ask that all scouts wear their uniform to regular Thursday night meetings. Your assistance in providing reminders is appreciated.

What else should my son bring to meetings?

The other thing that a scout should bring to every meeting is his scout book. The scout book contains “sign-off” sheets that scoutmasters and older boys will review regularly.

The weather is really bad. Is the meeting canceled?

Troop 874 follows the calendar and operations of the Howard County Schools. If Howard County Schools are closed for weather or for vacation, there will ordinarily be no meeting or other Troop activities that evening.

My son has a conflict on meetings and outings with another youth/sport activity. Is this OK?

Scouting is a skill-development, team sport. Scouts don’t have to attend every meeting or event, of course. Our recommendation, though, is that they attend as much as they possibly can. Our experience has been that kids who don’t attend around two-thirds of the meetings and outings will drop out of scouts after a year or so. Boys who don’t attend often fall behind their peers in skills and ability, and become less comfortable going on events where their friends may be far ahead of them. Boys who are heavily involved in youth sports programs (SAC soccer, etc.) that keep them away from scouting events usually need to make a choice between the programs in the first year or two. Generally, the

commitments work out over time. Of course, we would like to see the boys give as much time to Scouts as they do other activities to insure they receive the full benefit of the program.

Outings

Scouting is all about outing. One of the things that has distinguished the Troop 874 program over the years has been the number and variety of outings. Outings are decided on and planned by the boys in the patrol leader’s council. We have outings ten (10) of the twelve months of the year. Notice of outings is published on the Troop website and in the weekly emails by the adults in the meeting minutes. Of these sources of information, the web site tends to be the most current, and should be checked for updates. The site is located at <http://www.troop874.com>.

Boys must sign up for outings at the troop meetings and observe the two (2) week rule; if they miss the meeting, they may sign up by calling (or emailing) their patrol leader or an Assistant Scoutmaster. For some outings, one or more advance deposits are requested. Most outings will leave from the Glen Mar parking lot.

What should my son bring on the outing?

For overnight outings, a general equipment list is available on the web site and through the troop. Boys must bring their own “ditty bag” of toiletries, plus a sleeping bag, appropriate clothing, etc.

Are there any things my son should NOT bring on an outing?

Generally, the gear list provided for an outing is a complete list, and a boy should bring all of the items and nothing else. Exceptions may be made for small items (deck of cards, etc.).

Many home-comfort items, like pillows, bathtowels, etc. are frowned upon and will only be ruined. At all costs, avoid items with cartoon characters (mighty mouse blanket), teddy bears, or other "kiddie" items. Electronic devices (walkmen, radios, games) are prohibited on outings. Soda is also prohibited. Exception may be made for long car trips, but these items are still frowned upon.

My son lost something on an outing. Is there a lost & found?

At the meeting following an outing, misplaced gear will be brought to be returned by the SPL. Scouts are expected to keep track of their personal gear. Lost items are kept on hand until the end of a Leadership cycle. After that, if unclaimed, they will be disposed of.

Why did my son come home with troop gear at the end of the outing?

Some items like tents, dining flies, patrol boxes, etc. require additional "maintenance" before we can store them. Tents and flies should be hung up to dry and air out after an outing. Please spray it with water and brush off the dirt if necessary. When the tent is dry, it can be put back in the stuff sack. The tent should ALWAYS be taken out of the stuff sack by Sunday night, even if your son claims it is not dirty. (Please DO NOT wash or dry tents in laundry machines!) Pots & pans should be washed, stoves cleaned and utensils washed thoroughly.

What is an equipment check, and are they required?

An equipment checkout is a detailed examination of the gear your son intends to bring on an outing. For a number of outings, these will be required of all boys. Being properly equipped is both a comfort and a safety issue, and the older boys or adults will be

firm about having proper equipment. Some in-troop "loaner" gear is available to assist.

We forgot about the signup/trip deposit. Can my son still go?

If your son misses a meeting where a signup is taken, he should contact his ASPL immediately. Usually, if he calls within a few days we can accommodate the addition. If he misses a deposit, he should call the trip leader as well to let him know, and follow the instructions provided. Where possible, we will accommodate occasional forgetfulness, but because of lead time requirements for reservations, etc., it may not be possible. Please do not just "show up" at the outing without signing up/doing pre-trips/passing equipment checks; we will send the boy home, which can be very disappointing and awkward for him. Generally, we'd ask that you help your son be responsible for the signup & deposit deadlines.

Can parent(s) come on outings?

Yes! Parents are welcome on outings and are often needed as drivers. Parents must meet the same equipment and pre-trip requirements as the boys in order to participate. Parents who come on an outing serve as extra adult leaders, and are expected to stay with the adults and not interfere with the boys' activity by helping them cook, cleaning up after them, sleeping with them, etc. This rule is relaxed somewhat for first year scouts, but is still done in accordance with the Lead Assistant Scoutmasters requirements. Parents are expected to follow the Scoutmasters rules, and not be either more or less strict with their child than the Scoutmaster. Mom's are welcome on outings as well as dads.

Can other siblings come on outings?

No. The troop can't be responsible for brothers & sisters, and their addition complicates the logistics and the trip dynamic. A parent who comes on an outing is serving as a troop adult leader, and cannot be spending time tending to other kids. The exception to this rule is the annual troop Thanksgiving Feast and the September Court of Honor/social, both of which are designed to be family outings under troop sponsorship.

I'm an expert canoeist/backpacker/etc. Can't I skip the pretrips?

No. Adults must meet the same requirements as the boys. Even experts need to get refresher training, and to learn troop procedures. Plus, participation in the prep trips provides a good example to your son of the importance of learning and being prepared.

It's raining. Is the outing cancelled?

Troop outings go in all kinds of weather. We have a saying in Troop 874, 'there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear'. Unless the outing is advertised as "fair weather only" it will almost surely be "on." In fair-weather-only cases, or in the rare event of a cancellation of a regular outing, all the boys who have signed up will be called. Our boys get very good at camping in bad weather.

My son is trip leader or has to buy food for a weekend outing. What should I do?

If it's his first time around as trip leader, you might gently help by suggesting things to think about. He will probably be involved in buying food. Go with him to the store and buy food. He should have a list and a number of people to buy for which is another reason for the two (2) week rule. Please exercise some judgment

in terms of nutrition and minimizing cost, and help him to understand these pieces.

It seems like the troop goes on a lot of difficult outings that make me nervous.

Yep. Troop activities are exciting and challenging, particularly in the Venture program. Challenging activities help boys to grow, and keep them interested and enthused. While exciting and challenging, the activities are also as safe as we can make them. That's why we insist on things like gear checks, prep trips, and following troop procedure.

My son doesn't seem to like outings, and avoids going on them.

There are often some comfort/maturity issues for first year scouts, and it's difficult to go from a webelos program that car camped once or twice a year to a scouting program that goes on overnights and activities once a month. Talk to a scoutmaster about how together we might gently encourage participation. Consider taking a year off, and coming back to scouts when he is a bit older. Ultimately, understand that there are some kids who decide they don't like camping (it's dirty, smelly, cold, uncomfortable...) and help him find some other fun youth activity.

Does my son need to fill out a permission slip for each outing?

Yes! We ask you to fill out the permission. Occasionally, an outside agency may require a special permission slip, but that's rare.

My son has band practice Saturday morning. Can I bring him out late?

Much of the work and responsibility of camping is in camp set-up and clean-up. It's unfair to the other boys to have your son come

for the fun stuff and avoid the work. Special arrangements also require the adult leaders to go out of their way. For these reasons, the troop frowns on late arrivals or early departures from outings. Occasional, rare exceptions may be made by the Scoutmaster with strict guidelines. Please understand that such requests are a very big favor, and will not ordinarily be granted. Help your son to make good choices between activities rather than rushing from one to another.

I've been asked to drive on an outing by the transportation coordinator. What should I know?

You'll get specific instructions from the adult trip coordinator at the departure. Please do not leave until the passengers in all the vehicles have been counted. Car rules, whether you allow food, etc. are up to you. We recommend you be very cautious about allowing food or drink.

How do I get reimbursed for gas when I drive?

You don't. Driving is a volunteer effort on behalf of the program. Your driving mileage may be tax deductible as charitable mileage.

Venture Program

The Venture program is a Troop 874 program for older boys, focusing on "high adventure" outings and activities of a challenging nature. These include caving, rock climbing, advanced backpacking and mountaineering, whitewater kayaking, scuba, and a variety of others. Troop 874 Venture scouts become strong outdoor leaders capable of running their own expeditions. The program follows the outdoor leader curriculum of the Wilderness Education Association and the National Outdoor Leadership School. Troop 874 runs numerous extended trips each

year, usually over summer. Months of effort, preparation, training and practice are required prior to each major Venture expedition.

How does my son join Venture?

To be part of the Ventures, a scout must be at least 14 years old or a freshman in high school, and 1st Class rank.

These trips sound really extreme. Aren't they dangerous?

Venture activities, as with all troop activities, emphasize safety through knowledge and preparation. If done by inexperienced or unprepared scouts or adults, these trips could be risky. That's why the guys insist on extensive training and equipment checks before any major trip. The risks for some Venture outings are higher than some regular troop outings, in part because of the more remote nature of the trips and the extra car or plane transportation to get there. Generally, Venture trips should be considered to have risks similar to high-school level competitive athletics, though probably not as hazardous as football.

Billing, Finances, Fund-Raising, and Insurance

Troop finances and billing for outings are run by the troop committee and the troop treasurer, so as to relieve the scoutmasters of this burden. There is an annual fee from BSA plus a family assessment from Troop 874. Please contact the Troop treasurer for the details on these current costs.

Are there troop dues?

Yes. Dues are \$1.00 per week and should be paid by your son out of his allowance or some other savings. If your son is behind in his

dues, he cannot receive advancement recognition until he settles his account.

We can't afford to pay the bill or pay for an outing. What should we do?

Troop 874 has an iron-clad policy that no boy should be denied participation on any event because of ability or willingness to pay. Our boys are our troop leaders; it's more valuable to the troop to have them out learning skills and taking responsibility than the small cost of outings. If you can't afford an outing but your son wants to go, please speak to the Scoutmaster or Committee Chair in confidence. We will send him and make arrangements to insure your needs are met. Every boy will have the same opportunity to participate.

Our family is unwilling to spend the money for an expensive outing. Why do scoutmasters or troop committee members keep inviting our son?

Boy Scouting is about boy leadership. Most of our trips are possible only because of the skills and contributions that each boy, and particularly the older boys, make. Each boy is a teammate, and each patrol needs enough team members to play the scouting game. When one can't come, it hurts everyone, from the boy who doesn't get to learn a skill, to the peer who has few friends on the outing, to the older boy who spent a ton of effort planning the campout or preparing to teach a skill. Troop 874 believes that each family should give according to their ability and take according to their need. Many friends and families of the troop give generously of their resources to provide for boys where family resources would be stretched. They recognize the value scouting has as an educational program, and were often themselves the recipients of such kind assistance in the past. We

know your son will be similarly generous to others, by teaching younger boys, being a contributing part of the team instead of an occasional player, and supporting youth education programs in the future. It's a good investment. While accepting the troop's offer of assistance and allowing your son to go on more adventurous trips may require the practice of some humility, it gives others the opportunity to share, and helps bring our scouting community together. Accepting Troop 874 financial assistance is no different than accepting a scholarship to help pay your son's college tuition (except that we're going to expect more of him than just doing OK in classes!)

We make our son pay for half of the outing cost.

About 25% of the troop families ask their son to pay a portion of trip costs. That's a family decision which the adult leaders will support. Our experience with this practice over the years, however, is that it should be used with some caution. We have seen about half of the boys who had this sort of arrangement drop out because of it. Boys who participate in scouts, particularly in more expensive Venture outings, have a great deal of difficult responsibility for planning and "making the outing happen." It's a lot of work. To add the money-earning requirement (more responsibility & work) puts kids in the "hey, it's easier and almost as much fun to just hang out with friends & play video games" mode. Just as in the marketplace, higher cost discourages purchase, even when it's a good product.

What troop fund raisers happen during the year?

The troop committee decides these. If you have any great ideas, please share them with the committee.

***We like to give a portion of our income to worthwhile causes.
Can we give to scouting?***

Yes! We would ask that rather than giving to the Scout Council, where most of your money will go into administrative salaries and overhead, you make a gift to the troop. 100% of your donation will go into the program, to support scholarships, loaner equipment, and other needs. Gifts can be sent to the treasurer.

Does the troop carry accident insurance?

Primary coverage for any accident or injury your son has while on a troop outing is going to be your family health care plan. The troop does not as a matter of course provide health coverage. Some limited coverage may be provided in a particular year, but should not be relied upon.

Have Additional Questions?

The Lead Assistant Scoutmaster and Scoutmaster will be scheduling a new parent's orientation for you after receiving your son's joining paperwork. Please bring your questions to his attention at that meeting, where other parents may benefit from the answer. As you have questions along the way, ask your son, check the troop website, or email or call one of the scoutmasters. Please understand that during scout meetings there's quite a bit going on, and the adult leaders will normally not have enough reserve sanity to address your queries thoughtfully.

**You can reach still more information
about Troop 874.**

<http://www.troop874.com>