

# Troop 874

## Ellicott City, MD



### Prospective Scout

### Parent Handbook & FAQ 2026

Welcome to Troop 874. We are glad you are considering joining our Scouting community and hope this handbook provides a helpful overview of how our troop operates and what you and your Scout can expect. Scouting offers a unique experience centered on outdoor adventure, personal growth, and leadership development. Through a wide variety of activities—from campouts and service projects to skill-building and high-adventure trips—Scouts gain confidence, independence, and a strong sense of responsibility.

Troop 874 follows the Scouting America model of a youth-led program. Scouts plan and lead their own activities with guidance from trained adult leaders, creating an environment where they learn by doing. This approach may feel different from other youth programs, as it intentionally gives Scouts the opportunity to make decisions, solve problems, and grow from their experiences. Parents play an important supporting role by encouraging participation, reinforcing responsibility, and helping sustain the troop through volunteer efforts.

This handbook is designed to answer common questions and provide clarity on troop structure, expectations, and policies. It serves as a reference for both new and returning families as you navigate the Scouting journey with your Scout. We encourage you to read through it, stay engaged, and reach out with questions—our goal is to partner with you to create a positive and rewarding experience for every Scout.

What is Troop 874 ..... 4

*Do families have to be members of the church where the troop meets, or belong to a specific religion, to join the troop?* ..... 6

*Will my Scout be able to attend services on weekends?* ..... 6

*We're not religious. Does my Scout have to go to the Interfaith Service with the troop?* ..... 6

*Will my Scout be able to earn religious awards for our denomination?* ..... 6

*What is the Troop Committee?* ..... 6

Parent Involvement

*I would like to help out, but I don't like going camping. What can I do?* ..... 6

*I'm pretty busy. Do parents have to take volunteer positions?* 6

Leadership

*How are Assistant Scoutmasters selected?* ..... 7

*Why do the Scoutmasters and boy leadership always email my Scout, and seem reluctant to respond to my questions?* ..... 7

*I emailed one of the boy leaders to ask a question. Why did he not respond to me?* ..... 7

*I've got a great idea for an event or service project. How do we schedule it?* ..... 7

*I don't like something about the way the troop operates. Who should I talk to?* ..... 8

*My Scout says he doesn't have to bring a jacket and I don't believe him. What should I do?* ..... 8

Ranks and Merit Badges ..... 8

*Can my Scout work on more than one rank at a time?* ..... 9

*When can a Scout start working on merit badges?* ..... 9

*Can I sign off the requirements when my Scout earns them?* 9

*They taught first aid requirements at the meeting. Why didn't they sign my Scout's book?* ..... 9

*How does my Scout earn the "Show Scout Spirit" requirement?* ..... 9

*What's so different about ranks after First Class?* ..... 9

*Can a Scout "fail" a scoutmaster conference or board of review?* ..... 10

*How long does it usually take for a Scout to move up in rank?* ..... 10

*What's a "partial" merit badge?* ..... 10

*Can I sign up to be a merit badge counselor?* ..... 10

*I've been called to serve on a Board of Review. What should I know?* ..... 10

*At a court of honor, they pass out a number of small cards for merit badges and rank. Should we keep these?* ..... 10

*Where on the uniform do I put the badges?* ..... 10

*What is the troop neckerchief, hat, and uniform?* ..... 10

*What do I do with the activity patches my Scout gets at courts of honor?* ..... 11

Meetings & Participation

*Does my Scout have to wear his uniform to the meeting?* ..... 11

*What else should my Scout bring to meetings?* ..... 11

*The weather is really bad. Is the meeting canceled?* ..... 11

*My Scout has a conflict with meetings and outings with another youth/sport activity. Is this OK?* ..... 11

**Outings**

*What should my Scout bring on the outing?* ..... 12

*Are there any things my Scout should NOT bring on an outing?* ..... 12

*My Scout lost something on an outing. Is there a lost & found?* ..... 12

*Why did my Scout come home with troop gear at the end of the outing?* ..... 12

*What is an equipment check, and are they required?* ..... 13

*We forgot about the signup/trip deposit. Can my Scout still go?* ..... 13

*Can parents come on outings?* ..... 13

*Can younger siblings come on outings?* ..... 13

*I'm an expert canoeist/backpacker/etc. Can't I skip the prep trips?* ..... 13

*It's raining. Is the outing cancelled?* ..... 13

*My Scout is trip leader and must buy food for a weekend outing. What should I do?* ..... 14

*It seems like the troop goes on a lot of difficult outings that make me nervous.* ..... 14

*My Scout doesn't seem to like outings, and avoids going on them.* ..... 14

*Does my Scout need to have a permission slip for each outing?* ..... 14

*What if my Scout cannot attend the entire campout? Can they arrive late or leave early?* ..... 14

*Does the troop provide transportation to campouts or outings?* ..... 14

**Venture Program**

*How does my Scout join Venture?* ..... 15

*These trips sound really extreme. Aren't they dangerous? ..* 15

**Billing, Finances, Fund-Raising, and Insurance**

*I'm being asked to pay different amounts at different times. What are these payments for and why can't I just pay it all at once?* ..... 15

*Are there troop dues?* ..... 16

*We can't afford to pay the bill or pay for an outing. What should we do?* ..... 16

*Our family is unwilling to spend the money for an expensive outing. Why do scoutmasters or troop committee members keep inviting our Scout?* ..... 16

*We make our Scout pay for half of the outing cost, what's wrong with that?* ..... 17

*What troop fund raisers happen during the year?* ..... 17

*We like to give a portion of our income to worthwhile causes. Can we make a donation scouting?* ..... 17

*Does the troop carry accident insurance?* ..... 17

*Have Additional Questions?* ..... 17

### **What is Troop 874**

Troop 874 is chartered through Scouting America by the Ellicott City Volunteer Fire Department as part of the department's service to youth in our community. As the troop's Chartered Organization, the Fire Department sponsors the troop and approves its adult leadership. Troop 874 holds its regular meetings at Glen Mar United Methodist Church, where we rent meeting space. Troop 874 welcomes youth from across the greater community who want to participate in the Scouting program.

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 is encouraged to volunteer 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 to helping with a scout's Board of Review.

Scouting is designed to be youth-led. The Scouts themselves plan and lead activities through the Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC), with guidance from the Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), who serves as the troop's primary youth leader. This structure helps Scouts build responsibility, confidence, and leadership skills by giving them real ownership of their program. Because Scouts and leaders come from a variety of backgrounds, participants may be exposed to different perspectives, especially as they grow older. However, troop activities are generally non-religious in nature.

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 "pickup 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 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 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 families have to be members of the church where the troop meets, or belong to a specific religion, to join the troop?***

No. Troop 874 welcomes youth and families of all faiths and backgrounds. While our meetings are held at Glen Mar United Methodist Church, families do **not** need to be members of the church—or of any particular religious denomination—to participate in the troop. Troop 874 operates as part of the program of Scouting America and is chartered by the Ellicott City Volunteer Fire Department.

***Will my Scout 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 Chaplain's Aide, a Scout, and planned in concert with the Troop Chaplain, an adult.

***We're not religious. Does my Scout 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 Scout 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.

**Parent Involvement**

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

You are invited to attend campouts and may be surprised at how much fun you have. However, if you do not like to camp, there are a number of other positions that are as valuable. Most of these help with various logistics – our fund-raising event, equipment, billing, transportation, scout advancement, merit badge counseling, board of reviews, and more. 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 Scouts commit to living by the Scout Oath and Scout Law as part of Scouting America, parents and guardians play an important role in supporting the troop. Troop 874 is a volunteer-supported program, and its success depends on the time, skills, and talents of our families.

There are many ways to help, ranging from small, occasional tasks—such as helping at a Court of Honor, providing

refreshments, or assisting with an event—to longer-term roles like serving as a merit badge counselor or helping coordinate training or activities. We encourage every parent or guardian to find a way to contribute that fits their schedule, interests, and abilities.

Your involvement not only helps the troop operate smoothly, but it also shows your Scout the importance of service, commitment, and supporting the community. If you are unsure how you might help, a member of the troop leadership or committee will be happy to help you find a role that works for you. We understand that each family's circumstances are different. If a family is temporarily unable to volunteer, they are encouraged to speak with the troop committee so we can find an approach that works for everyone.

### **Leadership**

#### ***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 email my Scout, and seem reluctant to respond to 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 message your son and give him the information (and copy you). When you have questions about an outing or event and email a Scoutmaster or Patrol Coach, the first thing they are going to do is ask if your son has emailed his patrol leader or the scout trip leader. Kids learn responsibility by being given responsibility, and occasionally make 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 emailed one of the boy leaders to ask a question. Why did he not respond to me?***

We encourage your son to email 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 Committee Chair. As part of Scouting America's youth protection rules and to avoid misunderstandings, parents or two adult leaders must be copied on scout to adult communication. The Committee Chair provides a weekly email to parents with current information and updates.

***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 Committee Chair who will discuss with the Scoutmaster and respond to you directly. The Scoutmaster has the final say in troop program operations but works with the troop committee. If the matter affects the health and welfare of boys in a serious way and the Committee Chair and/or Scoutmaster's response was not appropriate, call the Baltimore Area Council for guidance.

***My Scout 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. Thirteen 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 several 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 Scout work on more than one rank at a time?***

Yes. In particular, the requirements for Tenderfoot, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Scout 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 Scout 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 Scout'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 Scout 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 Scout “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 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. 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 all the requirements. 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 from the Advancement Chair.

***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 Scout 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 Scout 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 of Glen Mar Church and not Howard County Public Schools. The church does many times follow the same closures as HCPSS, but it has happened in the past that the Church has stayed open when the schools have closed. We may cancel meetings if the church has need of the space for church activities.

***My Scout has a conflict with 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

Many home-comfort items, like pillows, bathtowels, etc. are frowned upon and will only be ruined. Avoid items with cartoon characters on them, stuffed animals, or other "kiddie" items. Electronic devices (phones, mp3 players, video games) are prohibited on outings unless required for boy leadership. Soda or other soft drinks are also prohibited.

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 for 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>.

***My Scout 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.

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 or waivers are requested. Most outings will leave from the Glen Mar parking lot.

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

Scouts will be assigned a tent, dining fly, or patrol box to clean after a campout. It is **THEIR RESPONSIBILITY** to clean the equipment and return it during the next troop meeting. Parents should review their work but should not clean for them. Tents and flies should be opened and hung to dry (do not place in washing machine). Brush off leaves and dirt before repacking. **All items** in the patrol box must be inspected, cleaned, and inventoried before repacking. There is an inventory check list in the box. Equipment will be inspected by the adult Quartermaster. Families may incur a replacement fee if equipment is not returned or is returned damaged.

***What should my Scout 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 Scout 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.).

***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 Scout 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 pretrips/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 parents 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 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’ activities by helping them cook, cleaning up after them, sleeping near them, etc. Parents are expected to follow the Scoutmasters rules, and not be either more or less strict with their child than the Scoutmaster. Any adult staying overnight must be a registered adult volunteer

with the troop, take Youth Protection Training, and have a background check with the council. See the Committee Chair for more details.

***Can younger siblings come on outings?***

No. The troop can’t be responsible for younger siblings, 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 June Family Campout, the Thanksgiving Feast, and the September Court of Honor & picnic, all of which are designed to be family outings under troop sponsorship.

***I’m an expert canoeist/backpacker/etc. Can’t I skip the prep trips?***

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 notified. Our boys become very good at camping in bad weather.

***My Scout is trip leader or must 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 be required to buy food for his patrol. Go with him to the store and buy food. He should have done meal planning at the last troop meeting and 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 to 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 Scout 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 Scout need to have a permission slip for each outing?***

Yes! We ask you to fill out the permission slip. Occasionally, an outside agency may require a special permission slip or waiver, but that's infrequent. Any late arrival or early departure plans should also be noted on the permission slip.

***What if my Scout cannot attend the entire campout? Can they arrive late or leave early?***

Troop 874 encourages Scouts to participate in campouts for the full weekend whenever possible. A big part of the Scouting experience includes helping with camp setup, meal preparation, and cleanup, and full participation helps the patrol and troop work together as a team. At the same time, we recognize that Scouts often have other commitments such as sports, band, school events, or family obligations. When needed, Scouts may join a campout late, attend for the day only, stay for just one night, or leave early. We simply ask that families communicate plans with the Scoutmaster and troop leadership in advance so we can plan meals, transportation, and supervision appropriately. Our goal is for Scouts to participate as fully as they can while still being able to take part in the many other activities that are important in their lives.

***Does the troop provide transportation to campouts or outings?***

***What should I know?***

Parents are responsible for bringing their scouts to and from campouts and outings. The troop does not coordinate carpools. Families are encouraged to create carpools within your patrol or age-range. Parents may drop scouts off but must pick them up at the time specified by the troop. Scouts are not allowed to leave a campout until all scout transportation is present.

## 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 Scout 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 troop insists 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

*I'm being asked to pay different amounts at different times. What are these payments for and why can't I just pay it all at once?*

Troop finances and billing are run by the troop committee and the troop treasurer. There is an annual registration fee from Scouting America paid online. There is a separate annual family assessment fee from Troop 874 paid directly to the troop. This fee is charged per family and not by the number of scouts in the family. Please contact the Committee Chair for the details of these current costs.

### **Scouting America Registration (~\$185/year)**

When you register or renew your Scout through Scouting America, you pay approximately \$185, split between a Council Fee and National Fee. This money goes entirely to the national organization and the Baltimore Area Council. None of it comes back to Troop 874. It covers your Scout's official membership, insurance, and council-level programming. Think of it as the cost of being a Scout; our troop never sees a penny of it.

### **Troop 874 Family Assessment (\$125/year)**

This is Troop 874's primary source of operating funds, and it's what has prompted most of the recent questions. The family assessment is a flat annual fee of \$125 per family. It applies equally to every registered family regardless of how many Scouts you have in the troop or how often your family participates. It

covers the everyday costs of running the troop: camping gear and equipment, campsite fees, and our facility use fee at Glen Mar Church. These are shared expenses that benefit every Scout, and this fee is how we pay for the program. The fee is due no later than **March 1<sup>st</sup>** each year. Scouts that have unpaid family assessments after March 1<sup>st</sup> will not be eligible to attend troop meetings or troop campouts until the fee is paid.

***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 you son is behind in his dues, he cannot receive advancement patches until he settles his account. It's a small but meaningful way to teach Scouts financial responsibility and a sense of ownership in their troop. The dues are used to purchase the patches and awards that recognize their hard work and achievements throughout the year.

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

Troop 874 has a policy that no boy should be denied participation in any event because of an inability 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 cannot afford an outing but your son wants to go, please speak with the Scoutmaster and Committee Chair in confidence. We will send him using our TOGA funds to ensure your needs are met. Troop 874 maintains the *TOGA FUND*, which goes directly to scouts who need financial assistance. 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, what's wrong with that?***

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 has an annual mulch fundraiser in February and March. That is our only fundraiser. 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 make a donation 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 their 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 Committee Chair. Please understand that during scout meetings there's quite a bit going on, and the adult leaders will be focused on their meeting responsibilities and supporting the scouts and, as such, may have limited time to address your concerns in the meeting.

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

**<http://www.troop874.com>**