

**WHAT TO EXPECT
WHEN YOUR SON
IS A SCOUT**



**A PARENT'S GUIDE TO
TROOP 76**

www.troop76.org

Ridgefield, CT

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ABOUT TROOP 76

We like to refer to our Troop as “boy led, adult supported”.

We believe by that placing decision-making and execution in the hands of our scouts, they learn invaluable life skills such as; responsibility, leadership, independence, mentoring, and teamwork. These are lessons learned both through successes and challenges. We may be best known around Ridgefield for our holiday wreath sale, which has been a Troop 76 tradition (and our only fund raiser) for over a decade!

As a parent today, it is often difficult for us to take a “hands off” approach when it comes to our children’s activities. Scouting is a terrific opportunity for you to allow your son to make decisions for himself (e.g. shopping for his patrol’s “grub” for a camping trip, completing a merit badge) and learn from these experiences – both the good and bad.

So when your son asks you to pack for an upcoming camping trip -- remind him “a scout does for himself”!

KEEPING INFORMED

www.troop76.org

You should bookmark this page, and this should be your first stop if you or your scout has a question about the troop and troop activities.

We are VERY fortunate to have a website that is robust and always kept current (special thank you to Troop Committee member Bob McCarthy!). On the website, you'll find:

- A current calendar of all upcoming meetings and events (not sure if there is troop meeting this Tuesday – check the troop calendar!).
- Information on all events and activities (time, meeting location, dress code, required equipment, etc.).
- The ability to download documents like permission slips, equipment lists, etc.
- Adult leader contact information.
- Photo albums from previous troop activities.
- A “frequently asked questions” section.
- Helpful links to other scout (and non-scout) information.

Of course you are always welcome to reach out to the Adult Leadership with any questions or concerns you may have. E-mail is the preferred method for doing so and you will receive a troop directory at the beginning of the scouting year.

You and your scout will also receive regular e-mail communications from the troop. If you are not receiving e-mails at least on a weekly basis, check your spam filters to ensure you can receive e-mail from troop members. You can also contact the Troop Committee Chair to ensure we have your correct e-mail address.

For security and safety, e-mail addresses (parents and scouts) are not posted on our website.

Another great resource is our own Troop 76 Handbook (not to be confused with your scout's official Boy Scout Handbook) which is available for download off our website.

At our regular Tuesday troop meetings, your scout will receive handouts and information. You may want to have a central location for keeping this “scout stuff”.

HOW CAN I HELP?

While we encourage our parents to allow their sons to work on their own – ***the troop needs extensive parental involvement to run.*** Simply put – we cannot do it without you. There are a number of ways for you to help the troop – whether you're a Mom or Dad, were never a Boy Scout yourself, or even if you hate camping!

Uniformed Adult Leadership: These are the parents involved with the running of the scout program. From camping trips to merit badge activities to rank advancement, the uniformed leadership help provide the structure that allow the scouts to grow. There is some training required to become a uniformed leader. Adult leaders also aid as "advisors" with rank advancement. Positions include Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters. Without uniformed adult leaders, there is no scout program. Please contact our Scoutmaster if you are interested in becoming a uniformed leader.

Troop Committee: Think of the Troop Committee as the PTA for the troop – these are the parents who are responsible for "non-program" aspects of the troop including things like fund raising, troop policy, council registration, etc. Positions on the Committee include chairperson, secretary, advancement, treasurer, and trip permits. The TC meets on the last Thursday of every month. For those parents who may not be comfortable taking on a uniformed leadership position, the troop committee is a great way to get involved. Please contact the Troop Committee Chairperson if you are interested in playing a role on the troop committee.

Wreath Sale Committee: Our annual wreath sale is the troop's only fundraising event. We need one to two people to chair the committee each year. Sale activities run from late September through mid-January. For our new parents in particular, this is a terrific way to get involved with the troop. Please contact the Troop Committee Chair if you are interested in running this year's wreath sale.

Merit Badge Counselor: Parents can volunteer to help over see a merit badge project. Merit badges can be earned in everything from salesmanship to photography to swimming. If you have a hobby you are passionate about, chances are there is a merit badge program you could run. Please contact the Scoutmaster if you'd like to run a merit badge program.

General Volunteering: There are always plenty of opportunities for you to help the troop on an "ad hoc" basis. Whether it's running a service project, or providing refreshments for a Court of Honor, we never say "no" to the question, "can I help?"

One last way to help – ***remind your scout that he is a scout 24/7***, not just when he is wearing the uniform. We expect the scouts of Troop 76 to exemplify the scout oath, law, and slogan wherever they are. We ask for your help in reminding your scout of this.

Scout Oath

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

Scout Law

A scout is:

- Trustworthy
- Loyal
- Helpful
- Friendly
- Courteous
- Kind
- Obedient
- Cheerful
- Thrifty
- Brave
- Clean
- And Reverent

Scout Slogan: Do a good turn daily!

HOW IS THE TROOP ORGANIZED?

Within Connecticut, we are part of the **Connecticut Yankee Council** (www.ctyankee.org), the Boy Scouts of America council for Fairfield and New Haven counties. Within the Council, we are part of the **Scatacook District** (www.scatacook.org), which consists of troops from northern Fairfield County. Our liaison to the Yankee Council is our District Chairperson. Our sponsoring organization is **Jesse Lee United Methodist Church**.

Within the troop, we are organized by **patrols**. There are typically 8-15 scouts per patrol, typically organized by age and rank attainment. All efforts are made to place scouts within their desired patrol.

For each patrol there is a **Patrol Leader** and **Assistant Patrol Leader**. These are rotating positions and are voted on by the patrol. Because of the critical role they play during camping trips (covered in our Camping section), ***it is expected that a Patrol Leader will make every effort to attend camping trips.*** If your son has sports or other activities that will prohibit them from attending camping trips, they may want to consider being a Patrol Leader when their schedule will allow for regular trip attendance.

Think of a patrol as a “troop within a troop”. Patrols work together on rank advancement, merit badge activities, service projects and (especially) activities during a camping trip. We often have contests of friendly competition across the patrols.

The **Patrol Leadership Committee (PLC)** is the scout-run leadership of the troop. In addition to the Patrol Leaders, the committee includes: Senior Patrol Leader (SPL), 2-3 Assistant Senior Patrol Leaders, Troop Guide, Instructor, Scribe, Historian, and Quartermaster. The PLC typically meets once a month, typically the last Tuesday of the month (when there is not a regular troop meeting). They make decisions on everything from where our monthly trips will be to what service projects we should organize.

TROOP MEETINGS

Troop 76 meets every Tuesday from September through early June, except (usually) for the last Tuesday of the month when only the PLC will meet. The Tuesday meetings are in the Carriage House, a separate building on the east farthest side of the parking lot from the Sanctuary at Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church at 207 Main Street in Ridgefield. The entrance to the Carriage House is off the parking lot on Kings Lane on the northeast side of the property. Meetings are from 7:30 to 8:45 pm. ***If your scout's patrol is listed as being the Setup Patrol, they should come 15 minutes early at 7:15 to get the meeting room set up and they will be available by 9:00 after the post-meeting take down.***

For Troop meetings, the general guideline is that if there is no school (for vacation, holiday or snow day reasons), there will be no troop meeting but there are exceptions. Best bet is always to check the troop calendar on our website at www.troop76.org.

Scouts are encouraged to wear their complete Class A uniform (including scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) to troop meetings – at a minimum they must wear their scout shirt (tucked in) and neckerchief.

Uniforms and scouting equipment are available locally at The Joy of Movement (Girolmetti Court, Ridgefield) and Rankin Sporting Goods (37 Newtown Road, Danbury) and online at www.scoutstuff.org. Information on emblem placement for uniforms can be found on the inside sleeve of the Boy Scout Handbook, or online at www.scouting.org/forms/34283.pdf.

Your scout should also bring their Scout Handbook to all Tuesday meetings.

Our scouts run the troop meetings, and typical activities include; camping trip planning, rank advancement, and merit badge activities.

Three to four times a year, the troop will hold a **Court of Honor (CoH)** during our regular troop meeting time. During the CoH we recognize scouts for things like rank advancement and merit badge achievement. ***Class A uniforms are required*** and family members are encouraged to attend. Check the troop calendar at www.troop76.org for upcoming CoHs.

CAMPING

Enjoying, respecting and learning about nature is an integral part of scouting. Our monthly camping trips are an opportunity for our scouts to learn invaluable life lessons, enjoy the great outdoors, work on rank and merit badge activities and have fun with their friends. It is expected that your scout will attend as many trips as possible.

Because our activities are decided on, and planned by, our scouts, they reflect the variety of interests of our members (there's something for everyone!). We have at least one outing a month, which in the past have included: hikes, back-packing trips, beach camping, trips to historical sites (like a Fall 2007 trip to Philadelphia's Freedom Trail), an annual ski-trip to Vermont, winter and spring "camporees" with other area troops, orienteering, and a multi-night "big trip" to celebrate the end of the school year. Many of our scouts also participate in sleep-away summer camp at Camp Sequassen here in Connecticut, as well as traveling out west to attend Philmont Scout Ranch, a BSA-run national camp of over 100,000 acres.

Your scout will need to sign-up for trips at our regular troop meetings. A permission slip signed by an adult guardian is also required. Your scout will be given an equipment list (or one can be downloaded at www.troop76.org) to use as a packing guide. The troop provides a bulk of the needed equipment (tents, stoves, lanterns, cooking equipment, etc.). Scouts typically need a sleeping bag, pad, two one-quart Nalgene bottles, headlamp, compass, knife (if they have earned their Totin' Chip card in knife safety), etc. Also, it is worthwhile to invest in a decent pair of waterproof hiking boots for your scout. **Electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, GameBoys, etc.) are NOT allowed.** Adult leaders carry cell phones in the case that you need to reach your scout (and vice versa).

During our regular Tuesday troop meetings leading up to the trip, patrols work on planning meals (food is purchased and prepared by patrol on camping trips), organizing tasks and planning activities. Each patrol assigns a **GrubMaster** (there is a different GrubMaster for each trip) who is responsible for actually purchasing and bringing the food for their patrol. If your son is the assigned GrubMaster for a particular trip, you can help them (but not do for them) by:

- Making sure they have a complete shopping list based on their patrol's meal plan (e.g. did they forget syrup to go along with their French toast?).
- Bringing them to the grocery store to purchase the food.
- Helping them tally the total money spent and divide it equally among the number of patrol members attending the trip.
- Bringing the food at the gathering location for the trip.
- Creating a list of scouts they need to collect money from, and ensure that this is done (if collecting money becomes an issue, they should contact an Adult Leader).

IMPORTANT: If your son is the GrubMaster for a trip and is unable to attend, they are still responsible for purchasing and delivering the food at the gathering location for their patrol (unless other arrangements have been made).

In addition to the patrol-provided food, a "bag lunch" is typically required for each scout (lunch for the day of the trip). You may also pack snacks for your scout – we encourage you to limit these to "healthy options" – a camping trip is a great opportunity to get away from junk food.

On the day of the trip, the troop will meet at a central location (typically this is the rear parking lot at Jesse Lee near the playground) to organize and pack equipment. ***Scouts need to be on time and in full Class A uniform (scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchiefs).*** Transportation is typically provided through car-pooling among the adults attending the trip, though for longer trips we may rent vans or buses.

Scout safety is always our number one concern. There are always a sufficient number of adult leaders on camping trips to oversee and supervise the scouts. It is imperative that the Scoutmaster be alerted if your scout has any medical needs or requirements. Any scout requiring medication must give all medicines to the Scoutmaster (or Adult Leader) for proper administration. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to attend our trips (Moms and Dads). Each adult is typically assigned a meal that they are responsible for providing and cooking.

Patrol Leaders play a critical role during our camping trips (and learn valuable leadership skills in the process). They ensure that their patrol has their required equipment, supervise the patrol task lists, and lead patrol-specific activities. ***It is expected that Patrol Leaders will make every effort to attend ALL our monthly trips.*** If your son has sports or other activities that will prohibit them from attending camping trips, they may want to consider being a Patrol Leader at a time when their schedule will allow for regular trip attendance.

At the end of the trip, you will pick your scout up (assuming you have not attended the trip yourself!) at the same location we started the trip (again, typically the rear Jesse Lee parking lot). Your scout will be given a piece of troop equipment (tent, table, stove, cooking equipment, etc.) to clean. **This is your son's job – not yours (though you may need to supervise).** Encourage your scout to do this job the day they get home (even though they may be a bit tired), so that the equipment can be returned at the next regular Tuesday troop meeting. Replacing lost equipment is the responsibility of the scout in whose care it was entrusted.

Caring for our tents:

- They should be set up (either outside, weather permitting, or indoors in a garage or basement).
- They should be swept out thoroughly (our smaller tents can be given a good shaking to get debris out).
- Clean the tent by wiping it down with a mild soap (liquid hand soap) and lukewarm water solution. Rinse thoroughly and dry completely. Never use detergent, washing machines or dryers because they can damage the tent's protective coating and seams. ***After cleaning, be sure the tent is completely dry, especially the heavier, double-stitched areas such as the seams, before storing or mold and mildew are likely to grow.***
- Clean the tent poles with a soft, dry cloth. This is especially necessary after oceanside camping trips to remove salt spray so the poles don't corrode or stay gritty.
- Clean the zippers by wiping with a damp cloth and then dry them off. This is especially important if we've been camping in a location with sand/dirt. If our scouts don't clean the zippers, the sliders will wear out and eventually the teeth will become inoperable.

SERVICE PROJECTS

Service to the community is at the essence of the BSA and Troop 76. At any given time, our scouts are involved in a number of community-focused projects including; food drives, open space improvement projects, and providing set-up and takedown help for charity events.

It is expected that your scout will complete a **minimum** of six hours of service related work between September and December, and another six hours (**minimum!**) between January and June.

There are two type of service projects – **troop sponsored** and (for lack of a better term) **non-troop sponsored projects**. As the name would imply, troop-sponsored projects are organized and run by the troop (an example would be helping Jesse Lee unload pumpkins for their annual Pumpkin Patch sale for charity). Helping an Eagle candidate with their Eagle Project is also considered a troop-sponsored project. Non-troop projects are any service activities completed by a scout on their own (an example would be helping pick up litter within their neighborhood). A written description of the service project and an adult signature is required for a scout to get credit for a non-troop project.

For all service projects, full Class A uniform (scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) is required, unless otherwise notified.

IMPORTANT: Historically, a minimum number of service hours have been required to attend the annual troop ski trip in February (a minimum of six total service hours between September and December, with at least four hours being from troop-sponsored projects) and our annual end-of-the-school-year "big trip" (a minimum of six total service hours between January and June, with at least four of the hours being from troop-sponsored projects). This will be the service hour policy for the 2010-11 scouting year.

FUNDRAISING

The troop's only fundraising activity is our annual Holiday Wreath Sale. We've been running it for over a decade and it has become a Ridgefield tradition. The funds raised will help pay for our equipment and defray the cost of our scouting activities.

Starting in late October/early November, your scout will be asked to go "door-to-door" (or e-mail or phone) selling orders for wreaths -- calling on friends, family and neighbors. Their selling "season" is typically 2-3 weeks.

Starting the week of Thanksgiving, and through the second or third week of December, wreaths are available for pick-up (at scheduled pick-up times) by the scouts for delivery to their "customers".

The troop also holds "cash and carry" sales a couple of Sunday mornings at Jesse Lee and St. Mary's churches.

Historically, each scout has been required to achieve a minimum dollar amount in individual sales (traditionally \$300) in order to participate in both the annual ski trip in February and the end-of-year "big trip" in June. The 2010-11 policy is yet to be determined and will be set by this year's Wreath Sale Committee.

For a parent unsure of a way to get involved in helping the troop, running the Wreath Sale (as Wreath Sale Committee Chair(s)) is a terrific (and vital) way to do so. Contact the Troop Committee Chair by late September if you'd like to volunteer.

ADVANCEMENT AND MERIT BADGES

Advancement is also an integral part of our Troop program, both indoors and outdoors. The requirement for badges of rank entails plenty of Troop meetings, hikes, and camp activities. We are fortunate that we have many adult leaders (BUT WE NEED MORE) that are ready to "help our scouts help themselves" by playing such roles as merit badge counselors and Eagle Advisors. As scouts take part in our Troop programs they learn new skills and work towards rank advancement. Ultimately, advancement is a personal and individual thing, with each boy advancing according to his own interests, abilities, and participation. That being said, Troop 76 is very proud that a majority of our high-school aged scouts do attain the rank of Eagle Scout.

IMPORTANT: Your scout's Boy Scout Handbook becomes the official record of their advancement history. It is important that your scout not lose their handbook! You son will use the same handbook for their entire scouting career. They will use it when going for Eagle Scout advancement. Also, their copies of the blue Merit Badge cards should be saved as they are the "official" record of badges earned.

Scouting ranks are as follows:

- Tenderfoot
- Second Class
- First Class
- Star
- Life
- Eagle Scout

Specific information on rank advancement is located in the Boy Scout Handbook.

Once a scout has completed the requirements for rank advancement, they must participate in a **Board of Review (BoR)**. BoRs are run by our Advancement Chair and parent volunteers, and are essentially a "job interview" for the rank that the scout is looking to achieve. They are scheduled throughout the troop year; check our calendar at www.troop76.org for dates. ***Class A uniform (scout pants, shirt, belt, socks and neckerchief) is required.***

Merit badges are designed to help a scout learn new skills in things they enjoy doing and try out new activities. Merit badge requirements can be found in the current BSA merit badge pamphlets. There's a pamphlet for each type of merit badge, they can be purchased online at www.scoutstuff.org -- though the troop keeps a good supply in our library found in our quartermaster (QM) room located in the basement of Jesse Lee.

The troop offers merit badge opportunities throughout the course of the year. A **merit badge counselor** coordinates merit badge activities. The general process to earn a merit badge is as follows:

- Your scout obtains a signed merit badge application (this is the merit badge "blue card") from our Scoutmaster and the name of the merit badge counselor.
- They set up a time to meet with the merit badge counselor to discuss requirements and schedules BEFORE they do any work on the badge.
- They complete the requirements (tracked on the "blue card") until the requirements are met, meeting with the merit badge counselor as needed.
- ***It is the scout's responsibility to manage this process – not Mom, Dad, or the merit badge counselor. There are complete instructions on earning a merit badge on our website at www.troop76.org.***

Merit badges are handed out at Court of Honors.

IMPORTANT: With their badge (which may be displayed on a sash) your scout will receive their completed "blue card". DO NOT THROW THIS CARD OUT. It should be kept in a safe place (the troop has "My Merit Badges" binders with vinyl sheets that are ideal for this – just ask for one). The "blue cards" act as the official record for earning badges, and are needed for rank advancement.