

AN INTRODUCTION TO TROOP 390 SPRING 2007

Now that your sons have entered the world of Boy Scouts we thought we would explain some of the differences between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and help you understand what we do in Troop 390 and why we do it. We hope it will help you decide whether there is something in Scouting for you as parents, too. We believe that the whole family benefits from their sons being in the program. And, honestly, we need your help to make this a great experience for all!

Troop 390 is a “youth-run” troop where the major decisions of what we do and how it is done are determined by the youth leaders in the troop. Under the guidance of the Scoutmaster and Assistants the Senior Patrol sets the calendar, plans agendas for meetings and determines the activities that take place at a meeting. The Senior Patrol is comprised of experienced scouts who have been elected by their peers. The Senior Patrol Leader, individual patrol leaders and their assistants meet periodically and plan the troop’s events. Currently the Senior Patrol Leader is MH, the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader is CS, and the Patrol Leaders are ML and DF.

The troop exists to help boys learn scout skills, gain new and positive experiences, develop leadership skills and have fun. There are several ways to meet these goals. First, everyone has heard of Merit Badges. There are over 100 Boy Scout merit badges the boys can earn in many diverse areas. These range from usual scout skills like camping, hiking and emergency preparedness to high interest areas like genealogy or plumbing. (Go to www.meritbadge.com for a list of many of the available badges and their requirements.) Merit badges can be earned through activities in the troop meetings, at merit badge clinics (like the Coin Collecting Clinic many boys attended in March), at summer camp, or individually by scouts interested in a specific subject.

Ranks are also earned as the boys learn the ways of Boy Scouting. Specific skills are taught and then tested. The boys are rewarded with advancement in rank. There are six ranks in Boy Scouts: Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star Scout, Life Scout, and Eagle. As soon as your son entered Troop 390 we started him on his road to First Class Scout, and then if he wishes, on to Eagle Scout Rank! We aim for each boy to reach First Class rank, because at that rank he is eligible to attend regional and national events, such as the National Jamboree or Philmont Ranch. Also, at First Class rank, your son has proven to himself and the rest of the Troop that he is ready for everything that Boy Scouts has in store for him.

At each meeting we have been working on the skills needed to advance in rank. Each boy has an Advancement Checklist that is being used to track his learning the basic scout skills. You can see that checklist if you go to our troop website www.troop390.com, click on Advancement on the menu on the left side of the home page and go to Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class Checklist. While your son may have accomplished some of these tasks before he entered Troop 390 we must test and

document his progress through each rank. Many skills are very easy to accomplish, some are more difficult. But we are learning as a troop that we can succeed and therefore will be able to count on each boy to do his part as a member of the troop. Our goal is to have each new scout attain the rank of First Class Scout within his first year of scouting. Many of the boys will reach First Class rank by the end of this summer. Many of the requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class are covered at Summer Camp in late July.

One of the differences between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts is how the boys are taught and tested on their skills for advancement. In Cub Scouts, generally the parents and adult leaders teach and test skills. In Boy Scouts, older boys teach and test the skills. A Scout advances when a senior youth leader confirms that the younger Scout has met the requirements for the next rank, when the Scout has a conference with the Scoutmaster, and then when a Board of Review approves the rank advancement. It may seem daunting, but the advancement process works very smoothly.

While we want the boys to earn merit badges and advance in rank we also want them to have fun and learn leadership through scouting. We are having a number of activities which are focused on helping the boys have fun. We have planned some hikes, a canoe trip, camping, a bike trip and other events. Some of them may be combined with enough activities to earn a merit badge, some may just be for fun—that's up to what the boys want to do!

One of the highlights of being in Troop 390 is Boy Scout Summer Camp each year. We usually reserve a campsite at LeFeber Northwoods Camp near Laona, WI during the last full week of July. LeFeber is about 200 miles north of Milwaukee, and is a Scout camp run by the Milwaukee County Council of Boy Scouts. It accommodates dozens of troops each of the six weeks it is open during the summer. Our troop goes up on Saturday and spends the week involved in all the activities offered by the camp. The boys sign up for merit badge classes each day, cook their own food, participate in camp-wide activities and have a HUGE bonfire on the last night. It is an experience that the boys savor and don't want to miss!

The troop is organized into groups called patrols led by older scouts. Each patrol must learn to work together to accomplish tasks necessary to make the troop work. Boys are chosen to fill leadership roles such as assistant patrol leader, quartermaster, chaplain, and historian. Each has a job and learns to help the patrol.

We also participate in service projects, both those that help our sponsor, St. Monica Congregation, but also other parts of the community. For example, the Boy Scouts often help serve and clean up at Parish-wide events, such as the Lent Fish Fry, the Fall Spaghetti Dinner, and Breakfast with Baby Jesus. We also help other social service agencies and groups with their efforts, such as the Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll sale, or the Kiwanis River Clean-up. Troop 390 also participates each Spring in the County-wide "Scouting for Food" campaign to re-stock the local food pantries. And many of our boys help out others of our Scouts with their Eagle Scout projects. A boy

must organize and then run a special service project for a local agency as part of his rank advancement towards Eagle Scout.

One last job of the boys is to help keep the troop functioning financially. Yes, we fundraise in Troop 390! Our largest and most important fundraisers are the sale of Christmas Wreaths, and the Popcorn Sale. For the Wreath sale, the boys take orders for wreaths, swags and garland in October and deliver their orders the weekend before Thanksgiving. The proceeds are shared between troop needs and each boy's "Scout Account". From this account boys can pay for events, outings, camping, and summer camp. Their troop dues are also taken out of the proceeds of the Wreath Sale. Any boy can choose not to participate in the Wreath Sale but they will be assessed troop dues and will have to pay for each activity in which they participate. We also participate in the Milwaukee Council Boy Scout Popcorn Sale in the fall but historically have not used this as a major fundraiser.

Besides supporting your sons in their scouting activities how can you as parents help? We always need drivers and chaperones on our activities. We need parents to help staff the troop's site at summer camp each year. We also need people who have special interests and abilities to suggest new and exciting opportunities for the boys. Anyone who has a skill or interest can become an official Merit Badge Counselor. As a MB Counselor you can lead scouts in learning the skills and meeting the requirements necessary to earning a merit badge in your area of interest. The certification process is easy and it may just open up a whole new world for our troop!

We have found that the boys who get the most out of Scouting also have the most fun doing it. We have also found that the more a family can participate in their son's activities, the better the boy enjoys himself. Scouting is more than just camping, hiking, and having fun. We are developing young men who are active citizens in their homes, in our community and nation, and in the world. Come join us in Troop 390 to help our boys grow into good young men.