

2016 membership and marketing plan

Garden State Council, BSA

Overview

In 2015, the Garden State Council benefited from an intense focus on growing Cub Scout membership. Throughout the year, the council promoted initiatives specifically designed to recruit new Cub Scouts – the result was positive Cub Scout membership for the first time in at least three years.

Additional focuses in 2015 included helping move the council's culture to be more focused on membership growth and increasing retention. Both of those areas saw improvement, but need continued emphasis in the coming year. For 2016, the foci of the council's membership and marketing committee will be:

- Council-driven initiatives to recruit new Scouts, with a continued heavy emphasis on Cub Scouting.
- Expanded information and incentives to units for retention.
- Increasing marketing activities for the council as a whole.
- Reinforcing the culture of positive membership growth.

The lessons that were learned in 2015 will inform these efforts in 2016, and should allow the council to continue to meet its goal of increased Cub Scout membership.

Recruitment initiatives

Unit membership & marketing contacts

The membership & marketing committees will identify a contact for M&M in each Cub Scout Pack by April 1, 2016. This individual will be different from the committee chairman or Cubmaster, and be asked to serve as a liaison (with no direct responsibility).

Through the unit M&M contact, each unit will be given (as opposed to needing to ask for lawn signs to place in their town and custom recruiting flyers. This contact will be used to coordinate submission for incentives, grants, and other materials. Units will need to designate a contact to be eligible to receive those items.

Assigned: District membership chairmen, District executives

Adventure Clinic

The Adventure Clinic is an eight-week introduction to Cub Scouting that was piloted in four locations during 2015. In 2016, this program will be expanded to a total of (at least) six locations.

Adventure Clinics include registration in the Scouting program, and expose parents to an ideal Pack. The eight weeks includes youth protection training for parents, two outdoor experiences, two weeks of STEM, and the earning of the Bobcat badge for new Scouts. After the clinic, they are transitioned to a unit in their community.

Assigned: Membership & Marketing Director

Recruitment campaigns

To incentivize new recruitment, there will be two distinct recruiting campaigns: a spring campaign from March 1, 2015 – July 1, 2015 and a fall campaign from August 1, 2015 – November 1, 2015. These campaigns will drive sign-ups with an incentive whose value outstrips the base registration fee.

For the spring campaign, all new Cub Scouts will receive three free days of summer camp. These camp days may be used at any council camp during any summer session, and may be used as a tool to convince interested parents to try out Scouting for a few days.

In the fall, the council will offer a fall Family Fun Day. This event will be held in conjunction with the activities committee's fall Cub Scout event, with registrations for new Cubs covered by the council.

Assigned: Council activities committee, Membership & Marketing Director

Printed collateral

The council will create custom flyers that promote the incentives for both the spring and fall membership campaigns. These flyers will include trackable URLs, so the council can associate response for each campaign to its appropriate expenditure. These flyers will be supported by custom lawn signs reinforcing the same messaging.

A palm card will be produced, as well. This handheld item will contain key information about the Scouting program and upcoming events, and serve as a quick reference to new and potential families on the most important elements of the Scouting program.

Assigned: Membership & Marketing Director

SJ Scouting

The council will develop an “SJ Scouting” presence on Facebook, and target content to the parents of Cub Scout-aged youth in South Jersey. The council will develop an organic marketing strategy on these platforms to build followers and engagement throughout the year.

In addition, the council will engage in paid, targeted advertising on Facebook to drive eligible parents to the council’s membership information page. The digital campaign will have both a (larger) spring component, and a follow-up fall push as well.

Assigned: Vice President of Marketing & Membership, Membership & Marketing Director

Lion Cub expansion

Competition for youth activities is lower during Kindergarten than any other grade level. Introducing families to Cub Scouting at this point is a great opportunity to capture them before they consider alternative options.

The council will offer targeted marketing for any unit that agrees to run a Lion Cub program in the fall of 2016. Marketing support will include Lion-specific flyers and Facebook ads that are specific to their unit, and begin running at the beginning of August through the end of September.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Membership & Marketing Director

Shoot into Scouting

The summer between fifth and sixth grade represents the best entry point for the Boy Scout program. To supplement the influx of new membership from crossovers, the council will offer a “Shoot into Scouting” event. This one-day event will include rocketry, shooting sports, lunch and a closing campfire. The event will be marketed to non-Scouts, but largely be driven by a “bring a friend” component, encouraging current Scouts to bring their non-Scout friends to this event.

Assigned: Membership & Marketing Director, Shoot into Scouting Chairman

Unit membership grants

The council will award up to \$2,500 of grants for units to fund innovative membership ideas. These grants will be awarded prior to March 15, 2016, with the money to be spent on a spring recruiting initiative that takes place prior to June 1, 2016. Units may apply for up to \$500 in funding, with final awards being determined by the membership and marketing committees.

Assigned: Recognition Chairman, Membership & Marketing Director

Educational relationships

Each of the counties served by the Garden State Council has a state-appointed superintendent of schools. This individual works with the local superintendents to support state-driven initiatives and give guidance. To create a more scalable approach to improving school access, the council will establish relationships (and have face to face meetings) with each of the six county superintendents in its service area. The objective will be garner support in making the county leadership advocates for either traditional or STEM Scouting programs.

Assigned: Vice President of Marketing, Scout Executive

Community displays

Each district was provided in 2015 with a custom display for promoting Scouting at unit open houses and community nights. The council will continue to support these displays and provide assistance with scheduling and replacement materials to ensure Scouting is given the best possible presentation to new families.

Assigned: District membership chairmen, District executives

Increased unit retention

Improved commissioner partnership

The council will assign every unit a designation based on their level of membership retention: stable (for those at or above the council average), warning (for those within one standard deviation), danger (between one and two standard deviations) and failing (more than two standard deviations). Twice a year these assessments will be shared and discussed with the commissioner corps to ensure immediate intervention to the units that need it most.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Council Commissioner

Unit training workshops

Throughout the year, the council will offer one-day workshops for Cub Scout leaders to improve program, recruiting and growth. These workshops will be led by an experienced Cubmaster and offer a “hands-on” look at what it takes to be an effective leader. Invitations to these workshops will be directed to units identified by the commissioner efforts above.

The council will also offer additional workshops on specific skills, such as making videos for unit recruiting, throughout the year.

Assigned: Cub Scout Membership Chairman, Membership & Marketing Director

Incentives

Top-performing units deserve a strong incentive to continue membership growth. One of the largest expenditures for a Pack is purchasing Pinewood Derby cars; in 2016, any pack that shows 10% or more growth over their December 31, 2015 membership number will receive Pinewood Derby kits for each registered boy in their unit. This creates an incentive not only to grow, but to do so as quickly as possible and earn cars early in the year.

Assigned: Promotions Chairman, Membership & Marketing Director

New family onboarding

The council will send a mailed package to each new family member who joins Scouting. These packages will include a thank you note from the Scout Executive and Council President. These packets will be available February 1, 2016.

Assigned: Membership & Marketing Director

Culture of membership growth

Unit Leadership Summit: Inspire Adventure

In February, the council will host a Unit Leadership Summit for each Cubmaster, Scoutmaster and their respective committee chairmen in the council. This summit’s theme of *Inspire Adventure* will focus on providing these leaders with actionable suggestions to improve their unit program immediately.

The summit will be divided into two tracks (one each of Cub and Boy Scout leaders) with six, fifteen-minute mini-sessions each. These sessions will each offer specific “how-to” ideas. Every unit will walk away with six things they can do immediately to improve program and increase retention.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing

Recognition

The council will establish an individual recognition for members who support membership growth. Any Cub Scout who recruits a friend to the program will be eligible to receive a “Helping my Pack Grow” patch for the first friend he recruits, and a paw print pin for each additional friend recruited.

Unit adult leadership that meets certain requirements will be eligible to earn a special council shoulder patch. The requirements for the adult award will be announced at the Unit Leadership Summit.

The Membership & Marketing committee will also create a recognition for each district to use at their annual awards dinner. This recognition will be awarded by the district by provided by the council.

Assigned: Recognition Chairman, Membership & Marketing Director

Event integration

Scouting tells its most compelling story in the outdoors. To help expose potential Scouts to the program, the council will request that all events and programs include a bring-a-friend component. There will be no additional imposition on the events for promotion, simply an addition to registration materials that if a Scout would like to bring a friend, he may.

Assigned: Scout Executive, Council/district activities chairmen

Inspiration

The success stories of the council and individual units are inspirational. The council will leverage the Knapsack, social media, and other existing venues to share updates on membership success and best practices. These efforts will be designed to reinforce the concept that Scouting is growing, and motivate a broad base of the council's volunteers to support that narrative.

Assigned: Scout Executive, Council/district activities chairmen

Expanded council marketing

District public event

Each district will be asked to run an event in a public area during 2016. These events may take any shape or form (including a district-supported, but unit-run event), but should take place in a visible area and include an opportunity for non-Scouts and families to participate. The council will support these activities with the displays and other promotion.

Assigned: District executives, District membership chairmen

Donor support packet

To assist in securing high-value donors and new board members, a donor support packet will be created prior to April 1, 2016. This packet will include high-level information on the council, its mission, and the impact of volunteerism and financial support. The packet will be designed to be an impressive introduction to Scouting, and excite a potential donor about their gift.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Assistant Scout Executive

Annual report

The council will create an annual report, highlighting its achievements from 2015. This report will be created in a format that may be widely distributed to all donors, leaders, and interested volunteers or parents. The report will be complete and available no later than May 1, 2016.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Assistant Scout Executive

Brand strategy

During the summer of 2016, the council will conduct an assessment of its current brand strategy, and determine the appropriate guidelines going forward, with the intent of aligning the council's brand with its strategic plan. This review will include the distinct trade names of the council, logos, and personality – the final document will be a board-approved set of guidelines all elements of the council are asked to adhere to.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Membership & Marketing Director

Knapsack e-newsletter

After the council's brand strategy is determined, the Knapsack weekly newsletter will be reconfigured to adhere to this approach and become more readable – specifically on mobile devices. The Knapsack revamp will take into account information gleaned from two years of readership since the last redesign, including the optimum amount of information and formatting for maximum engagement. This redesign will be complete by September 1, 2016.

Assigned: Vice President of Membership & Marketing, Membership & Marketing Director