

Troop 188 Fort Collins, CO

Troop Values

This troop is successful because all of its members have a strong sense of Scout spirit. It starts with the Scoutmaster and runs through the adult leaders, parents, and Scouts. This spirit is the one trait we all share. Although we come from various backgrounds, Scout spirit gives us shared ideals from which a shared history grows. Our primary goal is to instill this spirit in the Scouts of our troop.

Scout spirit is difficult to describe, impossible to write the rules of, and yet, when an example presents itself, simple for everyone to identify. Developing team work on a COPE course at summer camp is Scout spirit, as is sorting food at the food bank. Sleeping in a tent in sub zero weather when you're eleven years old is Scout spirit. Having a water fight spread out over three miles is Scout spirit.

Scout spirit is a blend of having fun, learning, and volunteering. We have fun so everyone comes back for more. We learn new skills to keep our Scouts excited and engaged. The Scouts learn how to take care of themselves; or, as the Scout Motto succinctly puts it: Be Prepared. We volunteer to help the troop, Scouting in general and the community we live in.

Each of these aspects of Scout spirit is equally important. Without any one of them, the troop would fall apart. We make as much time available for fun and service as we do advancement; an Eagle Scout that doesn't know how to have fun or volunteer, doesn't understand the very thing we want them to learn. A Scout who is only in the troop to have fun, is also missing our message. A Scout that knows how to have fun while volunteering or learning a difficult skill, is more likely to learn how to take care of himself and help his community long after he has left Boy Scouts.

While describing Scout spirit is difficult, it is simpler to describe the techniques we use to instill this spirit in the Scouts. First, this troop is boy-led. This means the Scouts decide what their program is and they implement it. They elect their own leaders. Second, they are also responsible for their own advancement. This allows the Scouts to decide what they want to do, take responsibility for their actions, enjoy their successes and learn from their mistakes.

Adult leaders have an important role in a boy-led troop. First, the adults set boundaries for the Scouts. This ensures that when Scouts make mistakes they aren't serious and that Scout goals are realistic. The adults will check that an eleven-year-old has the right gear before going on a winter camping trip; however, if a fifteen-year-old forgets his rain gear on a summer back packing trip, he'll get wet. Second, the adults also run other aspects of the troop that would be inappropriate for the Scouts to handle. All in all, the adults make opportunities available, but it is up to the Scouts to take advantage of them.

The adults also have an important role by interacting with the Scouts and implicitly teaching them Scout spirit. The Scout Law and Scout Promise don't need to be memorized so much as they need to be practiced and seen. Adults exemplify these traits while interacting with the Scouts in everything from having fun to participating in flag ceremonies. The Scouts and adults respect each other and this respect grows from living the Scout Law. Friendly, Courteous, and Kind are more than buzzwords.

We want each Scout to develop a close relationship with much of the troop. The Scoutmaster personally knows each Scout and does all of the Scoutmaster conferences. The troop is organized using the patrol method to help distribute leadership activities and also to give Scouts a smaller, more personal group to do many activities.

There are many other skills we want to teach the Scouts and much of this is built into the requirements for Eagle rank. Outdoor skills, safety, respect for the flag, fitness; the list is long and well thought out. This is quite a task for an eleven-year-old to face, or a sixteen-year-old to stick with, so we place a lot of importance on rewarding Scouts for their accomplishments. Reaching Eagle is something we encourage. At the same time, we realize that Scouting is not the only thing in a boy's life and that reaching Eagle is not for everyone. Again, we make opportunities available and encourage the Scouts, but it is up to them to accomplish what they want.

To instill Scout spirit, we also provide opportunities to have fun. This sounds like an obvious idea, but it is something the adults have to be aware of. Sometimes there is too much pressure to do advancement, fund raising, or other activities, and the first thing cut is time for games.

Sometimes fun is planned, like a ski trip, but often it's impromptu, like "bowling for Scouts" on sleds. Outdoor activities are almost always fun and we encourage the Scouts to pick these. Extra camping trips, mountain biking, or "fun88" trips are examples of this. We also encourage high adventure trips and other activities to ensure the older Scouts have something that will challenge them as their abilities grow.

The adults in our troop enjoy these activities with the Scouts and will play just as hard and have as much fun as the Scouts. This is beneficial to the troop for a few reasons. First, the adults, just like the Scouts, need to have fun or else they won't be part of the troop. And without an active group of parents the troop can't function. Second, sharing the fun times makes it easier for both the Scouts and adults during the tough times when work needs to be done or lessons need to be learned the hard way.

Volunteering is an important aspect of Scout spirit. It is probably something the Scouts think of least when joining the troop, but is one of the more important ideas we want to teach them. Without volunteers, the troop wouldn't function. The spirit of volunteering is the backbone of being Helpful, Courteous, Kind, "To help other people at all times," and doing a good turn daily. We promote volunteerism in many ways. The troop does service projects such as SOAR projects and helping with Eagle projects. Older Scouts helping out the troop and membership in the Order of the Arrow is encouraged. Every leadership position also requires spending extra time helping the troop. Like rank advancement, volunteerism is strongly recognized.

Another side to volunteering is giving support to those in need. We participate in Scouting for Food and we have collected money to help neighboring families buy Christmas presents for their children. We also understand that financial hardship can strike families in our troop. In such cases it is our deep felt desire to ensure the scouting experience of any boy that actively participates in our troop and lives by the ideals of scouting .

We also encourage parents to become involved with the troop. Extra help is always appreciated and their input is important to keep the troop running. Our adult leadership is informal and we work well as a group. Informality encourages new adults to volunteer and gives us flexibility in solving problems.

Our goal is to teach Scout spirit to boys between the ages of eleven and eighteen. It is a complex task with many seemingly contradictory ideas. Sometimes we must be serious, as when retiring a flag, and sometimes we have a lot of fun playing frisbee golf. Sometimes we must get involved to prevent a disaster, and sometimes we must stand back and watch mistakes unfold. Sometimes we must push older Scouts to help more, and sometimes we must create activities solely for them. Our task is not simple and it requires a lot of time, but if we get it right, when the day comes for each Scout to leave our troop, he will understand what we mean by Scout spirit, will exemplify it, and will hopefully help lead a Scout troop in the future.