President Monson embodies three characteristics that are vital to working successfully with young men: first, a positive attitude; second, a commitment to duty; and third, a desire to build relationships with others. Priesthood, Primary and Scout leaders who develop such traits can bless and benefit the lives of all those they serve.

David L. Beck
Young Men General President
Church News, Nov. 2, 2009

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Strengthening Shepherds

From the Young Men General Presidency

One of the most ancient of occupations that continues to this day is that of sheepherding. Shepherds spend their time in the mountains or fields watching over and protecting their sheep. Their primary duty is to keep their flock intact by protecting it from predators. At times they may have to move the sheep from pasture to pasture where there is adequate water and feed. They also guide the flock to market in time for shearing. Why is the occupation of sheepherding so important? Because sheep provide a number of different products that are of great use; therefore it is critical for the shepherd to take very good care of his flock.

The Savior often spoke of sheepherding when speaking to the people of His time because they could understand and relate to it. Jesus Christ not only understood the importance of the role of the shepherd in providing for the physical needs of his sheep, but also the needs of his own family. He knew of the importance of a true shepherd in providing for the spiritual needs of his children. The people knew that when the sheep were in the fold, they would only come to the one whose voice they knew, the one who cared for their daily wellbeing. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14). He also said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me" (John 10:27).

The purpose of the Lord's Church is to further the progress of every one of Heavenly Father's sons and daughters toward the ultimate blessing of eternal life. Just as shepherds for thousands of years have cared for their sheep, today He, the good shepherd, asks for leaders of young men to act as shepherds in caring for the eternal souls of their young men. This is not an easy task; it is something that one must work at diligently. Over time you will come to realize the significant impact that you can have on these young men as you help them measure up to their full potential.

We express our profound gratitude to each of you who serve as leaders in the Aaronic Priesthood and in Scouting. We recognize and are deeply thankful for the many hours of dedicated service you provide to all of our young men. They look to you to love them, lead them, and direct them. You are true shepherds. We pray that the Lord will continue to guide, bless, and inspire you for the time you spend reaching out to each young man. Your impact on a young man is powerful when he knows you are there to love him, serve him, and guide him in his individual and personal needs. We are grateful to you for your dedicated service to each of the young men in your care. We ask the Lord’s continued blessings to be with you in this important calling.

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Be a Guiding Shepherd

By Erin Sanderson, Primary General Board

As a Scout leader in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you have the sacred duty to strengthen boys and young men. Men and women who are spiritually strong and are called to serve in the Scouting program have a unique opportunity to become shepherds to the youth as they guide, motivate, and strengthen them. The relationships you as leaders can develop with the boys will have a lasting influence for good for the rest of their lives. Elder Robert D. Hales said, "I have learned that what makes a priesthood or Scout activity most meaningful to a boy is not just getting a merit badge but having the opportunity to sit and talk with a leader who is interested in him and his life." If there ever was a time when our boys and young men needed to associate with adult leaders who are strong shepherds, that time is now. (See David L. Beck, "Capturing the Vision of Scouting")

The boys you lead will look to you as an example to follow. Scout meetings during the week provide wonderful opportunities to help the boys grow physically, as well as spiritually, mentally, and morally.

When you have been called and set apart you are entitled to receive inspiration for your calling. As you come to know the boys, you can know their needs and how to reach them. You can know how to handle the challenges that are unique to them. Heavenly Father loves these boys and He loves you. He will help you as you strive to create a program that is best for your boys.

What a gift to be an influence for good in the life of a boy! May you be blessed as you seek guidance in shepherding the boys you are called to serve.

Visual Storytelling Photography Workshop

Storytelling is a powerful way to grow Scouting! In fact, the Young Men general presidency has encouraged Scouters to capture and share their stories of success. When stories are shared, hearts are touched and softened and the effect and benefit of Scouting can reach even more young men and families. Even one image or experience can have a positive impact.

Think about it. Do you know someone who had their life changed through Scouting? Was yours? Have you ever shared the experience with someone else? Scouting is a powerful tool within and outside the Church for good, with the potential of blessing lives every day.

So, how do you get started sharing stories? One option is to attend the 2015 Philmont Visual Storytelling Workshop. The weeklong course focuses on photography and digital storytelling. Faculty includes incredible Scouting photographers from across the nation with state-of-the-art equipment provided, all within the breathtaking backdrop of God's country. You don't have to be an expert to get started!

Past conference attendees have named the week as one of their favorite Philmont courses. The skills learned will benefit you and your unit, ward, stake, or scouting district as you share the stories of Scouting. Check out the online site to register now! You don't want to miss this amazing opportunity! Click here to sign up: Philmont Training Center
So you’re an LDS mom and you want your son to be a Cub Scout. You check with his Primary leader (or maybe she’s already called you), sign him up (the Church has already paid his registration fee), and then you go to your chapel for his first den or pack meeting. Easy, right? But what if you live in Guangzhou, China, where the Church does not sponsor Scouting?

This was the challenge that Lori Qian faced when her son expressed a desire to be a Scout. Lori, her husband William, and their three children—Abraham (11), Annabelle (10), and Alexander (7)—are living in China after spending the early years of their marriage in the United States. William and Lori moved back to his home country in 2008 from California. They wanted their children to get to know the Chinese culture and their grandparents (Lori’s parents had already passed away) and to truly be global citizens. William is the chief financial and operations officer of the American International School of Guangzhou, a private school that educates students pre-K through grade 12 from all over the world. Lori is a grade 3 homeroom teacher at the school.

William had never been a Boy Scout and Lori, who had no brothers, admits that “Scouting was not on our radar.” But when Abraham read some of The Berenstain Bear Scout books, he asked, “Why don’t we have Scouts?” Lori had no idea he would be as persistent about it as he was, but his continued interest made her pursue the idea. She first inquired at her LDS branch, but they did not sponsor a troop or pack. She talked with leaders of a Boy Scout troop and picked their brains. She did Internet research; she talked with adults who had been Scouts as youth; and then she began emailing anyone and everyone she could think of who might give her answers to her many questions. In the meantime, she started holding meetings on Tuesday nights with two boys, then three boys, then six boys for over two years.

In the spring of 2014 the “unofficial pack” was at a crossroads. The boys wanted to advance in rank and receive official awards that they had earned. They wanted uniforms and to be involved in the community. Lori had contacted BSA and was put in touch with the Direct Service division in Irving, Texas, and later with the Far East Council in Japan. She contacted all the parents who had expressed interest and explained what would need to happen—and what parent involvement would be needed—to take the group to the next level. The school where William and Lori work agreed to be the pack sponsor. Dedicated parents came forward to fill the leadership positions, excited boys were able to order their first official uniforms, and a charter was requested for Pack 5858 with 25 boys signed up—14 as Webelos Scouts and 11 as Bear Scouts. The pack celebrated by holding a campout, the very first camping experience for most of the boys and fathers involved. Lori said, “The excitement is about Scouts, but also about the cultural aspects that they see as being ‘very American’.”

An exciting event transpired soon after Pack 5858 was organized. They were invited to participate in a flag ceremony at the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou. Marines instructed the boys in proper flag etiquette. The boys in their new uniforms stood proudly with their parents and six U.S. Marines, representing the Boys Scouts of America in a far-away country.

Thomas Paine once wrote, “That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly.” The next time you have to go “clear over to the church for Scouts,” think of Lori and the Cub Scouts of Guangzhou, China—and be very grateful.
Safety Moment – What Leaders Should Do to Keep LDS Units Safe

By Church Risk Management

As we begin a new year, it is a time of planning and organizing. We make goals and set direction. In Scouting, we may be thinking about rank advancement, activities, outings, and campouts for the coming year. We focus on what we want to accomplish and what we would like to see happen for the boys and young men in our units. Then we do our best to plan activities that will encourage their progress in the Scouting program, as well as in the Faith in God or Duty to God program.

In outlining a plan for the new year, it is also a good time to refresh ourselves on some of the basics of a safe Scouting program. A wealth of information is available to assist Scout leaders in planning safe and exciting activities. Here are some ideas to help you get started on the right foot.

- **Visit the Church’s “Safe Church Activities” website at** [http://safety.lds.org](http://safety.lds.org). Did you know that the Church has a website that focuses on health and safety? At this site, you can access many important documents, including:
  - several sections of *Handbook 2* containing guidelines for activities,
  - the Church’s Activity Plan,
  - the Parental or Guardian Permission and Medical Release form,
  - the First Presidency’s annual letter on “Safety in Church Activities.”

- **Register Your Scouts and Leaders.** Are your youth members and leaders properly registered? Registration provides significant insurance and liability protection. Make sure your unit roster is always accurate and up to date, and that everyone who is participating in your Scout unit has been registered, including adult leaders and boys who are not members of our faith. Don’t forget you need a parental/guardian signature on each Youth Application.

- **File Tour and Activity Plans.** Are you filing local or national tour and activity plans whenever required by your local council or by your bishop and stake president? This simple act helps solidify all of the protection that the Boy Scouts of America organization has to offer. A tour and activity plan helps to ensure that you are doing everything necessary to carry out a top notch and safe event. For more information about submitting a tour and activity plan, see **Tour and Activity Plan FAQs**.

- **Read, Know, and Use BSA’s *Guide to Safe Scouting***. This manual contains the basic safety policies and guidelines established by the Boy Scouts of America. Following the guidelines in this manual helps to ensure that the unit leaders will retain liability coverage that could be lost if they were engaged in an unauthorized or restricted activity. Yet many leaders are not as familiar with it as they should be. No tour and activity plan is complete without at least a quick review of the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Become familiar with this important resource which is available for free at [http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx).

In planning activities for 2015, take advantage of the many resources that are available to you. May the coming year be one of safe and successful Scouting for you and your boys.

### THIS MONTH’S FEATURED SECTIONS

#### 8.11 Scouting Month

February has traditionally been designated as Scouting Month in the United States. Leaders of Scouting units chartered by the Church may plan and carry out approved activities during the week to recognize this tradition. However, in keeping with the purposes of Sabbath observance, boys and leaders do not wear their uniforms to regular Sunday meetings or while administering and passing the sacrament.

#### 8.13 Funding Scouting

Leaders should follow the budget allowance guidelines in *Handbook 2* to fund Scouting (see 8.13.7, 11.8.7, 13.2.8, 13.2.9, 13.5, and 13.6.8). Ward budgets should be used to purchase Scouting awards and materials, as determined by local leaders. Commercially produced or packaged goods or services should not be sold.

Scouting units may participate in Scouting shows, camporees, and other BSA activities involving the sale of tickets by boys or young men, as long as all other budget allowance guidelines are met.

The Church supports the BSA’s annual Friends of Scouting drive. These funds provide financial support for the BSA local council. Stake presidents and bishops oversee the drive in their units.
Am I Being a Strong Steward?

by Mac McIntire, LDS-BSA Scouting Blog

I wish to discuss two ways to strengthen Young Men leaders—calling them properly, and supporting them after they are called. We need to help our adult Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting leaders become stronger stewards of the young men.

For the past nineteen weeks I have posted a weekly message on the blog section of the LDS-BSA Relationships website. The purpose of these messages is to inspire stake presidents, bishops, stake and ward Young Men presidencies, and ward adult Young Men leaders to understand and magnify their calling in the Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting.

Perhaps the best thing a bishop (or stake president) can do to strengthen a new adult Young Men leader is to thoroughly interview the prospective leader when issuing the calling. During the interview he should meticulously orient the individual on what his Aaronic Priesthood or Scouting responsibilities entail. To this end, I have created a document called the “Bishopric Checklist for Orienting New Young Men/Scouting Leaders.” The checklist provides an easy-to-follow outline of things that should be discussed during the calling interview. It summarizes nineteen very important duties and responsibilities that will help the new leader start off on the right foot and hit the ground running in their new calling. If you would like a copy of the checklist, send an email to me at mac@imglv.com and I will be happy to send it to you.

Another way to strengthen the shepherds who have stewardship over the young men is to provide a strong support system of constant communication, encouragement, coaching, and reinforcement. Too often men are called to leadership positions in Young Men and then just turned loose. There is no overview of the program, no shared vision, no setting of expectations, no accountability, no follow-up, nor a “return and report” on one’s stewardship. Personal Priesthood Interviews (PPI) may be few and far between, particularly with Scouting leaders.

Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 8.3.1. says "The bishop assigns one of his counselors to oversee the ward Young Men organization under his direction. This counselor discusses Young Men matters regularly (emphasis added) with the ward Young Men presidency. He reports on these discussions in bishopric meetings.”

These discussions need to be more than hallway discussions. They should be formal, structured PPIs that focus on the important issues of Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood. It ought to be an accounting of one’s stewardship and a sincere dialogue of the things that matter most in dealing with the Lord’s young men. Most important, the PPI should provide a spiritual boost to the Young Men leader that inspires him to further magnify his calling.

In my opinion the thing that determines the success of the Young Men programs within stakes and wards is the extent to which the stake presidencies and bishoprics are actively involved as leaders over these programs. I believe more can be done to strengthen new Young Men leaders. Stake presidencies and bishoprics cannot abdicate their responsibility to ensure the Lord’s purposes are fulfilled through His inspired Aaronic Priesthood and Scouting programs. Calling brethren properly and following up regularly in PPIs are just two ways to strengthen the shepherds over the Lord’s young men.

New Resource - “LDS Scouting Archives”

Need a great thought for a Scouter’s minute? Want to know what Church leaders have said about Scouting in the Church? Remember a Scouting story from a conference talk? You can find it here! Many of the struggles we face today trying to put together a viable Scouting program are not new. Learn from experienced Church Scout leaders—how did they solve the challenges of trying to do Scouting in small units, or with special needs youth, or with limited resources? The answers are here. To find the new “LDS Scouting Archives” click on LDS-BSA History found on the top navigation bar, then click on “LDS Scouting Archives.”

There are several ways to navigate the archives:

- **Sort.** Click on the heading and it will sort by that topic. For example, click on “Year” and the articles are sorted by year. Click on “Topic” and you can find all the articles about a variety of topics, such as Aaronic Priesthood, Good Turns, Primary, or Older Boys (Varsity, Exploring, Venturing). Click on “Section” and articles are sorted by type, such as biographies, awards, stories, etc. Note: “Authors” are sorted by their first names, not by their last names.

- **Search by key words.** For example, type in “Thomas S. Monson” in the Search box and all articles by or about President Monson will appear. Or type in “Good Turn” and read about service projects or helping those with special needs.

- **Click on the Description.** By clicking here you will be taken to the original article, story, or video.

Get inspired, gain new insights, or just read about what Scouting was like “back then.” Enjoy!
Planning the Varsity Scout Annual Calendar of Events

By Andy Gibbons, Philmont Varsity Course Director

The key to an active Varsity Scout program is imagination—not your imagination but the boys’! It all happens at an annual planning meeting held...well, annually, and then followed-up quarterly in more detail. The recipe for a good planning meeting is some food, a friendly place, a flip chart or whiteboard, pens, and a Varsity team. The goal of the planning is a balanced calendar of events covering a year of activities for the team—ones the boys are enthusiastic about.

After the food is laid out and the grazing begins, on the flip chart or whiteboard you draw a yearly calendar in months. You may want to draw three columns and four rows. Here’s why: you would like to find four major activities to serve as the anchor points in your yearly calendar: one every three months. The idea is that the detailed planning, preparation, work-ups, skill building, and physical conditioning all take place over a three-month period leading up to the major event. Drawing the yearly chart with four rows (representing quarters) and three columns (representing three-month periods) divides the chart into four parts, each with a three-month lead-up.

How do you begin the planning? You can start by asking the boys, "If you could do anything as a team, what would it be?" Get ready to write. Maybe team members have heard about great activities from other teams. Maybe they have been looking at some of the pictures (from Boys’ Life or Scouting or online) that you have casually displayed around the room. Maybe you have found some good articles and pictures in the Varsity Vision Newsletter or in the online Program Features.

These, of course, are just pump-primers. The boys will have good ideas, and a good idea from one boy will set off another good idea in another. The ideas will build on each other, and soon you will have more than you can manage. You can collect these ideas on a list on a second piece of flip chart paper. Let the ideas roll out of the boys. And if you, as a leader, have a good idea, put it into the mix but let the boys do most of the work. They have to be excited about the events.

What you would like to end up with is four major activities that have a three-month lead-up that can be filled with preparation and training events to get the boys (and the adults) ready. You may want to offset the major event months so that you don’t have a major event in December, unless that is part of your plan. (However, the end of December is a great time for a major service project.)

What goes into the major event months is the boys’ choice. As you gather ideas from the team members, you have to be careful not to let yourself and your great ideas dominate the boys’ suggestions and their choices. Once you have a good list of major event ideas and have chosen four as anchor events (or as many as your adult staff can support), you place the anchor events at the end of a row on the calendar chart. Now you have three months of weekends and weeknights on which you can schedule planning and training sessions to prepare for the major events. This could include skill or knowledge training, slide lectures from expert specialists, physical training (like work-up hikes), and logistical planning (How much food? Transportation? Equipment?).

During your quarterly calendar review meetings, place these work-up events in the months leading to the major event. You’ll find that instead of having blank spots in the calendar, it will be full of really important and fun things to do to get ready. The lead-up events will come from each of the five fields of emphasis. This gives balance to your program and provides leadership opportunities for each of your program managers (youth), working with your adult program advisers.

An important last step of the calendaring process is to share the calendar with the moms and dads. This not only communicates the times of events and meetings to them, but it might be a way to recruit some help from them as well. A word to the wise: your youth are at an age where you need to turn as much responsibility over to them as they are willing to assume. If you can have one of the team leaders conduct the planning session, with you on the sidelines offering help when needed, then it gives the boys just one more leadership experience.