



April 21, 2020

Re: Mid-April Update

Dear Scouting Family,

I hope this letter finds you and your family healthy during our current stay-at-home environment.

There is a lot going on and I thought I would take this time to update you on events in our Council. First and foremost, I want to share how incredibly impressed all of us on the Council staff are with the resiliency and innovativeness that our unit leadership has shown. From the online activity we know about, it appears about three quarters of our Packs, Troops and Crews are still meeting in some virtual format. That is amazing and thank you for your persistence to keep Scouting alive!

As you can likely imagine, our office staff and executives are all working from home. This brings some challenges and we can't do everything from home that we can do in the office but we can keep the ball rolling in a lot of areas. Staff are checking email and voicemails so feel free to reach out to anyone should you need assistance.

Please read on to learn about our Scouts ROC at Home initiative, Summer Camp updates, Advancement Challenges, guidelines for Physical Meetings & Outings, and other Miscellaneous Updates.

Scouts ROC at Home

Scouting during the summer is always a challenge for Packs and to recognize units that continue to function over the summer we have the National Summertime Pack Award. In a similar fashion, we are pleased to announce the "[Scouts ROC at Home](#)" Award to recognize units who continue to engage in program during this stay at home environment. The award is a streamer for the unit flag and individual patches that can be purchased for every Scout. Personally, I have watched multiple troop meetings, den meetings, and committee meetings happen; sat in on several online boards of review and watched OA elections happen; as well as virtual camp outs and campfires. It is amazing what can we can do online.

- **Scouts ROC at Home Awards:** Award applications are due by June 1st and can be found at:
<https://senecawaterways.org/scouting-at-home-activities/scoutsrocat-home-unit-and-individual-award-page/>
- **Online Program Activities:** To help support unit programming, we have helped launch both Cub Scout and Scouts BSA online programs. As of last week, over 300 Scouts had already participated in our Council-supported virtual programs. The links are below.
 - Cub Scout Programs: <https://scoutingevent.com/397-VRCubScouts>
 - Scouts BSA Programs: <https://scoutingevent.com/397-MBOnline>

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- **Merit Badge Program:** Additionally, multiple other Councils can also be found online offering merit badge programs. The Council Advancement Committee has looked into some of those. I would just say buyer beware. Some Councils maintain much stricter merit badge counselor standards than us and their online programs should also be great; other Councils give no scrutiny to it and have 900 kid classes and you get a badge for participating. Scoutmasters should expect a large swing in quality if they have Scouts going online. Scouts should only be doing programs that are promoted through a Council that the Scoutmaster feels comfortable with. Do not allow Scouts to engage in merit badge programs that are being run by an individual not associated to a Council.
- **Online Meetings:** There has been a lot of discussion on what is the best and/or safest online platform to use. Zoom and Teams seem to be the platforms being used the most, but I have had Skype and Google Hangouts/Meet as well. Here is a link to National do's and don'ts.

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/digital-safety-and-online-scouting-activities>

- **Share Your Stories:** We have received multiple inquiries from media looking for feel good stories of Scout groups doing activities online. If you have a great event, service project a Scout or Scouts are doing from home or other exciting online program, then please send a note to Mary Ellen Smith at marketing@senecawaterways.org as she can always use more stories and we love to highlight units we have not used in the past.
- **Best Time To Stay Connected With Friends:** Units who are meeting online are absolutely encouraged to have their Scouts invite a friend (non-Scout) to participate. In fact, Scouting may be one of the few activities that gets to stay operational during the shutdown and a great way for kids to stay in contact with their peers. If you are stuck for program ideas your district executive can help you out.

Summer Camp

We are hiring camp staff and planning that the opening of summer camp will happen. Currently, under NY State Health Code, summer camps are considered an essential business so we are very optimistic camps will happen. We have had some great conversations with health departments at both the County and State level and have had very promising conversations that camp will happen, assuming the stay-at-home orders are lifted. Here are some key considerations pertaining to summer camp.

- Summer Camps are still planning to operate.
- Early bird date and campership dates will continue to get pushed out to accommodate families. Both are currently set at June 1st.
- We anticipate a whole new set of recommendations from the health department as it pertains to medical screenings, social distancing, and food service.
- We are still accepting payments and deposits for summer camp and encourage units and individuals to reserve spots to guarantee their preferred week. This is probably most important for Cub Scout Camp sessions which run at lower attendance levels.
- If summer camp does not run, we will be offering a virtual camp program so scouts can still do some summer program at home.

Advancement Challenges

It has been amazing to watch people's ingenuity to help Scouts complete rank requirements during this virtual world. The National office has also issued some guidelines on what unit leadership can do to help scouts through various rank requirements.

- Even though we are in a virtual world, Scouts still need to complete all rank requirements for all ranks to earn that particular award. At first glance, some requirements seem impossible to do in a virtual sense but with a little creativity many can get worked through. The suggestions for advancement can be found at <http://senecawaterways.org/advancement-qa-recovid-19/> and clicking on the Q&A link, then scrolling down to the advancement section.
- National has granted the Council the decision authority on extension for Life Scouts working towards Eagle Scout. Should Scouts need more time completing their Eagle Scout due to being delayed during the covid-19 pandemic, this can be granted.
- In-person Eagle Scout Boards of Review will resume in July.
- The Louis & Sally Langie Eagle Scout Scholarship application deadline has been extended to June 1st. Application is available online at <https://senecawaterways.org/forms/> under Eagle Scout Information.

Physical Unit Meetings

As spring starts to appear, we hear more and more units wanting to get outdoors and back together in physical meetings. Our recommendation continues to be to "follow the lead of your school district." With five counties that will probably all get back into operations on different schedules, it is hard for us to give a blanket recommendation that fits everyone. Please be mindful of the following:

- Health and safety of our participants are the number one priority. This should also include people we encounter.
- Follow the lead of your school district or municipality as we get closer to summer.
- Do not engage in any physical gathering while your town or area is under a stay-at-home order. This includes door-to-door activities such as fundraisers.

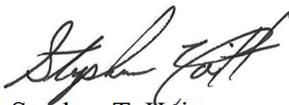
Other Items & Events

Obviously, the list of events being postponed or rescheduled seems to change almost daily. A list of changes can be found on the website. Here are some highlights....

- The Fall Wood Badge course is still being planned. Space is very limited and participants are encouraged to send in a deposit if they want to hold a spot.
- The Council Annual Meeting and Silver Beaver Dinner has been moved to June 22nd.
- 21 Stories for Scouts has moved to Friday, September 4th.
- Most events for May that required reservations have been moved - check the website.
- The National Office is planning a National Virtual Campout on the first weekend of May. More details to follow.
- All National High Adventure Bases and Training Programs are still scheduled from June 1st onward with a 30 day out "go / no go" date.
- There is a drop box outside the Council office for any item you need to get processed (such as applications, campership requests, camp payments). Retail items like uniforms or advancement can't be done until we reopen. Likewise, mail is still being delivered and is being processed daily.

Again, thank you for all you are doing to keep Scouting alive and active in the hearts and minds of all our families.

Sincerely,



Stephen T. Hoitt
Scout Executive