

PLAN LIKE A PRO

by Bill Milner

Look out - a new Scouting year is here already! You have survived September, but now you really, really need to be working on some long term planning. Lots of experienced leaders are doing what they do best - setting out on paper a great year of fun activities that will attract and retain youth and meet our objectives for Scouting. For you new leaders, there is hope at hand. You too can plan like a pro! Organizing a year of Scouting activities is easy — just use the resources readily available to you.



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First of all, sit down with a calendar and look at all your meeting nights. Start with the obvious - when did you start, and when will you finish? Summer holidays and sport activities will affect your attendance, so plan accordingly. Are there any nights when you may not want to meet because of statutory holidays, P.A. days, etc.? Enjoy the break, and use them to recharge your batteries. How about days when you want to meet but your facilities aren't available? Getting out is what Scouting is about. Plan a suitable activity - an urban hike, a local visit, or some outdoor games. Remember, there's nothing wrong with having your opening ceremony outdoors!

Use your Sixers/Seconds, PLs/APLs, Kims, and Keeos. They are part of your leadership team. Meet with them and the youth in your section. With their experience (and familiarity with the age group) they'll come up with some great, and totally unexpected, ideas.

Plan some time with your other leaders. Mark out some evenings or days so that you can all sit down together and fine-tune your schedule by

coming up with the minute-by-minute timetable that will be your guide each week. Make some time for training, and have social activities with your leaders. Let the other leaders lead. Spread the work out among many. Let others be responsible for program nights/activities. You are a team, and everyone can work towards a great program.

Look at the Program Standards (available in this edition of *Leader Magazine*, or online at www.scouts.ca). This lists the broad requirements that make up a successful program - number of nights camping, how many nights outdoors, how many weekend activities to hold, and so on. This will help you to start filling in your calendar.

The web is a wonderful tool. Watch your sources of course, but Scouting-related sites provide a wealth of ideas and information. Sign up for Scouts Canada's monthly program tips (e-mail: maiser@scouts.ca) and join a mailing list for sharing ideas and asking questions. Find enough information to round out your knowledge of clouds, forest animals, no-trace camping, or sign language. Check out your

council or area newsletter for links, news, and other great ideas. And since the youth are so active, there are more sites with games, songs, and crafts for you to use than you can try in a lifetime of program planning!

Log on to your area or council website and look at the calendar. You'll find a few area-wide activities to help fill your gaps. Youth love to meet and interact with those from other groups! You can often spend a meeting or two preparing for these events. Maybe you'll have your own Beaver Buggy/Kub Kar/Scout Trucks test rally, spend an evening at a skating rink practicing your skating skills, build a catapult, or get ready for the area-wide competition. Contact other groups in your part of town. You can do everything from an Olympics Day to a day trip to far-off places - and share the work and cost of putting on events.

For Cub leaders, most groups plan activities around two stars per year, and use the star (and related badge requirements) as inspiration for activities. These can be anything from simple lectures, to hands-on demonstrations, to games inspired by the requirements. The Cubs have fun, and they earn stuff for their sashes as well!

For the Scouts, think of a theme for the year, and tie a number of the badge requirements into that theme. This common thread makes the year more interesting, and helps to prove that badges are not something to be earned in isolation - they all help build a well-rounded Scout!

The theme idea works well in Beavers too. While many colonies will have special nights, a common theme can also be used to tie many activities together. Think about the environment, friendship, or other themes throughout the year, and choose a number of activities, crafts, and games accordingly. The reinforcement of a theme will help the learning process too.

Check out the Program Builder CD available at the Scout Shop. While you are in the Scout Shop, you are sure to find something that will inspire you. Need more inspiration? Go to a dollar store. Ideas for activities are there, just waiting to be discovered. There are dozens of things you can do with balloons!

How about including time for some holiday parties or activities - like a dress-up Hallowe'en party with related activities, or plan a special welcome night for the new youth.

Have the youth participate in the planning (and don't forget to invite parents and siblings)!

There are lots of other opportunities to fill out your program. Do you have any cultural or religious-specific

activities to include? If you have trouble thinking of themes for an evening, go to the Heritage Canada website (<http://www.pch.gc.ca/canada/>) and look at the list of International Days. Surely knowing that the fifth of May is World Laughter Day can inspire a great evening of activity, for any level! Don't forget your sponsor - attendance at a Remembrance Day service, schoolyard cleanup, or other activities can be worked into your program while saying "thank you" at the same time.

Don't forget about our fund-raisers; incorporate Scout Popcorn, Scout Hot Chocolate and Scoutrees into your schedule. Take some time to explain why fund-raising is so necessary (see pg. 20 of this issue) - talk about the Brotherhood Fund (or make an activity out of it).

Make sure you add in some linking activities. You want to encourage the Beavers to become Cubs, and you want your Cubs to see how much fun they'll have as a Scout. Invite some Venturers or Rovers to an event.

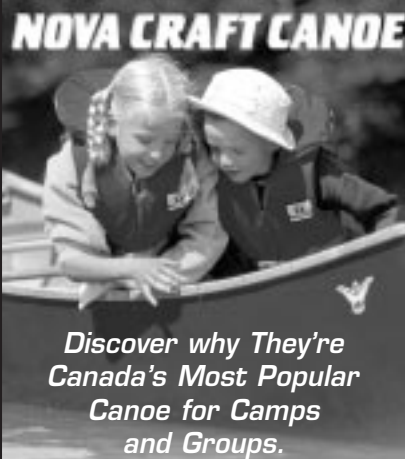
Keep your eyes and ears open. The newspaper regularly promotes activities that may be suitable for your group. A conversation at work may lead to a great evening activity. Check out community newsletters, and advertising by museums, galleries, parks, etc. What skills do your parents offer that you can make use of?

Still need help? Ask. You are not alone. We are all in this to have fun, make friends, and learn things. Con-

tact with other leaders, in the monthly All Section session for example, will give you an incredible chance to find out what has worked, or hasn't worked, for other groups. Call your area team or your council office if

- Bill Milner has a ball planning programs as Akela of 72nd Ottawa Scouts.

Check out the Camping/Outdoor Activity Procedures at www.scouts.ca - it's a great planning resource.



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