

Make It Happen: Organize a Great Scouting Display

by Bill Milner

In my view, there are three pillars that support Scouting - input (recruitment of youth and adults), stay put (helped by adequate training, recognition, and managing the workload) and output (providing a great program at all levels) Scout-Guide week is a perfect time to encourage input: an attractive Scouting display can be a perfect tool to help make it happen.

Scouts Canada has put a lot of effort into promotion – and why not, it's one of the best youth programs there is. What can you do to attract youth and adults to your program? Put Scouting out into the public!

A demonstration at a local mall, community fair, or other location is an opportunity for you to actively recruit leaders and youth by being out in the public eye, answering questions, and accepting registrations.



*Let your
creativity shine!*

Show and Sell our Principles

How do we promote our principles? Participants should be polite, friendly, well-dressed, and eager to talk about what we do. We want to involve the public by getting them to participate, talk to our members, and ask questions. We want to an-

swer all their questions; trying not to lose them by asking them to come back, or sending them to talk to someone else. We want to build up a large reserve of good publicity and goodwill; to show the world what a good program we offer, and how much fun we have doing it. There will be many adults who remember the good times they had - let's get them back, and their children as well. Let's have fun, learn things, and share information.

Where do you start?

You need to devote a bit of time, test your organizing skills, and rummage through the collective ideas, memories, and souvenir boxes of your youth and other leaders to come up with a display that will attract the public.

You will have to plan so that bookings are done on time, participants will be where they are needed when they are needed, and all the equipment and supplies that you need show up in the right place at the right time.

The good news? It is easier than you think! Here's how!



Photos: Francis Chan

Show up and Set Up

First of all, you are limited only by your imagination. You can use tables, booths, screens, slide shows, video, computer-assisted displays, etc. Many malls make tables and chairs available for events like this. Does anybody have access to multi-media kits? Can you sew together a large banner?

Make the most of whatever you have. Have bright images, interesting activities, and be a useful source of information. Try to have everything you need to answer questions, so that people don't have to come back later (they probably won't!).

Make sure you have enough youth and adults present to talk about what you do and answer questions. Enthusiasm is contagious!

What Do You Need?

Provide basic registration information - fees, forms, location, dates and times of meetings, and an idea of the program to be offered in the upcoming years.

Include attractive draws - photographs of previous events, models built, masks made, examples of crafts, perhaps a Kub Kar race or pioneering display, examples of badge work, campfire blankets, static displays of camps, etc.

Get posters from your council. Have a "hook" - give away stickers, balloons, or other advertising material (got a lot of old crests you can't use?). Scouts Canada has a range of small giveaways like tattoos and stickers. Contact your council office for a list of items that they may be able to provide, like flags, display boards, or handouts.

Use this opportunity to meet other members from nearby groups; share ideas and plan combined activities.

Organization

Organization is always easier if you share the responsibilities. Each role may be undertaken by one person or be the responsibility of a sub-committee. Tasks can be combined or split up depending on the available resources.

The Coordinator will oversee everything, ensure coordination with your local council, and is the main liaison with the Group Committee. Strong organizing and managing skills are important, and enthusiasm is critical!

Publicity is responsible for advertising, pamphlets, and local media contacts. Ensure that you have all the handouts you need to adequately describe Scouting in general (from your local council office) and put together a



There's nothing like a smile to make your display even brighter.

one-page sheet that gives the details of your meeting times, places, and activities. Keep strong links to local media - ensure that they are well-informed, invited to the event, and provided with text and photographs (don't forget the photo releases!).

Activities/Displays ensure that display material is available and suitable for the location. While kite making may be an activity you want to highlight, don't fly them in a mall! Ensure that the display has lots of interesting, colourful, informative, and attractive material.

Location/facilities people will book the site (some malls may require at least a month's advance notice), and ensure that display panels, tables, AV equipment, etc. are available. This group will check with the host to identify any special requirements, ask about available tables/chairs and ensure that any special rules are adhered to (some malls have height restrictions on displays, others have proof of insurance requirements). This group will arrange for the transportation of display material and participants if necessary.

Volunteers/Scheduling will make sure that a suitable number of participants from all age groups are always available to answer questions, set up and take down the display, etc. It's important to have all age groups present - our youth are the best people to answer questions from their peers.

The perfect solution might be to get together with another nearby group and share the workload. Anything is possible - you are limited only by your imagination!

Share your experiences with other groups. Keep a record of what you do, what worked, and what you can do better next time. An annual event builds on previous successes - whatever your group chooses to do, have the best time doing it. X

- Bill Milner enjoys planning programs as Akela of 72nd Ottawa Scouts.

Your Scout-Guide Week Activity: Plan it, Make it, Celebrate it!

February 15 - 22, 2004 is the week we celebrate all things Scouting. As you know, the birthdates of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell fall on February 22 - a time to reflect on the history of our Movement and the exciting new initiatives of today.

Some ideas you might choose:

- ☞ Shopping mall displays
- ☞ Parent banquets
- ☞ Award and recognition ceremonies
- ☞ Religious observances
- ☞ Learn how other nations celebrate Scout-Guide week
- ☞ Plan a B.-P. theme evening
- ☞ Show off those orange t-shirts!

There's no better time to get out there and promote Scouting. No matter what form of celebration you choose - enjoy it all, and give it all you've got. Remember: you're a part of Scouting history...they'll be reading about you in *Leader Magazines* to come.