



“What Are We Going to do This Year?”

by Bryan Mierau

Come September, my troop has to have a plan if we want to get things accomplished. I start planning for the next Scouting year even before the previous year is completed. During those last meetings and camps of the year in June, I repeatedly ask my Scouts to reflect on what has happened in the troop for the past several months, what positive life experience will you remember, what was fun? I write down what they pass on to me, and save it to remind them after the summer break when we re-start in September.

At the end of the Scouting year in August, I have a good idea of what the troop will be trying to accomplish the next year. We will have our weekly meetings, go camping, and attend Scouting events, always trying to achieve a minimum of one or two outings per month.

I come to the first Scout meeting of the year with a large calendar. I have already marked all the civic holidays, the school breaks, and the days that other leaders and I cannot commit to the troop. I also bring a list of events that are usually offered in our Scouting region, a list of what we accomplished the previous year and my personal list of goals for this year.

“Goals are items you want to accomplish; they are always changing, and not chiseled in stone.”

Fill In The Blanks

The first task for each of my Scouts is to provide a list of personal goals for this Scouting year: such as, to earn the Pathfinder Award, hike four 20 km treks, camp two nights in a quinzhee, have a canoe adventure. Already experienced in goal setting, the older Scouts assist the new members of the troop to select obtainable goals for the year. The usual goal set for all first year Scouts is to complete the requirements for their Voyageur Award.

The second task for the Scouts is to make a list of troop goals. What camps and events do they wish to attend as a whole? Here the returning youth are instructed to consider the pros and cons for their choices with respect for the new members of the troop.

Armed with the troop's list of goals, it is time to fill in blanks on the calendar. Past experience helps to complete this process quickly and the calendar usually fills up with the word CAMP on every second weekend or more.

Decisions, Decisions

Can we go to all these camps? Can we afford it? Can we commit the time, effort, and our personal life away from other family members? Keeping in mind we should go out once a month, the Scouts are asked to pick and choose as a troop one major outing a month for the Scouting year. These are now the main goals for the troop. We don't erase the other camps and events not selected because if the opportunity exists and we can accomplish a second, or third outing in a month, we will.

I now have a calendar with the big items that our troop wants to accomplish with dates. Once again, nothing is written in stone, and best-laid plans do change. Sometimes those once in a lifetime opportunities appear and modify

the monthly routine. But, we have a good start and the Scouts are excited to know they will get several outdoor adventures this year.

Because of this exercise, I also have the lists of personal goals for individual Scouts. I spend some quiet time reviewing these at home, and determine where and when the best times of the Scouting year are to help them achieve these goals in either a camp or weekly meeting. At the next planning session, I will have each Scout's list of goals that they can use to determine what they want to achieve during camps and for the rest of the weekly meetings.

Troop Planning Works

Our troop planning sessions are invoked at every weekly meeting. Some sessions become just a review of the previous week's outing. I feel it is important to keep communication open with the youth. Ask them what they like and dislike so you can be the leader of THEIR program. X

– Bryan Mierau is a leader with the Zion 8th Yorkton Scouts in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. One of Bryan's pictures took first place in the 2005 photo contest. Judging from the variety of activities and seasonal pictures Bryan submitted, his troop is an active and happy group of Scouts.

Linking to Strategic Direction #4.

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