

Who Will Lead? If Not You!!

by Rob Stewart



COUNTLESS TIMES I have been told the same recruitment story in various parts of the country. It goes something like this: “I was told if I didn’t step forward to be a leader, there would be no program.” A variation on the story: “I was told if I didn’t step forward, they wouldn’t have room for my son/daughter.” This is most likely a legitimate claim when you consider recruitment and retention of leaders is one of our critical issues.

While it might appear to be a pressure tactic, it is born out of necessity. The result of a person deciding not to step forward, or of a person deciding it is time to step aside, generally results in a decline in youth membership. Thank you for stepping forward.

Quite simply, if you had not come forward, it is likely the opening statements would become the reality. There would be no program in your neighborhood. So, thanks again for stepping forward.

How do we get to the point where we do not have to use “scare tactics” to encourage others to lead? Hopeful-

ly you joined an experienced leadership team. That is one of the keys if we are to have recruitment success. I believe there are plenty more parents and others who are prepared to serve. They are reluctant to step forward because they are uncertain of their abilities to lead. Let them know that with an experienced leadership team, he/she doesn’t have to lead right away. They have the opportunity to observe and slowly gain confidence in their role.

We need to ask people to step forward before we need them. What did I just say? Before we need them? Our past Chief Commissioner, Mike Scott, often spoke about the ease with which he and his fellow troop Scouters recruited new leaders. It was a constant activity. They were able to add new members to the leadership team on an ongoing basis rather than at a time of leadership shortages. They found that people were much more receptive to approaches when they were assured they would not be “thrown to the wolves” on the first night. There was time for training and coaching and a gradual learning experience. And one more thing — they were able to promise and deliver FUN.

We continue to stress that the primary function for Section Scouters is to provide a quality program experience for our youth. However, I believe you are in the best position to

serve as the key recruiters for our Movement. Scouting and many other youth serving agencies and associations are suffering because fewer adults are prepared to step forward to lead. In a world of constant change and career uncertainty, taking time to volunteer is one of the first casualties. You have already made the decision to come forward. Hopefully, you are having fun in addition to feeling the rewards of contributing to the development of our citizens of tomorrow. If you can express your enthusiasm for the job when talking with parents or your friends, who knows, we may be overwhelmed with leaders. What a great problem to have!

What other barriers do we have to address to recruit more leaders? I know the Board of Governors has promoted a review of the various forms and conditions that are related to the leadership function in Scouting. We believe we have gone as far as possible with that issue. Are there others? I would be interested in your thoughts and observations. Feel free to contact me at: rstewart@scouts.ca.

Thanks for stepping forward. I hope you enjoyed the past months as a Scouter and look forward to your return in September. Perhaps you can bring a friend. \

— Rob Stewart, Executive Commissioner and C.E.O. of Scouts Canada

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